

School of Public Health Diversity Plan:

The socio-demographic profile of the nation is rapidly evolving and is more diverse than ever before. The implications of these changes are far reaching. A concerted effort will be needed to prepare the public health workforce to address the needs of a multicultural society where social problems persist and where economic, racial and religious differences are inevitable (*Hurtado, 2007*). (*Hurtado, 2007*. ASHE Presidential Address: Linking Diversity with the Educational and Civic Missions of Higher Education. *Review of Higher Education*, 30 (2), 185–196.) It is the responsibility of schools of public health to meet this challenge head-on by creating an environment where diversity and excellence are valued equally.

Diversity is multidimensional; it includes, but is not limited to: age, ethnicity, gender, physical abilities/qualities, race, sexual orientation, educational background, geographic location, income, marital status, military experience, parental status, religious beliefs, work experience, and job classification." (Staff Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Compliance Office, University of California, Berkeley <http://hrweb.berkeley.edu/diversity>). In order to create environments that are more than culturally diverse in appearance, schools of public health must create a milieu that embraces the many dimensions of diversity and engages diverse voices, perspectives and experiences of peoples (Symonette, H. (n.d.) *Creating authentically inclusive and responsive campus environments*, Retrieved from <http://www.library.wisc.edu/EDVRC/docs/public/pdfs/ICC/CreatingAuthenitcallyInclusive.pdf>). Campus climate, effective recruitment and retention of diverse faculty, students and staff, and education and training are essential to this transformational process.

Louisiana and regions served by the SPH are comprised of diverse populations. Although the majority of the state's residents are Caucasian (64%), 34% of the population is of African descent, there are 14 Native American tribes in the state (4 federally recognized; 10 state recognized), and the life style and cultural patterns of Cajuns and Creoles (ethnic groups indigenous to the state) add a unique patois to the challenges facing public health, researchers, practitioners and advocates. The state and adjacent regions are becoming increasingly diverse. Among Asian populations, Vietnamese are the most recent addition to Louisiana's cultural gumbo and represent the 10th largest community in the nation (Greater New Orleans Data Center). While many Vietnamese families have lived in the region for two or more generations and share the local heritage of commercial fishing, language, distrust of institutions and reliance on traditional healing practices must be factored into public health initiatives. The disaster of Hurricane Katrina in 2005 resulted in an influx of Spanish-speaking residents primarily from Mexico and Central America, who now account for 4.2% of the population (up 79% from 2000-2010 census; Greater New Orleans Data Center).

Within the diverse communities of Louisiana and the region, groups experience health disparities which the SPH is tasked to address. Given its charge and the broader responsibility of higher education, the SPH is committed to creating an inclusive and responsive environment that supports the recruitment, retention and development of a diverse faculty, staff and student body to meet the needs of our region and beyond. The SPH is an entity of the LSUHSC-

NO and the LSU System. The Diversity Plans of the System and the HSC-NO will be summarized, followed by the specifics of the SPH's Diversity Plan.

LSU System Diversity Plan

In 2009, the LSU System Diversity Task force was established as an advisory council to the Board of Regents and the LSU System to enhance diversity and address three issues important to the System: 1) improving campus climate; 2) recruitment and retention of diverse students; and 3) education and training of LSU employees. A subcommittee of the Task Force was appointed to address each topic. After thorough review of the professional literature and national models, consultation with peer institutions and assessment of practices in the LSU System, the subcommittees produced white papers summarizing their findings and recommending future policies and practices related to each topic.

Campus Climate

Campus climate is influenced by: the institutional legacy of inclusion or exclusion; the numerical representation of various groups; the perceptions and attitudes among and between groups; and intergroup relations (Hurtado, 1998) . [Hurtado, S, Clayton-Pedersen, A, Allen, WR, Milem JF. Enhancing campus climates for racial/ethnic diversity: educational policy and practice. *Review of Higher Education* 21(3), 279-303]. In order to determine current campus climate and address glaring omissions, the subcommittee recommended:

- each campus assess its own climate using surveys designed to identify gaps and develop appropriate training and education;
- conduct focus groups with campus constituencies and community partners to assess perceptions of campus climate;
- the LSU System develop, place on the System homepage and distribute widely, a diversity statement highlighting the priority of inclusiveness;
- the LSU System develop a diversity handbook for all employees.

