

**Diversity Recruitment Plan**  
**The Rubenstein School of Environment and Natural Resources**  
**August 2012 – May 2013**

**Introduction**

The faculty, staff and students of The Rubenstein School of Environment and Natural Resources are committed to expanding our own understanding and appreciation of diversity issues and engendering in ourselves, our colleagues, and our students the strength to listen to and respect voices and ideas different from our own. Because environmental and natural resource problems are thoroughly intertwined with issues of equity and social justice, we need to aggressively expand our environmental agenda to include the pressing concerns of diverse peoples.

The environmental and natural resource disciplines and professions have been conspicuously underrepresented by both individuals and perspectives that reflect all peoples of the nation and the world. We recognize that enhancing diversity in our school, university, and professions entails much more than simply recruiting people of color. As we strive to create an inclusive, equitable, and truly pluralistic perspective for natural resources, we must be willing to change what we teach and how we teach, incorporating diverse ideas and values into our curriculum. We seek to provide a community atmosphere that celebrates diversity and respect, promotes learning, and encourages understanding, integrity, and justice.

The fields of environment and natural resources are overwhelmed with critical issues. Overpopulation, globalization, resource depletion, and climate change all threaten human societies and natural systems with an urgency that demands our attention. In this context, both the content and the personalization of human diversity as a key element of the environment need to be seamlessly integrated into the discourse around identifying problems and finding solutions. Diversity can not be seen as another issue competing for attention among a growing suite of critical issues.

In addition to outlining RSENR's recruitment efforts and procedures, this document will highlight current programs and initiatives within the Rubenstein School that address in multiple ways the suggestions outlined in the resource document "Workforce Diversity Recruitment and Retention Best Practices" (2012) provided by the Office of the Provost. Our efforts are due to the sustained commitment of our Dean's Office as well as leaders among the faculty, staff, and students in our community. There still much work to be done.

**Recruitment Efforts and Procedures**

The Rubenstein School of the Environment and Natural Resources makes a concerted effort to go above and beyond the required the Affirmative Action procedures when hiring new faculty and staff. Our processes include:

For Tenure-Track Faculty, the process is as follows:

1. The Dean will appoint a search committee that includes broad representation and a diverse mix of faculty, staff and students that is balanced with respect to diversity. At

least one member of the search committee will be from outside the Rubenstein School. The Dean will charge the Search Committee. In presenting this charge, the Dean will review the RSENR Diversity Plan, the importance of creating a diverse pool of candidates, and a clear set of expectations concerning the search plan. The evaluation criteria listed in the search plan will include a commitment to diversity and demonstrated record of activity in this area.

2. The Committee will create a Search Plan that is reviewed by the Dean. The Search Plan will outline the goals of the search, a recruitment strategy that is aggressively affirmative, and an interview plan that is equitable and proactively includes opportunities to experience the cultural environment on campus (i.e. meetings with members of the RSENR Diversity Task Force, ALANA Student Center, Diversity and Equity Unit).
3. The Dean will review the list of finalists selected for on-campus interviews. The justification for selection as a finalist must specifically address diversity concerns.
4. As standard interview protocol, each finalist will meet with members of the RSENR Diversity Task Force (DTF). During the 2008 Dean search, the Diversity Task Force developed an interview workbook to guide questions regarding diversity. These questions address funding for diversity initiatives, curriculum, collaboration with other units on campus, and recruitment efforts for faculty, staff, and students. This workbook will also be used to help guide interview questions for future recruitment opportunities (Appendix 1). Upon meeting with each finalist, the RSENR DTF will formally submit its feedback to the Search Committee.

Anecdotally, during recent searches candidates of diverse backgrounds have expressed appreciation for the existence of the DTF and the opportunity to discuss diversity issues.

5. Feedback from all parts of the RSENR and campus community will be solicited by the search committee.
6. The final report of the committee must include a discussion of how each finalist demonstrated commitment to diversity appropriate to the position.

For Classified Staff, the process is as follows:

1. The supervisor will prepare a search plan and submit it to the Dean for approval. For senior administrative positions, a search committee that includes broad representation and a diverse mix of faculty, staff and students that is balanced with respect to diversity would be created.
2. The Search Plan will outline the goals of the search, a recruitment strategy that is aggressively affirmative, and an interview plan that is equitable and proactively includes opportunities to experience the cultural environment on campus as appropriate to the job.
3. The final report of the committee must include a discussion of how each finalist demonstrated commitment to diversity appropriate to the position.

