

# **Diversity Initiative: NC State University [draft - 11/14/97, revised - 3/26/99]**

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## **Diversity: The Imperative**

An effective definition of diversity is one which exhibits a strong conceptual foundation or framework. Diversity can be defined by the varied groups which represent the demographic categories at an institution. It can also be defined relative to how it is implemented, and how it affects the teaching, learning, and research mission of an institution. At its core diversity is a well-reasoned philosophy which 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 embraces diversity as essential for effective participation in the global community. Achieving diversity requires the active cooperation and participation by all.**

**Definition: Diversity is an inclusive collection of individuals and groups who bring varied human characteristics, backgrounds, interests, and points of view to enrich the university community.**

**Such a community will:**

Enhance open access and opportunity for all and attract a diverse population.  
Enrich the educational experience and promote personal growth.  
Foster mutual respect and an appreciation of differences and promote cross cultural understanding  
Prepare leaders for a competitive global community.

By definition, NC State reflects diversity because: a) it comprises a community of individuals from varied backgrounds and demographic categories; b) it encourages, accepts, and values a diversity of ideas among individuals; and c) it seeks to promote an environment where equity, respect and recognition represent the norm in the campus climate. We will know that we have achieved diversity when there is an effective integration of these three areas. NC State recognizes that it must continue to sustain momentum and refine the activities associated with a genuine diversity initiative.

## **Background**

As an institution of outstanding educational opportunity, NC State has long recognized its responsibility to serve all of the citizens of the state. This responsibility includes the academic and social preparation of those who enroll, ultimately graduate and become lifelong learners. All persons within the university are committed to the maximization of the student experience. Our 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.

Like other higher education institutions, NC State must help its students to discover the dynamic connections between the campus, educational outcomes and the external community. No matter how this is approached, students will be exposed to the new frontier associated with learning about diversity. Understanding diversity is at the core of effective human interaction. For example, students learn from their peers who look at things differently, and whose experiences are different. The potential exists for students to broaden their perspectives, to increase their interactions, and to foster their understanding of inclusiveness.

These same outcomes can exist for faculty and staff. People from different backgrounds and cultures bring different, important, and relevant knowledge and perspectives about work. They often challenge basic assumptions and the results of work, teaching, research and outreach can therefore be greatly enhanced.

Various individuals and groups have contributed over the years to diversity efforts at NC State and those efforts have been extremely important. Such efforts have contributed to a historical foundation upon which future efforts can draw. Yet, despite past efforts progress has been slow and irregular. There is also evidence from survey data that employers, graduating seniors, and under represented groups report, at the minimum, that among our graduates there is a lack of significant knowledge about diversity. There is also evidence that some groups at NC State feel excluded, harassed and/or disrespected.

Among the institutions which can document positive outcomes and successes associated with diversity are many which are categorized as Research I or are peers of NC State. Although the outcomes may differ, each institution exhibits certain common characteristics in terms of their approach. Among these are the following:

- a planning effort was initiated which resulted in the creation of a diversity plan
- those in leadership positions accepted the responsibility associated with being a diversity advocate
- there was a visible expectation of accountability throughout the institution
- diversity outcomes were linked to student affairs and academic affairs
- diversity outcomes were linked to faculty, staff and student recruitment and retention and to their expectations to be able to work in an equitable environment

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## **Relationship to Existing Plans**

Diversity at NC State University flows from the strategic plan adopted in 1995, especially goal #7, [NC State will achieve a diverse student body, faculty, and staff that better reflect contemporary society], goal #1 [NC State will improve success and satisfaction of undergraduate and graduate students, staff and faculty], and goal #6 [NC State will expand multicultural and global awareness among the members of the university, in its curricula, and through international partnerships], and includes an action plan intended to assist in the achievement of these long-range goals. Nearly all organizations, including institutions of higher education have adopted goals which indicate diversity is important for achievement of the university's mission. Few, however, have followed rhetoric with action, which requires full commitment by the institution's leadership and full accountability.

