



We all should know that diversity makes for a rich tapestry, and we must understand that all the threads of the tapestry are equal in value no matter what their color.

~ Maya Angelou

Renée D. Culverhouse, President
Gadsden State Community College

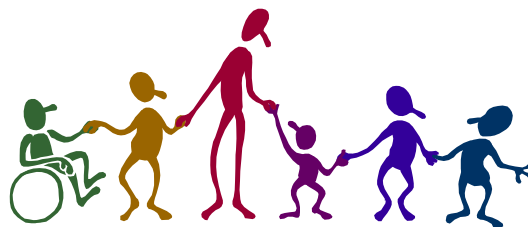
PRESIDENT'S TASK FORCE ON DIVERSITY

At the college-wide in-service meeting on August 16, 2004, GSCC President Renee Culverhouse set diversity as one of the priorities for the 2004-05 year. The President then appointed a Task Force on Diversity whose charge was to examine the issue of diversity at Gadsden State, with special emphasis on racial/ethnic diversity as it relates to faculty, staff, administrators, students, student activities, and community outreach activities, and to facilitate ongoing college and community discussion to identify specific strategies for systematically improving overall college diversity.

Task Force co-chairs were Kathryn Barrett and Eric Stringer. Community leaders who served on the Task Force were: James "Pappy" Dunn – Retired; John Elston – Retired; Amanda Gonzales – Student; Tamaria Hall – Student; Dr. Mary Harrington – Cleburne County Board of Education; Mike Henderson – Farmers & Merchants Bank; Robert Houston – United Defense; Dr. Paulette Lipscomb – Retired; Carol Oliphant - Cherokee County Schools; Hernan Prado – Alabama Latin American Association; Wayne O'Stean – Retired; Eugene Prater – Retired; Tony Reddick – Weaver Technical Center; John Reed – Gadsden Career Center; Sherri Sumners – Calhoun County Chamber of Commerce; Juan Vargas – Student; and Betty Wilson – Retired.

GSCC employees who served on the Task Force were: Michele Bradford; Carl Byers, Jackie Clark; Shirley Colvin; Paula Ross-Derrick; Wayne Findley; Dorothy Foster; Shirley Hall; Tim Heard; Belivion Herring; Beverly Hilderbrand; Jim Pitchford; Sandra Rudolph; Lisa Thacker; Tarva Vaughn; and Evelyn Woods.

Evidence of GSCC's commitment to diversity is the recent completion of the President's Task Force Report on Diversity. The Task Force's research included gathering data through interviews, examining data sources at GSCC, reviewing current applicable policies and procedures, and reflecting on trends that developed from analysis of the data. The Task Force's report includes goals, objectives, and strategies. Specifics of this report follow in this special edition. Processes for implementation of the goals and objectives are underway. Gadsden State will host a dinner on September 19, 2005 to recognize the work of the Task Force and to release the report to the community. We expect Gadsden State to be a model for other organizations in our service area and for other colleges in The Alabama College System with regard to diversity.



INTRODUCTION TO DIVERSITY

An investment in diversity is more than the act of recruiting diverse peoples to campus or celebrating ethnically themed events or holidays. Gadsden State Community College is committed to the real work of providing an opportunity for its students to learn in a rich environment free of intolerance and bigotry, one that teaches and honors the importance of multiculturalism and the acceptance of differences in others. All members of the College community have a responsibility to make GSCC campuses and classrooms welcoming and respectful of each member's differences and/or abilities.

Colleges and universities of today must prepare students to function successfully in the global society of the 21st century. The workplace of tomorrow will reflect a broad range of backgrounds and perspectives, introducing new challenges in thinking, communication and team-building. Citizens of tomorrow will require multicultural competence beyond our current imagination.

We in academia have a responsibility to prepare our students for assuming leadership roles in the 21st century. They will need specific tools and knowledge for leading a society of rapid change and multicultural growth. Multicultural competence serves these future leaders through broadened critical thinking skills, expanded opportunities for intellectual inquiry, and preparation for social and civic responsibilities.

DIVERSITY – The Definition

Diversity can be defined as “all the ways in which we are different and similar along an infinite number of lines.” These dimensions of diversity make for a rich variety and can lead to both creativity and conflict. Diversity includes individuals from a variety of groups based on characteristics such as those defined by race, ethnicity, national origin, age, gender, socioeconomic background, religion, sexual orientation, disability, and intellectual perspective.

