



## *University of Vermont Workforce Diversity Recruitment and Retention Best Practices*

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### **Introduction**

Diversity is fundamental to everything we do at the University of Vermont (UVM). It is more than a numeric representation, a benefit, or an institutional asset; it is key to the University of Vermont's success. We believe that diversity and excellence are inseparable. As stated in the UVM's *Why Diversity Statement*, "...A diverse UVM community is a compelling institutional interest that is indispensable to achieving our goal of academic excellence" [http://www.uvm.edu/~aaeo/pages.php?id=statements-why\\_diversity](http://www.uvm.edu/~aaeo/pages.php?id=statements-why_diversity). Thus, it is essential to achieve a diverse workforce if our goals of excellence are to be realized. In an effort to realize the affirmative action and equal opportunity recruitment and retention workforce goals established at the University of Vermont (UVM), the Associate Provost for Multicultural Affairs and Academic initiatives on behalf of the Provost's Office created the Workforce Diversity Recruitment and Retention Best Practice Document (BPD) in 2010. The initial purpose of the BPD in 2010 was to help senior academic and administrative leaders move from theoretical discussions about diversity planning to the implementation of concrete diversity strategies and initiatives.

Since the implementation of the BPD in 2010, the efforts utilized by some of UVM's Colleges, Schools, and Divisions have made considerable strides toward establishing an infrastructure to facilitate an effective equal opportunity and affirmative action recruitment process. Currently in 2012, the purpose of the document has expanded to support not just workforce recruitment and retention, but to provide more comprehensive guidelines for developing strategies and programs. These strategies and programs will advance numerical diversity and build a culture of excellence that is grounded in principles of equity and social justice. In turn, this culture of excellence will fundamentally affirm the multiple identities, perspectives, knowledge and cultural practices of individuals and communities. In addition, a continually updated BPD is also necessary to identify and challenge attitudes, behaviors, and practices that create barriers to the meaningful participation of every individual in UVM's community and larger society. This updated 2012 Framework helps UVM begin the next phase of achieving its diversity potential.

### **Why is Diversity Important to the University of Vermont?**

Our communities and universities are changing rapidly. Populations underrepresented in organizations and institutions comprise an integral and valuable part of our workforce. The need to create institutions of higher education receptive to diversity is greater than ever. UVM's Board of Trustees and senior leadership have repeatedly voiced their strong beliefs that diversity and excellence are inseparable.



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While our institution advocated for and implemented a number of diversity policies and practices over the past 20 years, there is more to do. Creating an environment that welcomes and includes all members of our community remains an important goal. The vision to be among the nation's premier small research universities can only be achieved if UVM builds a diverse and globally aware university community sustained by an inclusive, supportive, and socially just campus climate.

### **Defining Diversity at the University of Vermont**

The University of Vermont (UVM) is committed to ensuring Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity compliance and the institution's priorities for inclusiveness.

"Diversity" at UVM refers to race, ethnicity, gender, age, differing abilities, sexual orientation, gender expression, nationality, veterans, socio-economic status, religion, and political status. Diversity in today's global world requires more than a view focused solely on our capacity to increase the number of diverse students, staff, faculty and administrators on our campus. It requires a transformation of campus culture so that everyone feels included. Our capacity as a community is to ensure that everyone feels a sense of inclusion, and enhancing our success at retaining diverse members of our campus community requires bold action. Only then can we achieve the diversity goals necessary in today's higher education environment.

### **Building an Inclusive Campus Climate**

A respectful, inclusive, and welcoming campus climate is the ground on which a truly equitable and diverse institution flourishes. Too often, however, the responsibility for creating such a climate falls on the shoulders of the very people for whom the absence of such a climate has been a defining experience. A transformed University takes sole responsibility for diversity work and minimizes the burden on individuals to advance diversity goals, particularly those from marginalized and under-represented populations and cultures.

Creating an excellent campus climate ranks high among our priorities for achieving our University diversity goals. All campus community members contribute to and are affected by campus climate (Rankin, 1998), and institutional climate is directly associated with academic and professional outcomes; when individuals feel valued, they are more productive. Hurtado et al. (1998) categorizes an institution's diversity climate into four dimensions: *historical legacy* (inclusion or exclusion of various racial or ethnic groups), its *psychological climate* (perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes about diversity), its *behavioral climate* (how different groups interact on campus), and its *structural diversity* (numerical and proportional representation of diverse groups on campus). If campus community members feel a sense of belonging along these four dimensions, their experiences will result in or contribute to a positive campus climate.



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In a climate of respect and inclusivity, both individuals and the institution are expected to assume responsibility: individuals are encouraged to realize their potential and succeed; diverse identities are honestly and courageously affirmed; and the infrastructure supports the success of anyone and everyone who strives for success within its parameters.

