

# The College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Vermont

---

## Commitment to Diversity

### What is the difference between affirmative action and diversity in the College of Arts and Sciences at UVM?

Affirmative action includes the activities that help us be an Equal Opportunity Employer, that is, an employer that gives applicants with substantially similar credentials and experience an equal opportunity of being hired irrespective of characteristics that federal and state governments have determined may not enter into employment decisions, e.g., race, religion, national origin, gender, age, disability, etc. The strategies historically included in affirmative action are designed specifically to *increase* the representation of women and minorities<sup>1</sup> in the workplace. Legally speaking, affirmative action is about demonstrating a good faith effort to increase those aforementioned categories, and move beyond them<sup>2</sup>.

However, there are some categories of work in which, for example, men rather than women are not represented in proportion to their availability in the pool of candidates with the requisite credentials, experience, and geographic mobility. In such cases, the appropriate response is to try to increase the representation of men. In every case, the aim is to strive for a workforce that reflects availability.

The College goals are twofold: 1) to increase the numbers of employees in every job category such that the resultant array of employees in those job categories reflects their availability and 2) to avoid discriminating against applicants from particular protected classes. It is our firm belief that if we strive to have as diverse a labor force as possible by making affirmative efforts to encourage all sorts of people to apply for positions for which they qualify, we will have achieved both goals. In fact, we seek a level of diversity far beyond that which would avoid any suggestion of discriminatory hiring and far beyond that which would signal affirmative action in the hiring of women and minorities. We seek the most diverse workforce possible.

### Why is diversity important?

Equal Opportunity addresses historical and contemporary inequities while affirmative action, by addressing the former and extending beyond it, fosters a culture of excellence by bringing different kinds of people together. The College of Arts and Sciences is committed to *both* outcomes because the College is committed to the kind of excellence that occurs when people from different backgrounds and perspectives work and play together, and when they create knowledge and learn together.

The College has taken a leadership role in the University because it is the largest unit on campus; what occurs in the College sets the tone for the University.

---

<sup>1</sup> The US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission measures minorities in racial/ ethnic terms and includes African Americans, Hispanics, Asian Americans, and Native Americans.

<sup>2</sup> This includes people with disabilities, older people, people with different economic class backgrounds, and other groups and classes of people who are not represented in the life of the College.

## What is the College's approach to diversity recruitment?

Our approach blends federally mandated Equal Opportunity measures with the College's own proven strategies for promoting diversity among different segments of the workforce. This involves collaborating with managers and search committees, The Office of Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity, and the Office of Human Resource Services to extend information about vacancies in the College to groups and communities where our representation is below workforce availability. It also involves the use of personal and professional networks to spread the word that UVM, Burlington, and Vermont are safe and congenial places for people to set down roots and thrive personally and professionally.

Together we look at our current workforce, identify gap areas, establish goals, design strategies, and monitor our effectiveness. This commitment targets both full-time and part-time faculty and staff. The College has provided financial and human resources to departments to implement effective recruitment plans that will insure diverse applicant pools and translate those into diverse interview pools and hiring outcomes that accord with the College's culture of excellence through diversity. The College has an Associate Dean whose job description includes monitoring the College's effort in this regard. The Dean of the College accepts responsibility for implementing these efforts college-wide and is held accountable by the Provost and the President of UVM for achieving successful outcomes.

## Where do we stand?

In most universities, great diversity can be found at the lower levels of the organization, especially in service occupations, but diversity in the higher ranks is hard to achieve.

At UVM and in the College of Arts and Sciences, neither is true.

## A Snapshot of the College with Respect to Diversity

%	National	Burlington*	UVM Faculty	CAS Faculty	UVM Staff & Admin	CAS Staff & Admin
White	79.8%	92.3%	83.4%	79%	87.7%	85.9%
African A.	12.8%	1.8%	2.1%	3.3%	1.8%	1.5%
Hispanic	15.4%	1.4%	2%	5%	1.2%	2.2%
Am. Ind.	1%	0.5%	0.5%	1%	0.6%	0
Asian Am.	4.5%	2.7%	4.8%	4.8%	4.1%	0.7%
Non Resident Alien	11.1%	8.1%	4.5%	4.3%	2.8%	6.7%
Women	50.7%	51.7%	40.9%	43%	63.5%	65.9%
Men	49.3%	48.3%	59.1%	57%	36.5%	34.1%

*Table 1: Comparison of US minorities, gender, and non resident aliens (Based on 2008 data from UVM Office of Institutional Studies & 2008/2000 (\*) data from US Census Bureau.*

Because we can see from Table 1 that we still have a significant amount of work to do with respect to improving the representation of U.S. ethnic/racial minorities in our collective ranks, we have a compelling reason to focus on affirmative recruitment and equal opportunity when we think about

diversity in the College. However, that does not preclude us from making decisions to extend beyond those categories.

Our ultimate goal is to reach ratios within the College of Arts and Sciences that reflect national availability. At the same time we know that some hiring is necessarily local or regional, and availability within particular job categories may vary dramatically when recruitment is regional or local. However, there is good reason to believe that local and regional recruitment pools are often more diverse than is usually assumed. The College takes responsibility for providing search committees with up-to-date information on availability whether it is local, national or international.

