

Administration seeks to combat discrimination

The University plans to offer more money for minority scholarships

By Teri Meeuwse
Oregon Daily Emerald

Journalism major Akinori Aoki hasn't personally felt discrimination on campus, but he said his friends felt enough of it to move to different universities.

"They received uncomfortable attitudes from people around them — both professors and students," he said.

The University has been trying to increase diversity on campus all year, some administrators said. While Aoki said he hasn't seen any of these efforts, he hopes to see them soon.

Goals like scholarships, faculty recruitment, faculty retention, student recruitment and student retention have been on the University's list of things to do. But until now, these efforts have been sluggish, said Carla Gary, director and university associate for the Office of Multicultural Affairs.

"I think what they're planning to do is appropriate," she said. "There have been efforts in the past that were heartfelt but very singular activities."

The recent student protest, which stemmed from an e-mail sent to students in a class that was viewed as discriminatory, brought the overall picture to the forefront, Gary said.

"Students are consumed by this," she said. "We're not just talking about classes here. We're talking about people's futures."

According to the Fall 1998 Profile of Students at the University, the number of students of color enrolled at the University has dropped. In 1997, there were 2,094 students of color enrolled at the University. In 1998, there were 1,985.

Dave Hubin, executive assistant to the president, said the University has been taking steps to attract students of color to the campus and feel comfortable enough to stay for the rest of their education.

"There has been an effort in the past," he said. "This isn't a new idea, but we are more than welcome to do more. This is critical for the health and well being of all students."

Making students feel comfortable enough to come to the University and to stay for their education are the reasons scholarships for students of color were created, said Jim Buch, associate vice president for Student Academic Affairs.

This year, a number of different scholarships aimed at increasing diversity were awarded, Buch said. For the 1999-2000 school year, the scholarship money available will increase 15 percent from this school year to \$1,135,000.

"Focusing money to achieve a particular project works," he said.

Programs like the Target of Opportunity, Laurels Award, the Underrepresented Minority Achievement Scholarship and the Diversity Building Scholarship have been created and/or restructured to increase the amount of scholarships for students of color, Buch said.

"We can always use more scholarships for students who do good work and want to be recognized," he said.

Scholarships and more student programs have helped attract students of color to the University, Hubin said. Establishing connections to high schools through programs for students of color has also helped.

For example, the University hosts the Reach For Success program, a program that allows high school students of color to visit the University for a day and get a taste of college life, he said.

Other efforts have included the creation of the Ethnic Studies major and the building of the Native American Longhouse.

"This issue has been on our screen, and we're not removed from it passively," Hubin said. "We want to make sure we want to support the students of color."

Recruiting and retaining students is also affected by the number of faculty of color on campus, said Lorraine Davis, senior vice provost for academic affairs.

According to the Office of Resource Management, there were 112 minority faculty members in 1997 on campus and 129 in 1998. One reason the numbers are low is because of the atmosphere of the University, she said. Another reason is the salary the University can offer, compared to other universities.

"Faculty need the feelings of support and respect," Davis said. "There is a large competition for minority faculty. But good minority faculty get recruited away. Given our financial circumstances, we don't often compete with other research universities."

"It's not an excuse, we're simply trying to retain every good faculty member we have."

To do so, the University has a program implemented that gives departments that have faculty of color in them \$35,000 a year for three years. This money gives research support and allows for meeting higher expectations within the department.

To recruit more minority faculty, the University goes through the same recruitment effort for other professors, but "we tell our searchers to keep their eyes open for minority faculty and to make sure they are aware of us," Davis said.

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Lorraine Davis
Senior vice provost for academic affairs

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