DIVERSITY -- Vision Statement

It is the vision of Gadsden State Community College to create a campus climate in which trust is established among its widely diverse population, and opportunities for enhancing diversity and a sense of community are encouraged and supported. It is our goal to stand committed to fostering and sustaining a pluralistic, inclusive environment that empowers all members of the campus community to achieve their highest potential.

We shall strive to build an exemplary education community characterized by:

- Diversity/sensitivity training for administration, faculty and staff.
- Soliciting, hiring, and retaining a diverse administration, faculty, and staff.
- Increasing and expanding knowledge of diversity by offering programs and classes that promote an awareness and appreciation of diversity.
- Committing to a respect for human diversity.

We encourage every member of our college community to embrace the underlying values of this vision, and to demonstrate a strong commitment to supporting, retaining, and attracting students, faculty, and staff who reflect the diversity of our larger society.

DIVERSITY TASK FORCE PLAN OF ACTION

The following section presents Task Force diversity goals and objectives grouped under four broad areas: Climate for Living, Learning and Working; Student Access and Opportunity; Diverse Faculty and Staff; and College and Community Relations.

This diversity plan recognizes the importance of specific diversity actions at the departmental and unit level, which may not be listed here. Diversity plans for individual units will include strategies for addressing specific areas of under representation and other diversity issues within the units, consistent with the overall aims of the campus diversity plan. Although the campus-wide diversity document does not provide a complete list of these unit-level strategies, their implementation is critical to the success of the campus diversity plan.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

GOAL STATEMENT #1: Climate for living, learning, and working.

Institutionalize commitment to a welcoming and supporting campus climate that values diversity.

A diverse environment is essential for our long-term success. An inclusive climate with equal access and respected participation by all groups and individuals will encourage full engagement of those who work and learn here. This engagement will create a competitive advantage for students and employees of Gadsden State Community College.

- Objective #1:** Create a GSCC diversity resource office with staff and budget to coordinate, maintain, and assess diversity initiatives; research best practices; provide assistance and collaboration; provide “diversity facilitation”; and centralize diversity efforts by gathering and maintaining a knowledge base and inventory of all GSCC diversity-related programs, resources, and initiatives.
- Objective #2:** Organize and sponsor professional development programs focused on diversity issues for faculty, staff, and students.
- Objective #3:** Create a program to recognize and reward departments and individuals for innovative approaches that help improve the campus diversity climate.

GOAL STATEMENT #2: Student Access and Opportunity

Gadsden State Community College is committed to ensuring equal access and opportunity for a quality education among all GSCC students, including members of racial/ethnic groups traditionally underrepresented in higher education.

- Objective #1:** Improve the College’s ability to attract more minority students.
- Objective #2:** Improve understanding among minority communities about the various scholarships, grants and other financial aid programs.
- Objective #3:** Increase minority enrollment in those programs traditionally underrepresented.
- Objective #4:** Increase the retention rate of minority students.
- Objective #5:** Enhance job skills training for minority students.
- Objective #6:** To expand student activities to include all campuses.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES – Continued

GOAL STATEMENT #3: Diverse Faculty and Staff

To recruit and retain a faculty, staff, and administration that is reflective of the communities served by the College, especially with regard to race, ethnicity, gender, and national origin.

Objective #1: Improve the College’s ability to attract more minority applicants.

Objective #2: Improve selection processes so as to ensure that qualified minority applicants are given equitable consideration for employment.

Objective #3: Improve the College’s ability to retain qualified minority employees

GOAL STATEMENT #4: College and Community Relations

To collaborate with other community agencies involved in development of diversity plans, to improve the College’s relationship with diverse groups within our communities, and to serve as a model for community agencies in promoting respect and appreciation for diversity.

Objective #1: Build on the efforts of other community groups that have developed or are in the process of developing diversity plans.

Objective #2: Promote dialogue and open communication between the College and groups primarily comprised of minority citizens.

Objective #3: Assist other community organizations in the development of diversity plans.

DIVERSITY -- Levels of Responsibility

Responsibility for achieving success in diversity at Gadsden State rests at every level of the college organization -- including the President and other administrators, faculty, staff, students, governance groups and other organizations. Each individual and group within the campus community will be asked to help the campus reach its diversity goals. Each has a role to play and a responsibility to meet.