### **Institutional Leadership**

Organizational change occurs when leaders are truly committed to change and when they challenge prevailing orthodoxies and model new modes of thought and action. This is especially true in equity and diversity work. As the publication *Now is the Time: Meeting the Challenge for a Diverse Academy* notes, “Transforming an institution truly happens from the inside out, as leaders anchor change in their own behavior and mirror the diversity commitment to the campus through their words and deeds.” AASCU/NASULGC Task Force on Diversity.

Nothing replaces strong and bold leadership when it comes to diversity initiatives. Changing traditional recruitment, retention, and cultural practices is difficult and requires leadership--specifically academic and administrative senior leaders--to clearly identify diversity goals and objectives, and stick to them in the face of criticism or resistance. Senior leadership must continually insist on changing the culture to support a diverse student body and workforce, and must fully understand why this culture change is necessary and important. Creating such a culture change means providing the commitment, resources, and credibility required to lead hiring officers and supervisors to change ways of operating that breed exclusion, favorite insiders, and thwart established and agreed upon diversity objectives. Without this level of leadership in diversity planning and implementation, efforts to meaningfully change recruitment and retention strategies are marginalized, and are limited in scope and effectiveness.

That said, we must recognize that transformational leadership is not tied to institutional hierarchies. If the University is to be transformed through its commitment to equity and diversity, leadership capacity must be developed throughout the organization. Equity and diversity efforts must be led not only by people with formal authority, but also by faculty, staff, students, and administrators at every level of operation and responsibility. Across all functions, classifications, departments, administrative units, and campuses, people must be encouraged to “lead from where they are,” and to be open to the myriad forms and expressions of leadership found in different communities.

### **Recruitment and Retention**

Diversity recruitment and retention plans are major tools for effecting lasting changes in the workplace. Meeting the diversity challenges for the recruitment and retention of a diverse workforce can be difficult because of systemic obstacles, lack of cultural knowledge, resistance to change, and acknowledged and unacknowledged intolerance. In



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the fall of 2009, the University's Interim Provost and Senior Vice President formally requested that senior academic and administrative leaders create initial diversity recruitment plans in response to the newly issued Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity's (AA/EO) guidelines. These plans were requested in light of the institution's lack of and/or inadequate actions in the past. The initial review of senior leadership's plans by the Interim Provost identified many successful best practices, but it also highlighted barriers to success that needed to be addressed.

Because best practices related to diversity recruitment are paramount to success, all University units must outline a plan for the diversification of their workforces in two ways. First, achieving diversity in protected classes (e.g., race and gender) should continue as a priority in alignment with federal affirmative action policy. Second, diversity should include a broader array of perspectives as reflected in UVM's *Why Diversity Statement* (e.g. age, differently abled, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, nationality, socio-economic status, religious and political status). Retention is an additional key component to the success of diversifying the institution's workforce. An intact retention effort creates and sustains the change that enables an inclusive and respectful workforce to flourish. Accordingly, we must create an environment where everyone feels appreciated and accepted. This environment supports diversity and fosters mutual respect, and in turn will improve retention levels of diverse members of our campus community.

### **Accountability and Progress**

Accountability and benchmarks to assess progress are also key components of creating and maintaining a diverse workforce. To achieve success in this area, university leadership is ultimately responsible, but every member of the campus community must be a part of helping to achieve institutional diversity goals. Accountability measures that promote equity and excellence, as reflected in the UVM mission, must be developed to ensure goals for diversity are met. In other words, we must establish comprehensive plans and best practices within the Colleges, Schools, and Divisions for the successful recruitment and retention of a diverse workforce at UVM.

The degree to which we all accept responsibility for successful diversity outcomes depends on our willingness to hold everyone (e.g., senior leadership, faculty, students and staff) accountable. Despite the training by the AA/EO Office and messages from senior leadership that diversity matters, it is important for each hiring official to "own" the goal of diversifying its applicant pools. Search committees must not only have the necessary experiences and skills, they must have the comfort level to do what is needed. Gaining comfort level to work toward diversifying our campus requires consistent support and accountability. To this end, we must examine and refine accountability data and practices, resist and dispute rationalizations, and remain diligent in our dedication toward the implementation of diversity objectives. Performance measurements can assist in



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translating diversity objectives into practice. But it is our values, attitudes, and fundamental beliefs in the benefits of creating a diverse campus that will lead to progress.

