

## **A COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY**

*excerpt from 2008-2009 Student and Campus Life Annual Report*  
7/2/09

Advancing diversity and multicultural competence are among the core values for the Division of Student and Campus life at the University of Vermont. We believe that in order to adequately serve, and promote a safe and healthy community for people of all races, religions, national origins, socio-economic classes, gender identities and expressions, sexual orientations, physical and learning abilities, and ages, we must actively work to become a multiculturally: inclusive, affirming, and competent division. To achieve this vision, we continued throughout 2008-2009 with our:

- Division-wide professional development series;
- Widespread involvement on the President's Commissions;
- Close collaborations with divisions, departments, and colleagues across the university to promote and advocate for a more diverse, multiculturally competent, and inclusive climate; and
- Contributions to the national dialogue on diversity and multicultural competence.

### **Diversity Professional Development Series**

In an effort to push our diversity work to the next level, our Division made significant revisions to the content and format of the diversity training series in 2008-2009. These changes were based on the recommendations from an ad hoc advisory group representing the offices that participate in the series and the staff positions throughout the Division. Changes to the series were also informed by the feedback gathered at the end of the 2007-2008 diversity series.

The Division continued our work with Jamie Washington, a nationally recognized diversity trainer, who helped us to integrate the following core diversity concepts:

- Diverse Community Foundations,
- Path to Competence,
- Multicultural Change Process,
- Breadth of Awareness,
- Tracking,
- Power and Privilege, and
- Cycle of Oppression and Breaking the Cycle.

Throughout the academic year, we also began a new collaboration with a team of facilitators from Class Action to explore:

- Concepts such as class, classism, class groupings within the United States;
- Assumptions about addressing classism;
- Economic, cultural, and social capital;
- Ally and anti-classist behavior and attitudes; and
- How class and classism is manifested at the University of Vermont.

The Division also made substantial changes to the format of the diversity series through the creation of four cohort groups and the formation of Study Circle groups. Each cohort group was comprised of approximately 50 staff from each department, and represented varied identities and a mix of staff positions and roles. Within the cohort groups were several Study Circle groups that were designed to give series participants a smaller setting with which to engage in the series content more intensely. These format changes were well received. In the upcoming year, attention will be given to providing more support and structure around the Study Circles.

### **Collaboration Across the University**

Staff throughout the Division continued to support university-wide awareness and advocacy through membership and leadership on each of the Presidential Commissions. Our Division's involvement included representation on the following commissions:

- Diversity and Inclusion;
- Racial Diversity;
- Status of Women;
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Equity; and
- Social Change.

In addition to our work with the Presidential Commissions, our Division also worked closely with offices and colleagues throughout the university, such as the Diversity and Equity Unit and the Higher Education and Student Affairs program to advance the values of an inclusive and affirming institutional environment through ongoing collaboration, recruitment, student support, and other initiatives.

### **National Contributions to Advancing Diversity and Multicultural Competence**

The sharing of the Division's ongoing and cutting edge work around diversity and multicultural competence was enthusiastically encouraged by the National Association of Student Personnel Administration and the American College Personnel Association. At their respective annual conventions, two sessions on "Innovative Strategies and Tools for Assessing Multicultural Competence in Student Affairs Organizations" were presented by staff in the Division.

### **Looking Ahead**

The Division continues to build on our past successes and ever increasing momentum around diversity and multicultural competence. Over the course of a decade, the Division has developed a vision and numerous strategies to ensure that we continue to move forward in advancing diversity and multicultural competence. As the Division continues to move forward in 2009-2010, we will take a broad and deep look at the components (e.g., strategic planning, professional development, evaluation) of our work around diversity and multicultural competence to ensure that these components cohesively support and challenge our work.