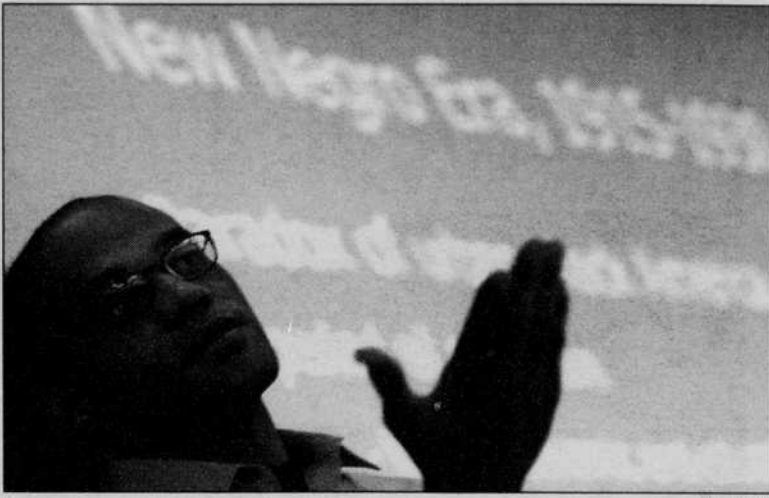


Diversity: Some cite Eugene's lack of diversity as a factor of low retention rates



EMERALD

Martin Summers, director of ethnic studies and associate history professor, said if diversity in faculty is to increase, the University needs to step up its recruitment efforts. "What the University needs to do is be more aggressive at the front end of the search process ... that will allow for a more diverse pool to begin with."

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Willamette University. There was nothing ambivalent about her reasons for leaving — Collin said in a Feb. 20 Register-Guard article that racial attitudes eventually led to her departure.

"There were no other reasons," Collin said in the story. "I would have stayed."

In one instance, the University faced legal action. Former University employee Joe Wade filed a lawsuit in June 2001 alleging racial discrimination.

Wade was the director of the Office of Academic Advising and Student Services when, in 1999, the University decided not to renew his contract.

The suit was settled out of court in 2002, with the settlement stipulating the creation of "the position of Vice Provost for Institutional Diversity ... for a minimum of five years."

University Senior Vice President and Provost John Moseley said the University had already planned to create the position, and the stipulation was merely proof that the University would follow through with its plan.

"(Wade) wanted assurance that we were going to do that," Moseley said in an interview last spring. "And we intended to do that."

In January 2004, Vincent, formerly the vice provost of Louisiana State University, was hired to fill the position of vice provost of institutional equity and diversity.

A hidden problem

During the course of the Emerald's investigation, some current faculty members expressed discomfort and fear of speaking about diversity issues.

Collin, a former faculty member, said she feared telling her story to the media because of a "continuing threat of retaliation."

"I believe that members of the UO faculty have used their contacts to retaliate against us within the legal community of Oregon and the larger community of legal academia," she wrote in an e-mail. "I believe they have repeatedly used these contacts to deride us personally, and discredit our records of achievement."

Affirmative Action Director Penny Daugherty said to the best of her knowledge, no such retaliation had occurred.

"Can I sit here and say that retaliation never occurred? I can't say that," she said. "I can tell you that this institution takes the issue of retaliation very seriously, and they follow up."

Davis said she didn't know where such a fear would come from.

"It saddens me and greatly concerns me," she said. "I don't have an answer for why it exists. ... I'd like to believe that we're open and willing to listen to

people's concerns."

Past and present initiatives

The University has implemented several programs to address the issue of retention and recruitment.

In 1994, the University initiated the Underrepresented Minority Recruitment Plan. The plan signified a renewed effort to recruit minority faculty by providing monetary incentives to departments that hired faculty of color.

The plan established a recruitment fund, which rewarded departments that hired underrepresented minority faculty with funding totaling \$90,000 for each person hired.

The money is distributed over three years. Since the program's inception, almost \$2.2 million has been allocated for recruitment efforts, ac-

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DAVID KELLY | City councilor and member of the Eugene Human Rights Commission

cording to a 2004 Oregon University System diversity report.

Ethnic Studies Director Summers said funds can be used for program development, such as bringing in speakers. A third of the funds are given directly to the hired faculty member to use at his or her discretion for conferences. Some of the money is used to enhance the compensation packages offered to the candidates.