## For Non-Tenured Faculty

In the Rubenstein School, there are basically two types of recruitment for non-tenure-track faculty:

1. Research Faculty: Our recruitment of Research Faculty who are partially funded with general fund resources or are expected to be long-term in nature will follow the same process as tenure track faculty. Short-term Research Faculty will be appointed based on a target of opportunity hire and will require in-coming research funding with their appointment.
2. Lecturers: Lecturers hired with general fund long-term resources will follow the same process as classified staff. We frequently use opportunity hires to fill short term teaching assignments for sabbatical and other faculty coverage. In all cases, we do strive to consider diversity when making these decisions.

We have made it a goal to aggressively reach out to generate a diverse pool of candidates. We have developed a database of over one hundred diversity-related organizations where available job postings can be listed (Appendix 2). We strive to write job postings that will enable candidates with diverse backgrounds to be considered and then aggressively seek diversity regardless of category of the position. We consult with the UVM Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity office to help craft position announcements and descriptions that reach wider audiences in order to create a larger and more diverse pool of applicants.

## **Faculty and Staff Recruitment FY 2007 to FY 2011**

During **FY09** we had the opportunity to recruit a new Dean. The Dean appointment was an internal search charged by the Provost. The RSENR Diversity Task Force met with the Dean Search Committee Chair, the search committee, and each candidate to review the Diversity Plan and discuss the importance of diversity in The Rubenstein School. Six internal applicants were interviewed and two finalists provided their vision for the School. Diversity issues were addressed by both finalists.

From **FY07 to FY11** we had seven faculty searches. Please see Appendix 3 for the demographic data on each of these faculty searches. Below are the hiring outcomes:

### 2011

Assistant Professor (Tenure Track) – Climate Science & Adaption

Hired: White Female

Associate Professor (Tenure Track) – Aquatic Ecology & Lake Studies

Hired: White Male

Professor (Tenure Track) – Director of Gund Institute

Hired: White Male

### 2009

Assistant Professor (Tenure Track) – Wildlife & Fisheries Biology

Hired: White Male

Assistant Professor (Tenure Track) – Atmospheric & Climate Science

Hired: White Male

2007

Research Assistant Professor – Forest Health (join with US Forest Service)

Hired: White Female

2006

Assistant Professor (Tenure Track) – Atmospheric Sciences

Hired: White Female

These faculty positions were posted in several journals and websites including:

- Burlington Business & Professional Women
- Institute for Tribal Environmental Professionals
- Minorities in Agricultural, Natural Resources, and Related Science
- Plattsburgh State University Career Development Office
- Professional Women of Color
- Society for Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science
- Women in Natural Resources
- Journal of Blacks in Higher Education
- Latinos in Higher Education

In addition, these positions were advertised through professional organizations & societies relevant to the specific discipline and current RSENr faculty were asked to reach out to their professional networks.

2010

Assistant to the Associate Dean (Target of Opportunity hire)

Hired: African American Female

Assistant Dean for Student Services and Staff Development.

Hired: Asian American Female

Career Services Coordinator

Hired: White Female

### **Diversity Recruitment Strategies That Have Led to Success**

The Rubenstein School developed The Diversity Task Force in 1991. It is a volunteer group of faculty, staff, and students who are committed to issues of diversity. This group is active in developing diversity curriculum, hosting diversity events, and addressing many other diversity issues on campus. Most relevant to hiring processes, this group updates The Rubenstein School Diversity Plan and meets with search committees whenever a position becomes available in the school. As mentioned previously, they also developed an interview workbook to guide questions regarding diversity which can be used to help guide interview questions for future recruitment opportunities.

The Rubenstein School maintains a diversity webpage which demonstrates our commitment to diversity to a wider audience, including potential recruitments. The webpage provides information about the Diversity Plan, the Diversity Task Force, diversity curriculum, multicultural scholars and fellowships, and the Rubenstein community.