Recruitment and Retention

Institutions of higher education, the communities they serve and society at large accrue many benefits from diversity among students (Grutter V Bollinger, 53, U.S. 306 (2003)). While diversity among administrators, faculty and staff is critical to achieving a multicultural environment, recommendations of the System subcommittee focused on identifying approaches to producing and sustaining racial/ethnic diversity among students.

The subcommittee noted that underpinning all efforts to increase racial/ethnic diversity are the need to: make diversity initiatives the responsibility of administrators (i.e. Deans and Department Chairs); review curricula for bias and offer courses that appeal to diverse groups; consider faculty and staff appointments to enhance diversity and create a cadre of role models for populations of students; and publicize the institutional value accorded diversity and promote internally and externally diversity achievements. Toward this end, the following recommendations addressing recruitment, admissions/scholarships and retention/graduation were presented:

- Establish recruitment advisory boards comprised of administrators, faculty, students and alumni;

- Establish collaborative academic programs with geographically proximate feeder institutions (e.g., HBCUs, HSIs and Tribal Colleges) and exhibit at conferences and events where such students are likely to attend;
- Develop scholarship programs available to students from diverse backgrounds;
- Use full file review to inform both scholarship and admissions decisions;
- Continually address retention issues through administrative review and use of advisory councils;
- Establish first year orientation programs to highlight the importance of multiculturalism, acclimate students with diverse backgrounds (domestic and international) and facilitate participation in peer and faculty mentoring; and
- Support student affinity groups designed to network racial/ethnic minority and other diverse groups of students.

Training and Education

After assessing system-wide education and training initiatives promoting cultural competence and diversity, the subcommittee recommended the following:

- Conduct a comprehensive assessment to establish baseline measures of diversity and inclusion
- Create a diversity and inclusion statement which establishes a code of conduct to guide education and training for faculty and staff
- Obtain resources needed to implement diversity training programs such as, mandatory classroom training, online trainings with annual compliances, grassroots programs designed to train participants to effect cultural change;
- Create a speakers bureau
- Diversify opportunities for professional development
- Include diversity and cultural competence training in orientation for new employees.

II. LSUHSC-NO Diversity Plan

The Diversity Program of the LSUHSC-NO was influenced by established policies for providing equal opportunity employment and its role as the state's flagship institution for research and training in biomedical and health sciences. Throughout the State of Louisiana, 70% of health care professionals receive some part of their training through LSUHSC and LSU-affiliated sites. Cognizant of the overwhelming responsibility to provide an educational experience that prepared professionals to address the health issues of the state's increasingly diverse citizenry and to develop a workforce representative of the population, the HSC-NO established the Multicultural Affairs Advisory Council (MAAC) in July, 2010.

In accordance with the strategic plan of the LSUHSC-NO, the MAAC seeks to increase minority presence in programs across all Schools of the HSC by identifying and monitoring initiatives to increase enrollment and retention of diverse populations; develop and implement strategies to enhance awareness of the value of multiculturalism; and facilitate creation of community, curricular, clinical and research experiences that promote cultural competence among students, faculty and staff of LSUHSC-NO.

The HSC Office of Multicultural Affairs has conducted the following activities:

- Annual recruitment caravan to local and proximate HBCUs to participate in career fairs and publicize HSC programs, financial aid and support services available to diverse groups of potential students. Faculty, students and staff representing all Schools of the HSC participate in these caravans.
- Initiated a HSC-wide book club to highlight issues and policies of the health care system that differentially impact racial/ethnic group. *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*, by Rebecca Skloot was the first selection and the focus of a panel presentation and guided group discussion attended by HSC students, faculty and staff.

SPH Diversity Plan

The SPH Diversity Plan is aligned with the recommendations of the LSU System Diversity Task Force and the HSC Office of Multicultural Affairs. The SPH is committed to creating an environment of inclusive excellence as evidenced in the Strategic Plan – EDU section, Goal 2: Establish a diverse student body qualified to appropriately address public health issues now and into the future. Prior to formally establishing the SPH Diversity Committee, administrators and Program Directors of the SPH took steps to increase minority enrollment and expand access to MPH programs. SPH representatives participated in the HSC recruitment caravans visiting HBCUs and other institutions in the region. The SPH distributed program announcements and recruitment letters to minority serving institutions throughout the region. The SPH also established a joint degree program with Dillard University, a HBCU in New Orleans, with an existing undergraduate public health program. Finally, in partnership with the School of Medicine, the SPH developed an MD/MPH track available to medical students.