### **Faculty: How are we doing and what are we doing to achieve our goals?**

In the past three years, we have seen an increase in the representation of women in our applicant and interview pools. Over the same time period, we have seen a very slight increase in the overall percentage of applicants who are from underrepresented ethnic and racial groups, but a somewhat better increase in underrepresented ethnic and racial groups in our interview and hiring pools. While there has been an increase in the number of faculty from underrepresented ethnic and racialized groups who have been hired, there has been a less impressive increase in the retention rate of faculty from these groups. The College and University need to address barriers to the retention of underrepresented ethnic/racial groups. Adequate monitoring of job performance and attention to barriers to meeting performance standards are critical, as are proactive efforts to support new employees as they try to adjust to new work and a new community. Strategies for formal monitoring and mentoring are in place. What is often critical, however, and a bit more challenging to achieve, is the establishment of informal networks of support. The College is actively working on this by creating opportunities for informal sociability.

The College of Arts and Sciences is more diverse than the University of Vermont as a whole with the bulk of racially and ethnically diverse faculty working in the College of Arts and Sciences. However, the College and the University are almost identical with respect to gender diversity.

In addition, it is true that the College's faculty is more diverse than the surrounding community. However, 70% of our students are from out of state and most of our students will end up working in other parts of the country and other parts of the world, where likely their educational preparation will, in part, be dependent on their ability to think through and across differences. The worth of a degree from the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Vermont will be measured in these terms in the future.

In addition to advertising tenure-track faculty and full-time lecturer positions widely and in specialty outlets that cater to particular target audiences, the College of Arts and Sciences has made funding available to all departments to enable faculty to attend national meetings with the explicit goal of seeking out talented graduate students from underrepresented groups who might not otherwise think of UVM as an employment option. These funds are available whether or not departments are actively recruiting in a given year. The goal is to make personal connections and provide information about the university, the college and the community as a way of creating a pipeline of candidates for future recruitment activities. This has proved a very successful strategy. However, it is dependent upon exploiting disciplinary venues. As UVM moves toward more transdisciplinary hiring, this strategy will

need to be expanded and will require additional funding—funding CAS is determined to provide. Another issue that will affect the ability of the College to diversify is the current and likely future decline in hiring and turnover. The precipitous decline in turnover during the past year is the result of the severe recession that is affecting the whole country. The decline in likely hiring comes from a different source.

Over the past few years, UVM and the College have seen a very significant increase in hiring, especially faculty hiring, with UVM's deliberate strategy to increase the number of undergraduates and to add faculty. The number of faculty hired has ranged from a low of 9 being recruited in 2009-10 to a high of 27 who were recruited in 2008-09. There have also been several waves of retirements in response to attractive retirement packages offered by UVM. In contrast, the level of faculty recruitment in the future—while difficult to predict—probably won't exceed 10-12 tenure-track faculty members per year. Recruitment of staff is also likely to be curtailed as long as the effect of the recession is being felt. A guess, and it is only a guess, is that the College will recruit fewer than 20 full-time and part-time staff per year for the next few years.

### **Support/Administrative Staff: How are we doing and what are we doing to achieve our goals?**

Since Fall 08 the College of Arts and Sciences has worked closely with departments to insure that support/administrative staff hiring, retention, and promotion accord with the College's commitment to diversity. To this end, College staff as well as the Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity work with departments to insure that position announcements reach a thorough cross-section of Burlington and the surrounding communities.

- **Isn't Burlington in a non-diverse part of the country?**

Not necessarily. Burlington had long been ethnically and racially homogeneous but that is rapidly changing: 25% of the city's high school students are now young people of color. Burlington is a refugee resettlement area and this also contributes mightily to the growing diversity of the area. In addition, Burlington is approximately 200 miles northwest of Boston, 300 miles north of New York City and 100 miles south of Montreal and is therefore easily reachable from some of the most diverse cities in North America. Although its population is only about 40,000, the city and its surrounding area contain more than 200,000 people and are home to a number of high-tech industries including IBM, as well as a major tertiary hospital offering excellent health facilities and services that draws from an increasingly global workforce.

The College of Arts and Sciences in the University of Vermont is also deeply connected to the political life of the state, a small state known nationally for its fierce tradition of political independence and its commitment to tolerance. The role of UVM in that tradition cannot be underestimated. It is a tradition that should make UVM an attractive place for prospective employees to consider when investigating institutions within which to build careers.

- **Why doesn't UVM's and the College's staff population mirror that of the local area and what is being done to address this challenge?**

Our employment process is not viewed by external applicants as being transparent and accessible. We are addressing this perception by noticing openings with every community group that might have access to potential applicants and advertising widely in a myriad of venues. We also recognize the need to

foster a culture that is supportive of new hires from our underrepresented groups once they accept a position in the College. The barriers to creating a diverse staff that includes US ethnic and racial minorities in the College are similar to those that impede the diversifying of the faculty, but barriers to staff recruitment also present their own distinctive challenges. In addition, the current downturn in the economy means that there are fewer new positions being created and less turnover of current staff.

### **What is the hiring manager's role in affirmative recruitment?**

Hiring managers are responsible for ensuring that they have engaged in a proactive, legally compliant, and good faith effort to diversify the College's workforce. This can be accomplished by:

- Partnering with the College and the AA/EO office to both understand the University's and their unit's diverse representation and what proactive outreach measures can be taken to enhance diversity in applicant, interview, and hire pools.
- Engaging in discussions about recruitment best practices.
- Ensuring that position descriptions reflect the true requirements for the role and thinking broadly about how the language of position descriptions might aid recruitment efforts and outcomes.
- Documenting strategies that are more or less successful.

### **Recruitment Policies**

- Faculty recruitment policies are listed here:

<http://www.uvm.edu/artsandsciences/forchairs/?Page=newfacdefault.html>

- Staff recruitment policies are listed here:

<http://www.uvm.edu/artsandsciences/forchairs/?Page=staffrecdefault.html>