NC State's 1994 Institutional Self-Study Report, North Carolina State University: On the Threshold of a New Century contains several recommendations which were considered in the development of this diversity plan, especially 5.1 [NCSU should review its recruiting and admissions material to ensure that NCSU's admissions procedures encourage all qualified students to seek admission], 5.5 [NCSU should review all aspects of its admissions and orientation processes to promote achievement of University goals for enhancing cultural diversity within the University community, enhancing institutional accessibility for all qualified applicants, and promoting academic success for all admitted students], 5.9 [NCSU should investigate a range of admissions formulas to determine which formula or formulas might be the most accurate predictor of success for diverse populations of potential students], and 5.15 [NCSU should broaden its disciplinary coverage at the undergraduate level in the arts and sciences and in appropriate applied fields to meet students' needs for richer disciplinary opportunities for learning, personal

development, and professional achievement and to meet society's needs for greater effectiveness in understanding and responding to changing social, economic, and cultural circumstances.] The Institutional Self-Study also proposes five action initiatives it suggests NC State undertake in the next decade. Initiative 3 states: NCSU should address issues of racial and gender diversity more comprehensively.

This Diversity Plan is also consistent with the University's Affirmative Action Plans, which adhere to federal and state legal requirements in employment.

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## **Current Diversity Efforts at NC State**

There are numerous efforts already in place at NC State with the purpose of improving the climate and achieving diversity. These efforts reside in central administration and the local College/School and departmental or unit level. Although each of these efforts may contribute to the diversity effort, they tend to be disconnected and many have not been systematically assessed. These efforts, while helpful, should be able to demonstrate their effectiveness and should be part of an overall plan for diversity, intended to contribute to a central mission. The American Council on Education's [A Handbook for Enhancing Diversity](#) (1989, p. 7) says that "the institutions that have been successful in improving minority participation have at least one important characteristic in common: They have developed a comprehensive and institution-wide approach. Too often in the past, institutions have tried a program here, a new staff person there. An institution-wide commitment to enhancing diversity and vigorous leadership from the chief executive officer and the governing board will produce more qualitatively different results than an institution undertaking sporadic and piecemeal efforts, even if they are well conceived and well executed."

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## **The Diversity Plan: Purpose**

As a broad blueprint which 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.

Various higher education organizations, such as the American Council on Education (ACE), have proposed certain fundamental assumptions that should underscore any diversity initiative ([Handbook for Enhancing Diversity](#), 1989, p. 6).

[All institutions are different](#). Each has a different culture, history, and structure and has devoted varying amounts of attention to the issue of minority participation. What is the culture of your institution and how will

it affect improving minority participation?

Institutions must change in order to adapt to a new population of students....How has change been accomplished in your institution in the past? Consider what it will take to change your institution with respect to minority participation. Try to construct a vision of what your institution would be like if it were truly a pluralistic environment, equally welcoming majority and minority students.

This is an emotionally charged and value-laden area. People will have emotional as well as intellectual responses to this issue. Anger, frustration, unconscious and conscious emotions and values are frequently part of the discussion, and interaction; they must be recognized and addressed. How can you deal with these emotions constructively as you work?

The strategies...will benefit the entire campus community, not simply minority individuals. Good recruiting practices will widen the net and increase access for all students. Similarly, a well-conducted search follows good employment practices, which result in a more comprehensive and equitable process. Active learning and student-centered teaching have been called for in national reports on education as beneficial to all learners. A diverse community of students, faculty, staff, and board members enriches the learning experience for all and helps prepare all members of the community for the multicultural world in which we live.

Additional assumptions underlying NC State's Diversity Initiative are:

The University must reexamine existing processes to make diversity a part of the everyday business of the institution. An examination of different types of organizations that have successfully incorporated diversity reveals two critical features. The first is a willingness to reexamine the fundamental organizational processes, policies and practices as to their efficacy for the promotion of diversity. The second feature is an ongoing assessment process which allows for a close monitoring of current activities. NC State is committed to the application and permeation of diversity across all academic and administrative processes, especially those which promote the teaching, learning and research mission.

The University should promote rigorous dialogue about diversity among students, staff, faculty and administration. Every member of the University community should be involved in this effort. Such a campus-wide dialogue should promote a campus culture that values open examination of difficult yet critical issues affecting the campus and society in a civil and respectful manner. The richness of ideas such a dialogue will evoke should serve the core values and mission of NC State University.

The University should monitor, report and evaluate all diversity efforts. The University will develop a systematic monitoring, reporting, and evaluation program for all diversity related goals and activities, including a comprehensive planning system for all supervisors and managers that

documents their efforts to attain diversity goals. The University should review its diversity plan and the implementation of its initiatives on an annual basis. The Chancellor and Provost will provide an annual report to the NC State community concerning the institution's progress.