Established in 2010, the SPH Diversity Committee is comprised of faculty, staff and students. In 2012, the SPH Committee developed a diversity plan that expands the three objectives delineated in the SPH Strategic Plan and complements the initiatives of the HSC MAAC. The SPH Committee adopted as its overarching objective, systematic implementation and evaluation of practices and policies that foster and sustain an environment that is inclusive and respectful of all students, faculty and staff of the SPH irrespective of race, color, creed, gender, identity or any other non-merit factor. The SPH Committee established short, intermediate and long term objectives. Strategies and progress to date follow:

Strategy 1: Create a joint faculty/staff committee to work in tandem with the LSUHSC-NO Multicultural Affairs Advisory Committee (MAAC) to address the recommendations of the Diversity Task Force of the LSU System to improve campus climate; recruit and retain diverse students, faculty and staff; and promote infusion of curriculum and training to enhance diversity.

Progress to date

- The SPH committee was established, held its first meeting July, 2010 and meets regularly.

Strategy 2: Participate in the development of an instrument to assess campus climate across the LSU system.

Progress to date:

- SPH Diversity Committee spearheaded development of the campus climate survey and submitted a draft to the LSUHSC MAAC November, 2010 which was distributed to all other Schools of the HSC for review and feedback.
- SPH revised the survey instrument and administered to 25 SPH students and faculty obtaining feedback on relevance and suitability of survey items and format.
- Data from this pilot will inform revision of the instrument in preparation for electronic dissemination through the System level Office of Compliance.

Strategy 3: Create a venue for staff to receive education and training, share perspectives, and address issues and practices impacting the work environment and retention of a diverse staff.

Progress to date:

- Staff Assembly convened in March, 2012. Staff Assembly meets at least six times a year. Six articles from the *Harvard Business Review* were distributed and best practices and evidence-based approaches to address worksite issues are presented by members of the Staff Council.

Strategy 4: Publicize and promote participation in MAAC-sponsored activities designed to heighten awareness of the value of multiculturalism and issues impacting diverse populations.

Progress to date:

- In 2012, faculty, students and staff of the SPH attend MAAC sponsored activities (book discussion and diversity seminar)
- Students, faculty and staff were informed of the next book selection and fall discussion forum scheduled for fall 2012.

Strategy 5: Expand opportunities for SPH faculty, students and staff to interact and learn more about the contributions of diverse populations to the field of public health.

Progress to date:

- In 2012, the SPH Committee committed to a series of presentations coinciding with national observances celebrating the accomplishments and contributions diverse populations (e.g. Hispanics, African Americans, Disabled Americans, LGBTQ) to the field of public health.
- The procedure for identifying and presenting honorees is drafted
- At least four national observances will be held annually. On successive years honorees will represent SPH students, faculty and staff, state and regional figure, and group members of national/international stature
- The SPH Student Government Association and the SPH Diversity Committee will host an International Food Festival prior to the holiday break. Students, faculty and staff will provide edibles representing their place of origin, culture or culinary preference

Strategy 5: Increase student and interdisciplinary participation in the development, implementation and evaluation of Committee efforts to expand multiculturalism in the SPH

Progress to date:

- In 2012 the SGA initiated the peer advisory group to assist incoming students with their transition into the School. This support will be available to international students as well as domestic students arriving from out of town.
- The SPH provides mandatory orientation training for all incoming students to welcome them to the School and apprise them of available resources and rules and regulations governing behavior.

Strategy 6: Infuse into the curriculum, information/data highlighting the importance of diversity in public health research and practice

- In 2012, standardized content was presented in multiple courses to ensure students have repeated exposure to a uniformed message (e.g. demographic changes and disease burden make diversity an integral component of effective public health training, research and practice).

The SPH will continually expand efforts to increase interdisciplinary, multicultural interactions among diverse groups of students, faculty and staff and to create an environment that fosters excellence and supports inclusiveness in equal measure.