### **UVM Institutional Strategies**

In addressing UVM's institutional diversity goals, it is important for all Colleges, Schools and Divisions to develop a shared set of institution strategies and foci to serve as a foundation for the individual approaches required by the specific needs of the various disciplines. In an effort to support the University's diversity goals, a subgroup of faculty, deans, and business managers helped to review best practices currently used to recruit and retain a diverse workforce. The outline of those best practices provides examples of current strategies (**See Best Practice List Below**).

This is not an exhaustive list of all diversity best practices within the University, but is a resource for hiring officials striving to create diversity plans and initiatives that complement UVM's priorities. The foundation provided within this document can assist hiring officials in recruiting candidates in relation to organizational culture and goals. In addition, the document outlines diversity recruitment and retention strategies that purposefully avoid outcomes that counter UVM's commitment to diversity.

The success of a diversity recruitment and retention plan, however, is best measured in leadership's ability to translate the written document into strategies and actions. To create the greatest possibility for success, this document both encourages diversity recruitment and retention plan development, and highlights key elements to measure effectiveness. By presenting and applying the best practices submitted by the various University units and adapting best practices from other institutions, the actions outlined in this document support our collective efforts toward diversity. Based on this initial work, and in concert with the ideas in this document, it is strongly recommended that all of UVM's Colleges, Schools, and Divisions have recruitment and retention plans to be implemented by hiring officials in accordance with UVM's mission and equal opportunity and affirmative action guidelines. These plans will serve as instructional guides for each unit to use in the formation and preparation of search committees that support successful and diverse recruitment and retention of faculty, staff, and administrators, as well as to support a climate that is inclusive and welcoming. Each plan should address the following areas:

- A description of the steps that leadership will take to implement a plan;
- An update of the information submitted in the prior plans;
- The current composition of a unit's workforce relative to diversity;
- A description of the average annual hiring activity;
- A description of the specific strategies that have led to success in recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce;



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- A list of the actions taken to create a climate and culture supporting the retention of a diverse workforce;
- The accountability and progress benchmarks established to achieve diversity goals; and
- A discussion of the challenges and opportunities to diversification, and proposed strategies to address both.

### **Conclusion**

Diversity is a necessary condition for excellence. Factors such as the need to provide current employees with promotional opportunities are also important. However, it is essential that the implications for diversity and other worthy goals be given careful consideration in each personnel decision. Hiring officials and search committees will need to foster an atmosphere of honest and conscientious consultation with the AA/EO Office on these important matters. Therefore, it is the expectation that full and open searches are done. When there are exceptional circumstances that require other recruitment options to be considered, the AA/EO Office must approve any recruitment target of opportunity requests for all positions at the University. Under no circumstances will a request to waive a posting be considered by the AA/EO office without the appropriate Vice President or his/her designee's written request that addresses the exceptions.

Diversifying a workforce requires individuals and entities within an institution to work together. A strong commitment to excellence and accountability is needed at all levels to achieve the diversity goals outlined in the University's mission. Integrating diversity with UVM's educational quality efforts, academic mission, and institutional functioning is a multi-layered process and product. By focusing on establishing leadership for these efforts at the executive level and devising specific plans for the achievement of goals, it is possible to realize our recruitment, retention, and climate workforce goals at the University of Vermont. Below are best practices that help UVM continue its efforts and move closer to its diversity and multicultural goals that apply to all searches regardless of the level.

### ***Institution-Wide Diversity Best Practices:***

- Implement and adhere to a Diversity Recruitment and Retention Plan that addresses all positions within the College, School, or Division.
- Identify a recruitment and retention manager in your College, School or Division to work with the AA/EO Office, each search committee and/or hiring official to help implement, infuse and monitor diversity progress.
- Network to build a deep and viable diverse pool of applicants.



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- Infuse diversity in all efforts such as meetings, evaluations, programs, documents, speeches, policies, orientations, and websites.
- Communicate the importance of diversity and how it is connected to the University's mission, unit goals, and strategic priorities.
- Implement College, School or Division assessment measures to evaluate the effectiveness and progress of recruitments, programs, training, and activities.
- Encourage and support the participation and creation of academic, cultural, and social activities that connect traditionally underrepresented individuals to the institution at large.
- Offer annual diversity training opportunities for those charged with the implementation of diversity goals and initiatives (e.g. cultural competency and compliance).
- Make attendance at annual diversity professional development part of annual reviews at all levels.
- Participate in the George Washington Henderson Pre/Post-Doctoral Fellowship Program.
- Diversify the senior leadership.