Summers said the fund helps address the additional responsibilities that faculty of color have placed on them, often by virtue of their ethnicity, by providing compensation.

"Faculty of color find themselves in situations that they have demands placed on them that their white peers do not have," he said.

They are often asked to serve on committees, mentor students of color and serve as ambassadors to communities of color.

"Those demands do take a toll," Summers said. "It takes away time that

THE UNIVERSITY'S AFFIRMATIVE ACTION POLICY AND THE HIRING PROCESS

- When a position is vacated, the Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity reviews department demographics to see whether any group (i.e. women, ethnic minorities) is disproportionately low compared to doctoral recipients nationally.

- Search committees, the committees charged with the duty of finding potential candidates, should include individuals from diverse backgrounds.

- The position is advertised in a manner that will ensure diversity in the candidate pool.

- Job openings are reviewed for anything that might unintentionally eliminate women, minorities or people with disabilities.

- If there are no women or minorities in the final interview pool, the search committee is encouraged to review candidates to see whether any women or minorities may be added.

Source: Penny Daugherty, Affirmative Action director

should be spent on doing the things you need to gain tenure. ... (The fund) works as a compensation."

The fund has had a hand in several recruitment success stories. The Robert D. Clark Honors College recently hired three faculty members of color, two of which fell into the "underrepresented" category. The college will receive two \$90,000 budget increases as a result.

"I support the way it's set up," Clark Honors College Director Richard Kraus, a professor of political science, said of the fund. Kraus said some of the money will go toward the new professors' research and the college's new "Thinker in Residence" program.

Kraus added that he is happy with the way the new hires have performed and is excited to expand the college's curriculum to include material beyond the Euro-American world view.

"We're not just looking for people whose faces are different," he said. "We want people with a different way of going about things."

The Clark Honors College found the new faculty members by defining the open positions in a way that would attract minority candidates, Kraus said.

Dayo Mitchell, one of the recruits, said the money will help her do more research and allow her to travel to the eastern United States, where the most prominent research is being done in her field of the history of the Atlantic world.

"(The fund) is really a recruiting tool; it encourages the best people to come to Oregon," Mitchell said.

The proposed Diversity Action Plan is also expected to contribute to better recruitment and retention. Summers, one of two point people for the plan's critical mass work group, said the plan will address the isolation that faculty of color might feel by proposing cluster hires, which are group hires based on themes or on a particular expertise. The hires would be made across a number of departments.

"The goal is to bring in a group of people (in cluster hires) ... so that they already feel like part of a community when they get here," he said.

While improvements in recruiting have been made, some say more could be done.

"They've been better the past couple of years, but better than what?" Summers said, emphasizing the little minority hiring that had been done in the past. "Some departments still have a very long way to go."

A community's role

Academic adviser Parker partially attributes the low retention rates to feelings of isolation, which may stem from a lack of diversity in the community. According to the 2000 census, more than 90 percent of respondents in Lane County considered themselves white.

"We can attract the most brilliant faculty to this campus, but if you can't connect them and find a way to anchor them, they're not going to stay," Parker said.

Some University faculty members and others in the community have said Eugene isn't necessarily the most diversity-supportive city, a factor that might contribute to the University's diversity woes.

City Councilor David Kelly, a member of Eugene's Human Rights Commission, said there is work to be done in the government and in the community.

"A number of people in the community have a blind spot," Kelly said. "They don't even realize that there are serious racial and ethnic intolerance in Eugene."

"Racism is really entrenched in the infrastructure of our city," Parker said.

People of color have trouble connecting with the community because they feel isolated, she added.

"There are no cultural centers," Parker said. "The environment is not conducive to them feeling comfortable, feeling safe and feeling accepted."

Kelly echoed Parker's concerns about isolation.

"I think some individuals feel driven away, and some individuals feel prompted to leave because of neglect,"

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LYLLYE PARKER | Office of Multicultural Affairs academic advisor

Kelly said. "They don't connect with the community or feel that the community is connecting with them."

Some said the community isn't overtly hostile, but that sometimes it can be difficult to connect.

"People in Eugene are well-intentioned, but the daily interactions can get a little strange," ASUO Women's Center Interim Director O'Brien said. "People say these offensive things, and you just scratch your head."

Assistant professor Mitchell, who has lived in Eugene for only a few months, said the city is supportive.