In order to create a supportive environment for diverse people, the faculty and staff of The Rubenstein School work with the University of Vermont ALANA Student Center and the University Center for Cultural Pluralism. These organizations provide guidance on issues of racial awareness. We have also had several people serve on the President's Commission of Racial Diversity.

The faculty and staff of The Rubenstein School also attend many conferences and workshops to network with the multicultural interest groups, and to meet and establish relationships with future potential faculty or staff candidates. Representatives have attended meetings such as the Minorities in Agricultural, Natural Resources, and Related Science Annual Conference, a "Faculty Diversity and Environmental Justice Research Symposium" hosted by the Minority Environmental Leadership Development Initiative, and the USDA CSREES Multicultural Scholars Program/National Needs Fellowship Program National Workshop.

### **Current Composition of the Unit's Workforce**

The Rubenstein School has 84 personnel currently

- 26 Tenure/Tenure Track Faculty
- 11 Research Faculty
- 6 Lecturers
- 19 Admin Staff
- 18 Research Staff
- 4 Post Docs.

Of these 84 employees, 5 employees (6%) represent communities of color.

### Challenges

The President's Commission on Racial Diversity produced a report in 2008 which discussed challenges unique to The University of Vermont:

1. Our pay scale is not competitive with other institutions.
2. Deans are not permitted to see exit-interviews from faculty or staff members who have left the institution. These interviews could contain important information about why diverse faculty and staff members chose to leave the university.
3. The private sector seems to appear more attractive to some diverse candidates.
4. We lack funding to bring in diverse visiting professors and scholars.

The following challenges are specific to RSENR:

1. There are not a lot of opportunities to increase diversity for tenure-track positions. We have only had the opportunity to recruit for a very few tenure track positions.
2. The applicant pool is small. According to the NSF Science and Engineering Doctorate Awards Report, only 11% of doctorates the field of Agricultural Science (including agriculture, forestry, food, animal husbandry, wildlife, and conservation) were earned by people representing communities of color.
3. Similar to other units at UVM, we are seeking diverse candidates for a predominantly white institution in a predominantly white state.
4. Some faculty and staff are unaware of all of the diversity resources and best-practices available.

### **Retention: Opportunities, Programs, & Initiatives**

1. RSENR already has a long-established community of faculty, staff, and students with demonstrated commitment and actions via The Diversity Task Force, curricular transformation NR6 Race & Culture in Natural Resources, PhD cross-cultural requirements, and the USDA Multicultural Scholars.
2. Created in 1991, **The Rubenstein School Diversity Task Force (DTF)** is a volunteer group of faculty, staff, and students who are committed to issues of diversity. The DTF generates and contributes to the development of ideas for diversity initiatives in curricular and other programming in The Rubenstein School. Although we recognize that it is the responsibility of all faculty, staff and students to work toward these goals, The Rubenstein School Diversity Task Force serves as a conscience for the community to assure that diversity issues remain consistently on the School's active agenda.
3. **Curricular Transformation** -- The UVM-wide diversity requirement includes completion of 6 credits of race and culture course work. For Rubenstein School students, this begins with the 2-credit course, NR 6 Race and Culture in the Natural Resources. NR 6 features speakers who address aspects of diversity as they relate to natural resources. Involvement of faculty (including the Dean and Associate Dean), staff, and graduate students as facilitators has been a key transformational strategy. In 2009-10, co-facilitators included staff from LGBTQ Services and Center for Student Ethics & Standards.

The capstone 1-credit course for seniors, NR207 Power and Privilege in Life & Work, is designed to provide seniors with the opportunity to contemplate and understand in a deep and empathetic manner aspects of power, privilege, and injustice in society and its implications to environmental fields and their own personal experiences.

4. We are contributing to increasing the applicant pool by recruiting and retaining students who represent communities of color. In the past 10 years the number of RSENR undergraduate students who represent communities of color has increased from 11 to 56. Our faculty also obtained 40 diversity grants totaling nearly \$1.7 million between 1989 and 2012. This includes funding to support outreach, programming, and scholarships for students at the B.S., M.S., and Ph.D. levels.