### *Recruitment Best Practices:*

- Require all search committee members and hiring officials to participate in AA/EO educational recruitment and retention session.
- **Networking must happen**, contact existing professional and personal networks to announce positions, request additional contacts, ask for nominations, and speak with potential applicants.
- Conduct an assessment of current workforce diversity. (e.g., through data provided by the Office of AA/EO, HR and Institutional Research Offices, and where necessary, supplemented by a unit's own data).
- Develop diversity goals and networking strategies before positions are available. Consider "transferable skills and knowledge" in terms of position requirements. (e.g., allow the applicant pool to be as broad as possible to increase the likelihood of diverse applicants).
- Consider internal promotional or external target opportunities regarding diversity objectives. Develop a protocol on how to proceed if internal promotion or external target opportunities exist. Link these efforts to institutional diversity goals and objectives.
- Select a diverse search committee and provide both recruitment and retention educational sessions. (For faculty see Faculty Recruitment Search Committee Membership Guidelines).
- Develop job descriptions that use approved commitment to diversity language. (e.g., The University is especially interested in candidates who can contribute to the diversity and excellence of the academic community through their research,



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- teaching, and/or service. Applicants for all faculty, senior academic and administrative positions are required and staff positions are requested to include commentary in application materials on how they will further this goal).
- Weave diversity and multicultural-centered work throughout the basic and essential job responsibilities.
  - Advertise in both local and national arenas (e.g., newspapers, listservs, professional mailing lists, online journals, and internal entities and individuals). See AA/EO Diverse Local & National Resources List at: <http://www.uvm.edu/~aaeo/pages.php?id=recruitment>.
  - Consider a rolling application process and remove nonessential job qualifications from ads.
  - Develop a protocol for campus visits/post campus phone calls (e.g., meeting with other diverse employees or entities whose main functions are to assist diverse populations. All applicants brought to campus should be afforded the opportunity to meet constituencies they name).
  - Develop an oversight process for interviewing and hiring decisions at all levels.
  - Include diversity and multicultural competency in appropriate interview questions.
  - Provide unranked pros and cons of candidates to the hiring official, which gives the hiring official flexibility. This practice allows the hiring official flexibility in selecting a candidate that not only is deemed qualified for the position, but who also meets the unit's and institution's priorities regarding diversity.
  - Prepare University and surrounding community diversity resource information for prospective hires. See AA/EO Information Packet at:
  - <http://www.uvm.edu/~aaeo/pdf/InformationalPacket2011.pdf>
  - Target diversity recruitment firms and data banks for prospective hires and maintain a "warehouse" that includes historical recruitment data for future needs.

### ***Retention Best Practices:***

- Develop the cultural awareness and competence necessary to establish an institutional multicultural perspective. Encourage greater understanding between people who are culturally different.
- When possible consider cluster hires, it creates community and demonstrates commitment.
- Require all UVM employees to participate in professional development on affirmative action/equal opportunity (where appropriate) and cultural awareness development (AA/EO, CTL, WID, and CCP).
- Provide senior leadership with educational workshops and tools to manage a diverse workforce and environment.
- Develop strategies and incentives to encourage all employees to participate in diversity programs and events.



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- Provide strong mentorship for all faculty from the Deans' offices, department and program levels.
- Create an employee leadership institute for faculty, administration, and staff to create internal pipelines and promotional opportunities for diverse populations.
- Establish positive professional learning and working environments that value and support diversity as a means to meet individual and collective needs.
- Provide an environment that is safe from overt and covert biases that undermine UVM's commitment to diversity.
- Communicate expectations and provide needed resources to accomplish the diversity objectives as reflected in UVM's mission.
- Sponsor and promote on- and off-campus social and academic activities. Provide information for and develop contacts with community organizations.
- Actively showcase knowledge and skills that support diverse faculty, staff, and administrators as presenters and leaders in professional development, institution-wide committees, and diversity-oriented activities. This recommendation is not intended to put unnecessary burden on diverse employees, but to offer more opportunities and access, where desired.
- Reward diversity efforts and initiatives as a way that encourage innovation and participation as well as validates the institutional importance of these efforts.
- Host open campus forums to provide ongoing dialogue and learning (e.g., expand the Blackboard Jungle Symposium).
- Support attendance by faculty and appropriate administrators at conferences with a content focus on traditionally underrepresented groups.
- Regularly review all orientation programs to update and include diversity content.
- Support and develop academic curriculum, activities, and programs, which focus on multicultural education and diversity.

### ***Accountability and Progress Best Practices:***

- Conduct workforce and utilization analysis (AA/EO).
- Write diversity recruitment and retention plans.
- Monitor progress in transparent, visible and accessible ways.
- Evaluate and refine strategies annually. Conduct climate surveys and exit interviews to assess and monitor behavior and work and learning environments.
- Utilize annual and comprehensive performance reviews of faculty, staff and administrators to evaluate diversity commitment, effort, and progress in recruitment, retention, climate, professional development and programming.



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