

Diversity Initiative

Executive Summary

As an institution of outstanding educational opportunity, NC State has long recognized its responsibility to serve all of the citizens of the state. The university community is composed of faculty, staff, students, and alumni from different backgrounds and cultures who bring different, important, and relevant knowledge and perspectives about work and learning. They often challenge basic assumptions and the results of work, teaching, research and outreach can therefore be greatly enhanced. All persons within the university must be committed to maximizing human potential of our people with the recognition that these efforts will contribute to success of our students. These students will become not only part of the global workforce but also fully participating citizens and the emerging leadership in our state and in a pluralistic society.

An effective diversity initiative is one that exhibits a strong conceptual foundation or framework. At its core, a diversity initiative is a well-reasoned philosophy that addresses how an institution sees itself, how it treats all of its internal and external customers, and how diversity will become a part of all institutional values and outcomes. NC State's definition of diversity is:

Diversity is a reality created by individuals and groups from a broad spectrum of demographic and philosophical differences. It is extremely important to support and protect diversity because by valuing individuals and groups free from prejudice, and by fostering a climate where equity and mutual respect are intrinsic, NC State will create a success-oriented, cooperative and caring community that draws intellectual strength and produces innovative solutions from the synergy of its people.

NC State will create a learning environment which enhances the human potential of all the members of the University community as related to its mission to achieve excellence in research, teaching and community service. Diversity and civility are essential for NC State's continuing world-class distinction as a progressive land-grant institution committed to excellence and equity.

Understanding diversity is at the core of effective human interaction. Various individuals and groups have contributed over the years to diversity efforts at NC State and those efforts have been extremely important. Yet despite past efforts, progress has been slow and irregular.

There is also evidence from survey data that some groups at NC State feel excluded, marginalized and/or treated with disrespect. Furthermore, data from employers, graduating seniors, and under-represented groups report, at the minimum, that among our graduates there is a lack of significant knowledge about diversity.

As a broad blueprint that links vision, commitment and action, the diversity plan at NC State is an extension of the University's strategic plan and, like other institutional initiatives represents a visible symbol of how we do business. This plan coincides with our mission as a land-grant institution and, when effectively

implemented, over time will place us on the cutting edge among our peers.

The Diversity Plan

I. Access, Development, and Retention

Access means welcoming previously excluded and ensuring the full participation of existing groups of students, faculty and staff to campus. Current efforts at recruiting members of under-represented groups should be enhanced.

Development and retention means providing the necessary personal and professional support that will allow individuals to be long-term contributing and productive members of the NC State community. All members of the NC State faculty, staff and student body should feel welcome and supported.

Goal 1: NC State will increase the presence and contributions of diverse groups through the NC State community.

II. Institutional Climate

Campus climate includes the culture, decisions, practices, policies and behaviors that, taken together, constitute the working and learning environment at NC State University. Such a climate is everyone's responsibility and includes fostering a climate of civility and respect for others, elimination of unlawful discrimination, and providing easy access to redress, if needed.

Goal 2: NC State will create a working and learning environment where differences are welcomed and valued so that NC State will have a climate that offers opportunity for and supports the success of all students, staff and faculty.

III. Curricular and Pedagogical Transformation

The faculty at NC State is committed to teaching, research, and scholarship. The University's curriculum should contribute to student preparation for the realities of the 21st century. NC State should include diversity of course content and pedagogy. The two must occur simultaneously, since student exposure to new material and alternative perspectives cannot occur effectively unless students have the skills to enhance cognitive understanding. Such skills are the product of dynamic classroom environments and effective instruction. Thus, the faculty represent a critical group concerning the successful acceptance and implementation of diversity.

The process of decision making should occur in a forum that promotes open debate and academic rigor. Faculty should be assured that neither academic freedom nor faculty governance will be violated.

Goal 3: NC State University will incorporate diversity in a significant way into teaching, learning and research.

IV. Institutionalization

The commitment to diversity should be evident in all of NC State's communications, including admissions literature, first year and transfer orientation literature and programs, and course catalogues, and should be frequently expressed by University leadership in written and oral presentations. It is important that leadership be fully committed to the goals and that this commitment be demonstrated in talk and in action.

Goal 4: NC State's commitment to diversity will be evident in all its operations.

This Diversity Plan is a working document and is consistent with the concept of continuous improvement. Evidence indicates that diversity enhances the quality of the educational experience. Diversity must become an integral part of the institutional culture. An intentional effort, such as is embodied in this Diversity Initiative, can contribute to that culture change. A measure of our success is when diversity becomes a part of the everyday business of the institution.