"There's a lot of space for individualism in this town," said Mitchell, who added that the city is far more diverse than the Vermont town in which she once lived. "I've been struck by how friendly people are in Eugene."

But there is always room for improvement, Kelly said.

"The (Human Rights Commission) gave me a much greater awareness of how pervasive some of the negative racial attitudes are in the community, and also the great frustration of people who have been working on these issues for 10 or 20 years and don't see signs of progress," Kelly said. "All of us, myself included, need to work on changing our hearts and minds. What is ultimately going to make the biggest transformation in the community is for all of us to be more aware of the dynamics of racial issues, of the assumptions that each of us makes about our neighbors and our community."

"Eugene's elected leadership could take a more active role around diversity issues," he continued, adding that the City Council agreed to discuss race and racism more.

The first step in fixing the problem is admitting a problem exists, Parker said.

"They don't think it's broke," she said. "It's broke. What we have to do is find a way to convince them that it's broke."

Nonetheless, the faculty of color on campus don't have to be proportional to diversity in the community, Summers said.

"We hire from a national pool," he said. "The number of minority in faculty shouldn't reflect the local

demographics because we are a national university."

The need for diversity

Many faculty members said diversity in faculty is important, given the increasingly diverse nature of today's workplace.

Charles Martinez, an associate professor of educational leadership and the College of Education's director of diversity, said the rapidly changing demographics of Oregon's schoolchildren have made it imperative that tomorrow's teachers have multicultural training. The College of Education has renewed its efforts to recruit more faculty who have expertise in multiculturalism.

"That changing context changes us all," he said. "It's our responsibility to prepare our students to do that kind of work."

O'Brien said diversity in faculty is integral to providing students with a comprehensive education and the tools they need to perform in increasingly diverse work settings.

"The student population needs to know how to survive in a diverse society," she said. "Believe me, if you leave Oregon, it's going to be more diverse." Parker echoed the sentiment.

"This is a global society," she said. "(The University) has to be representative. Through education, you get freedom; remember, with freedom comes responsibility. We haven't taken on the responsibility of making sure that every corner, every alleyway, every little nook is representative."

Looking to the future

Those working on integrating the Diversity Action Plan hope it will further the University's mission to increase diversity.

Vincent, vice provost for institutional equity and diversity, said the preliminary set of recommendations will be completed by the beginning of spring term so that faculty, students and community members can comment on the policies.

Summers said he's enthusiastic about the effectiveness of the plan.

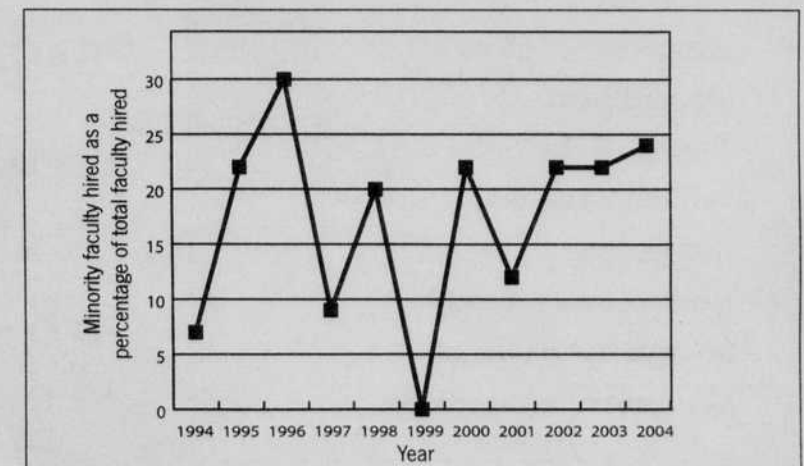
"At the same time, I'm cautiously optimistic," he said. "I'm not quite sure there's going to be the commitment of resources required to implement the policies."

Parker said she was similarly enthusiastic about the plan but warned that the University shouldn't overestimate it.

"I think that they have just stepped up to the plate with the hiring of Dr. Vincent," Parker said of the University administration. "Where they fall short is in thinking that one person can fix the problem."

"I give the University credit," she continued. "They're addressing the problem. But we haven't found the key yet that opens the door."

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The number of minority tenure or tenure-track hires each year has fluctuated in the past decade, ranging from 0 to 30 percent of total hires in this category. The greatest number, nine, was hired in 1996. There were no minority faculty members hired in 1999. Source: University Office of Resource Management