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## **The Diversity Plan: Goals and Objectives**

### **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. Questions for discussion include:

- How do these numbers relate to the populations we serve?
- What are we currently doing to increase access to NC State?
- What do we need to do to become more competitive in attracting students, faculty and staff from under represented populations?
- How do we communicate that we are not just a welcoming but a supportive community?
- Do we conduct equitable search processes?
- What are the obstacles to recruitment of members of under represented groups?

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. Such support includes gaining access to all forms of advancement, whether that means students persisting toward graduation, or faculty and staff being fully informed of and encouraged to advance in their positions. Questions for discussion include:

- What is a critical mass of individuals from under-represented groups in student, faculty and staff positions?
- What are the factors associated with retention of students, faculty and staff?
- Are institutional policies, programs and practices equitable?
- Are resources appropriately allocated to development and retention efforts?
- What programs are in place to support advancement?
- What are the barriers which hinder efforts at retaining members of diverse groups?

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

**1.1 Objective:** NC State will increase the presence of diverse student groups at all levels of the institution.

**1.2 Objective:** NC State will increase the representation of diverse persons among the general faculty, especially in tenured and tenure-track positions.

**1.3 Objective:** NC State will increase the representation of diverse persons among EPA administrative and professional staff.

**1.4 Objective:** NC State will increase the representation of diverse persons in executive and professional positions among SPA staff.

**1.5 Objective:** NC State will focus upon the retention and effective utilization of the contributions of diverse groups at NC State.

**1.6 Objective:** NC State will determine where inequities occur which hinder the presence and retention of students, staff and faculty.

**1.7 Objective:** NC State will ensure salary equity in faculty, EPA professional staff and SPA staff positions where possible under state policy.

**1.8 Objective:** NC State will identify barriers to providing equitable rewards for staff and will take proactive steps, where feasible, to eliminate those barriers.

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## 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. All members of the NC State community should believe that they are members of a supportive working and learning environment. Such a climate is everyone's responsibility, and includes fostering a climate of civility and respect for others, elimination of discrimination, and providing easy access to redress, if needed. The campus climate, though difficult to quantify or change, sets the tone for successful recruitment and retention of students, faculty, staff and administration.

Surveys of the NC State community indicate that women and people of color at NC State feel considerably less support than do white males, and report more experience with discrimination. Some women and people of color report feeling marginalized, treated

with disrespect, and unwelcome in many ways. Dialogue regarding improving the campus climate should respond to the following issues:

How is the climate affected by what is taught and learned in the classroom?

Do students, faculty and staff know about reporting mechanisms for incidents of discrimination?

Does NC State have an effective dispute resolution process?

Do managers receive training concerning the maintenance of equitable work environments?

Are all students, faculty and staff aware of services available to them?

Is there a mechanism in place to continuously monitor campus climate and engage the campus community to resolve issues?

Is there a program in place to proactively discourage harassment and discrimination and to teach appreciation and tolerance of differences?

Are policies, programs, and practices clearly communicated to promote understanding?

**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.

**2.1 Objective:** NC State's campus climate for diversity will be continuously monitored.

**2.2 Objective:** All individuals in the campus community will be expected to treat others with dignity and respect at all times and foster a culture of inclusiveness.

**2.3 Objective:** Opportunities for faculty development will be made available that focus on creating an equitable classroom climate.

**2.4 Objective:** Opportunities for staff development will be made available that focus on advancement.

**2.5 Objective:** Supervisors will be trained in ways to create an equitable working and learning environment and recognize and effectively manage complaints of discrimination and harassment.

**2.6 Objective:** Dispute resolution processes will be effectively communicated throughout the campus community.

**2.7 Objective:** Informal and formal processes for dispute resolution will be examined for their sensitivity to the needs of diverse people.

**2.8 Objective:** Policies, procedures and practices will be reviewed and revised when appropriate.

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### **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 twenty-first century. Recent research suggests that most people see diversity as a positive factor and as a contributor to social and intellectual growth, however, they are not sure as to how it should be represented within higher education. Some faculty may misinterpret the potential impact that diversity can have on the traditional curriculum. They may feel that a violation of academic freedom will result from an incorporation of nontraditional scholarship and pedagogy.