5. In Fall 2012 we will implement a new mentoring program that will connect undergraduate students to graduate student mentors. As part of this initiative, we are hosting a 2<sup>nd</sup> year graduate student from the UVM Higher Education and Student Affairs program to mentor a cohort of first-time, first year students of color with the goal of supporting these RSENR students as they transition in their first semester and effectively connecting these undergraduates to RSEBR faculty, staff, and graduate students.
6. We have established relationships with diverse organizations/institutions, such as The Nature Conservancy, which can lead to partnerships and potential recruitments.
7. We have established a protocol regarding diversity recruitment that has been implemented in all faculty and staff searches since August 2009.
8. We provide continued opportunities for education on diversity topics. In 2011, The RSENR Dean's Office co-sponsored the Dean's Breakfast Roundtable during Blackboard Jungle 5, "Challenges Faced by Women and People of Color in Leadership Roles in Engineering, Business, Academic and the Public Sector"  
  
RSENR faculty and staff delivered two of the four workshops offered during Blackboard Jungle 5 Professional Development Week:  
  
"Cultural Competency in Service-Learning Classes: Preparing Students for Community Based Experiences"  
  
"Creating the Conditions for Dialogue Across Difference"
9. RSENR sponsored a team at the 2009 AAC&U (Association of American Colleges & Universities) Greater Expectations Institute on "Leadership to Make Excellence Inclusive" resulting in an UVM/RSENR Action Plan with a series of goals including: diversity learning outcomes for students; creation of faculty & staff diversity development plans; activities for community building and emergent learning; and communication strategies.
10. We partner with offices across campus such as the Office of Affirmative Action, the Center for Cultural Pluralism, the ALANA Coalition, and the ALANA Student Center.
11. The new Assistant Dean for Student Services & Staff Development will revise the annual staff review process to encourage/support/evaluate diversity commitment, effort, and progress

### **Average Annual Hiring Activity**

The Rubenstein School has recruited for 17 employees since 2007, which averages out to approximately 3.4 opportunities to increase diversity each year. In the past five years, we recruited for following positions: assistant professor, associate professor, facilities staff, administrative and student services professionals, lecturer, Dean, Associate Dean, Director, office/program support generalists, laboratory/research technicians

## **Discussion on Challenges and Opportunities**

The 2010 RSENr Diversity Recruitment plan listed ambitious goals for increasing the diversity of our faculty and staff. It has been a challenge to meet these goals. During the Spring 2012 semester the Diversity Task Force discussed diversity recruitment and retention. We agreed that the DTF should initiate a community-wide dialogue focused on the following actions:

- Regularly review UVM Workforce Diversity Recruitment and Retention Best Practices and integrate these practices into RSENr policy
- Create and implement a process whereby faculty and staff may review and provide input to our evolving plan.
- Future iterations of our plan will include sections on:
  - Maximizing professional networks
  - Updated resources, such as lists of professional organizations and professional contacts to which Search committees can send announcements.
  - A "How To..." on the logistics of the Search process

In April 2011 a group of faculty, including those recently hired, met to discuss RSENr recruitment and retention efforts. We recognize that no plan can be truly effective without ongoing dialogue among community members who must implement these practices.

In order to create job postings that appeal to a wider range of applicants we will change the language of these postings to better represent the RSENr goal to welcome a more diverse applicant pool. This language will reflect RSENr diversifying the environmental movement through full inclusion of the unique and valuable perspectives reflected by diverse peoples, especially as the demographics of the United States are rapidly changing. In our postings we will also include information regarding support networks in the RSENr, UVM, and Burlington community.

RSENr faculty and staff members are strongly encouraged to connect with professional organizations that work with people of color to determine recruitment opportunities for faculty and staff of color. In addition, they attend conferences to network with the multicultural interest groups, and to meet and establish relationships with future potential faculty or staff candidates.

As a School we will be more attentive to the timing for faculty hires. A longer recruitment window will allow us to maximize our professional connections to hopefully reach out to a broader demographic of applicants. We will need to work harder to build relationships with people who live and work beyond our traditional networks.

There should be a broader and sustained dialogue among faculty and staff as to the value and importance of this diversity work, dialogue that goes well beyond those who are regularly engaged in the recruitment process. This sustained dialogue will serve to create a culture that will better retain faculty and staff of diverse cultural backgrounds as well as attract others to our community.

**References:**

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