Campus leadership and coordination of the Campus Diversity Plan will be provided by the President, Vice Presidents, Deans, Department Chairs and other administrators, in conjunction with a proposed Office of Diversity and Equity. Campus administration will play a critical role in setting both the tone and the example for diversity efforts, as well as motivating action throughout the campus community. Campus leadership will be responsible for implementing the diversity plan, including setting priorities, identifying resources, establishing accountability measures, implementing initiatives, managing budgets, building teamwork, reporting on progress, and recommending needed changes in the plan. Campus leaders will establish annual reviews utilizing qualitative and quantitative assessments to measure the rate of progress toward meeting goals and implementing key strategies.

In addition, the campus administration will establish comprehensive, five-year program reviews to help evaluate the campus wide diversity effort. These evaluations will include input from external and internal sources. Department heads with unsatisfactory outcomes under the diversity plan will devise a plan addressing how negative trends will be reversed. The Office of Diversity and Equity would be available for consultation about potential strategies for achieving success.

Office of Diversity and Equity

The proposed Office of Diversity and Equity would be dedicated to: providing leadership for campus diversity; monitoring, evaluating and supporting diversity efforts; directing initiatives; increasing communication; and supporting core programs and services.

Through this office, Gadsden State could explore opportunities for adapting "best practices" of other institutions to reach diversity goals. In the first year of the plan's implementation, these successful programs would be evaluated in terms of applicability to the Gadsden State environment.

Campus Departments and Units

Much of the day-to-day work on diversity occurs within academic and administrative departments, offices, and program areas. Administrators, deans, directors, and other department heads will be asked to ensure that unit diversity plans are ambitious, attainable, and aligned with the goals of the campus diversity plan. Timelines for initial reports on unit plans will be provided at a later date. Individual departmental plans are expected to provide a higher level of detail and specificity than the campus plan, while maintaining a commitment to accountability, qualitative and measurable goals, and ongoing monitoring and evaluation. Unit plans typically are targeted to specific needs and opportunities but need to be consistent with the campus plan. The Office of Diversity and Equity would be available for help in reviewing and realigning the individual departmental plans.

Individual Responsibilities

Supervisors at all levels will be responsible for providing leadership and implementation oversight for unit diversity efforts. Individual performance evaluations for administrators, supervisors, and other staff will include an assessment of their contributions to diversity-related strategies and goals.

Budgeting

Budget decision-making will include evaluation of diversity achievements by programs and divisions. In particular, outstanding achievement in diversity efforts by programs and divisions will be recognized as areas or models for greater investment through the budget allocation process. Also, incentives and rewards will be established for meritorious achievement in meeting diversity goals.

Where strategies have been less successful in meeting goals, Deans, Vice Presidents, and Department Heads will be asked to propose new plans for improving diversity in their areas, including options for reallocating existing funds and redirecting efforts to more effective strategies.

Measuring Progress

In the first year of the plan, Gadsden State will establish a process for measuring progress toward reaching diversity goals, in conjunction with the Office of Diversity and Equity and other campus organizations. External and internal data and comparisons will be used in the process of evaluating outcomes of the campus's efforts.

Annual reviews will be used to monitor progress at multiple levels, including campus wide and departmental efforts. Within the first year of implementation, the campus administration will work with departments, units and existing committees, as well as national experts, to establish progress indicators and benchmarks for evaluating diversity efforts.

Qualitative and quantitative indicators will be used to measure the success of individual and collective strategies, as well as to identify needed revisions in the plan. The Office of Institutional Research will conduct ongoing analyses and produce regular statistical reports to help inform the evaluation process. Progress reports will be compiled annually for review by the President.

A CALL FOR CAMPUS-WIDE COMMITMENT

All elements of the campus community, including faculty, staff and students, are challenged to join this effort to enhance diversity at Gadsden State. For example, students have great potential for assisting in the recruitment and retention of a diverse student body. The same can be said for individual faculty and staff. College-wide commitment is vital to the success of The College Diversity Plan.

Therefore, each governance group will be asked to develop written action plans, including an explicit set of strategies for contributing to a positive campus climate and enhanced diversity. The proposed Office of Diversity and Equity would be available to assist in the development of diversity plans.

Every member of the college community has an important role to play as the campus undertakes this important endeavor. Working together, the faculty, staff, and students of Gadsden State can create a Total Learning Environment in which diversity is a core value of the campus culture.