Colleges and universities which have fostered an intellectual and open dialogue have been more successful than those that have not. Moreover, there has been no decline in the academic standards or reputation of these institutions; in fact, many have become even more successful in attracting the top students, staff, and faculty from a variety of diverse groups.

The faculty represent the most critical group on a campus concerning the successful acceptance and implementation of diversity. Not only do students spend most of their time with them, but faculty control what content is taught, how it is taught, and what learning outcomes should be emphasized.

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 they have the skills to enhance cognitive understanding. Such skills are the product of dynamic classroom environments and effective instruction.

The faculty at NC State must begin this critical institutional dialogue which will forge the agenda for change. It is the faculty who will frame the questions, establish priorities and ultimately produce a richer development of the curriculum and classroom instruction. The goals they choose may flow from the following questions

Should curricular and pedagogical transformation at NC State seek to:

- broaden existing ideas and theories so they are more inclusive?
- better prepare students for increasingly complex and diverse communities?
- foster in students a comprehensive understanding of the interactions of different groups across history, culture, and society?
- introduce students to different peoples, cultures, and perspectives?
- enhance student analytical listening and thinking skills?
- help students to better negotiate the ambiguity and conflict often associated with

differences?

provide the skills to be competitive in the global marketplace?  
comprehend and respect other "ways of knowing"?

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

**3.1 Objective:** NC State students will be introduced to the varied intellectual traditions associated with diverse scholarship and assured the fair inclusion of the different voices represented by this scholarship.

**3.2 Objective:** NC State faculty will increase their awareness of the factors that enhance equity in the classroom while continuing to emphasize student success.

**3.3 Objective:** NC State faculty will generate new knowledge about diversity and its impact.

**3.4 Objective:** NC State faculty will assure that pedagogical transformation continues to reflect the best practices associated with effective teaching.

**3.5 Objective:** Individuals and units which effectively promote diversity in the classroom and the curriculum will be recognized and rewarded.

The process of decision-making should occur in a forum which promotes open debate and academic rigor. Faculty should be reassured that neither academic freedom nor faculty governance will be violated. On some campuses the end result has been the creation of faculty development incentives to facilitate the learning of creative instructional strategies and/or the incorporation of inclusive content. On others, a curriculum requirement on diversity and/or multiculturalism has been established. Additionally, some institutions produce quarterly newsletters on diversity published by the teaching center, thus creating the link between teaching, learning and diversity.

Support for academic success also means that resources are equally available to all students, faculty and staff. Library services, computing, and other support services, (such as those offered by the Division of Undergraduate Studies and the Division of Student Affairs) should be available and accessible to all. As the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning develops, support should be available for faculty interested in infusing issues of race, gender and class into their courses, or developing new courses. The Center should also offer assistance in the area of classroom equity and teaching strategies that meet all learning styles.

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## **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. A discussion of diversity should be included in speeches, in institutional documents, in news releases, talk show appearances, and guest columns in internal and external publications. It is important that leadership be fully committed to the goals and that this commitment be demonstrated in talk and in action. This commitment also includes modeling diversity in the governing board and in senior administrative positions, the celebration of diversity in all aspects of the internal and external community, and the willingness to allocate resources to achieve equity and diversity and to make support of the diversity initiative part of annual performance appraisals.

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

**4.1 Objective:** Where appropriate, NC State publications [such as the admissions, new student orientation and academic course catalogues] will reflect our commitment to diversity.

**4.2 Objective:** Where appropriate, NC State's commitment to diversity will be expressed in the variety of written and oral presentations on and off campus [such as speeches, documents, news releases, talk show appearances, guest columns].

**4.3 Objective:** NC State will reach out to the community to respond to issues and events and to develop partnerships that create an environment in support of diversity.

**4.4 Objective:** NC State will create a work environment where administrators are held accountable for cultivating a diverse workforce.

**4.5 Objective:** NC State will include issues of diversity in all current and future faculty, staff and student orientation sessions.

**4.6 Objective:** NC State will create a work environment that does not tolerate unfair or inequitable practices and behaviors.

**4.7 Objective:** NC State will provide the resources needed to institutionalize our commitment to diversity.

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## Conclusion

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. NC State can achieve excellence through the value it places on a

diverse, vital, and quality community. Like quality, diversity must become an integral part of the institutional culture. An intentional effort, such as is proposed in this Diversity Initiative, can contribute to that culture change.

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