

## **ACADEMIC AFFAIRS DIVERSITY FOCUS GROUPS – FALL 2005 SUMMARY**

### **Background:**

Over the years it has been suggested that the environment in the academic units is less welcoming to people of color than the environment in other areas, such as administrative departments. The implication of this is that fewer people of color apply for staff positions in academic units because of the perceived negative environment. To explore this issue, SVC sponsored a project to facilitate group conversations with a selection of staff from our units.

### **Process & Participants:**

Four focus groups were conducted by an outside consultant who has experience working with the campus. Thirty-three (33) staff employees from under-represented ethnic groups who were randomly selected by the consultant participated. The consultant recorded the conversations and took notes. He produced a report based on the discussions.

### **Discussion Questions**

- 1) In what ways do the following exhibit a positive, welcoming atmosphere to diversity; or a negative atmosphere?
  - a) The University
  - b) The Faculty
  - c) My Department & my manager
  - d) My Department & our staff
- 2) What do you think is the biggest barrier or gap to having more people of color apply for positions in academic departments?
- 3) How can we overcome this gap or barrier?
- 4) What else can we do to improve the environment and foster the idea of the value of diversity—e.g., recruitment and hiring efforts?

### **Summary of Responses**

#### **Department Focus**

- The departmental atmosphere was judged to be generally welcoming and positive and not especially different from other areas of the campus
- Leadership is critical, especially in promoting campus policies like the Principles of Community
- Specific positive and negative comments about a department were strongly related to the approach and style of individual supervisors and managers
- The opportunity to participate in training opportunities to promote internal advancement and retention is very important to staff
- Many issues affect all staff, regardless of color/ethnicity, e.g. the “educational divide” of working with faculty

#### **Campus Focus**

- Many issues raised seemed to concern UCSD as a whole as opposed to just Academic Affairs, e.g. UCSD’s physical location in La Jolla
- Consistency throughout Academic Affairs in Human Resource issues is important, and decentralization, although positive, can work against consistency - “when the University promotes something, it needs to follow up to ensure results”
- Basic processes related to recruitment, screening and hiring need to be assessed and improved
- New approaches may be necessary to reach desired populations – outreach to churches, community groups and other venues
- Communication is very important to staff. For example, they would like to be made more aware of initiatives to promote diversity on campus, and what the campus goals in this area are

### **Post Focus Group and Follow up**

- January 2006. Review results with Assistant Deans. Consultant met with the group and we discussed the results and how we might follow up. Unanimous recommendation that the Deans should be given a summary of the project
- March 2006. Summarize the project and results at a Dean's meeting
- Send a copy of the results to the focus group participants per their expressed interest
- Reinforce when possible to Deans, Chairs, Faculty, and Staff management the key leadership role they have and their impact on staff, both positive and negative. Offer support to these groups through materials and training opportunities.
  - Management and supervision in the trenches is key
  - Opportunities for development and promotion
  - Recognize issues inherent in the "faculty/staff" relationship
- Engage in discussions with the campus to address global issues and partner with other areas of campus to implement new strategies
  - Implementing recruitment strategies to maximize the opportunity to include people of color and achieve availability based goals
  - Campus wide communication of goals and strategies
  - Streamlining recruitment and hiring processes