Diversity Report from the Department of Communication

[Note: The Department of Communication was formed July 1, 2002, by the merger of the School of Communications and the Department of Speech Communication. Where relevant, references are made to the parent departments.]

1. Student Access and Opportunities

The Department of Communication relies on several factors in admitting students – including academic considerations and personal factors (e.g., economic and educational disadvantage, cultural awareness, overcoming personal adversity, leadership awards and achievement). In this regard, the department’s admissions procedures mirror those of the university in the post I-200 era.

We have also worked to diversify our graduate student body, reasoning that university faculties of tomorrow will be diversified only if Ph.D.-granting departments seriously commit themselves to recruiting women and people of color to graduate programs. The Department of Communication has worked hard to diversify its graduate program both through admissions and through financial assistance (in the form of teaching assistantships and research assistantships).

The experience of the School of Communications, one of the “parent” departments of the current department, illustrates the progress made in the past 8 years.

In Autumn 1996, roughly 12 percent of the program’s graduates were people of color. By 2003, the percentage of non-white students had risen dramatically, while the percentage of women (already a majority in the department) increased slightly. In Spring 2003, roughly 34 percent of the graduates were people of color. Part of this increase in diverse representation is attributable to our use of the National and Western Name Exchanges supplied by the Graduate Opportunities and Minority Achievement Program (GOMAP). We have also participated in a number of key recruitment events, including the Graduate and Professional Student Senate (GPSS) Diversity Fair in February 2002, and Prospective Graduate Student Visiting Days sponsored by Graduate Opportunities and Minority Achievement Program (GOMAP). The School of Communications used teaching assistantships and research assistantships in its efforts to diversify its program. In winter quarter 1994, the school had 19 teaching/research assistants. By spring of 2003 a significant increase in diversity within those positions was achieved.

2. Student Development and Retention
The department's minority enrollment is slightly larger than the university’s -- 26.5% as opposed to 25.8% for the university. The department's minority enrollment is also slightly larger than that of the university in all minority categories. 73% of the department's majors are female as opposed to 51% for the university as a whole.

In 2003, the department was cited for its (relative) success in retaining underrepresented minority students.

We believe our relative success in development and retention stems from several things, including:

- Curriculum with substantial coverage of diversity. (See Number 6, below, on curriculum)
- Strong leadership from faculty of color who serve as role models.
- Encouragement given to students of color (e.g., in 2002-3, students of color comprised one third of the membership in two key student organizations – Society of Professional Journalists; Public Relations Student Student of America, and students of color held leadership roles in both organizations)
- Blethen Scholarship. The Department of Communication’s annual Blethen Scholarship is funded by the Seattle Times to encourage cultural and ethnic diversity in the department's journalism major. The scholarship is awarded to three students every year.
- In 2002-3, the Department of Communication also awarded a Flip Wilson Scholarship, a full-expenses scholarship (tuition, books, fees, living costs). This scholarship came from the estate of Flip Wilson; the Department is one of five departments nationally that are beneficiaries of his estate. The Department has applied to the Flip Wilson trustees for four scholarships for 2004-5 (two for undergraduates and two for graduate students).
- Scholarships in general. Over the last three years, 31 percent of the Department’s scholarships have been awarded to students of color, thus helping to insure the diversity of our journalism program. (In 2003, the Department awarded slightly over $90,000 in scholarships).
- Native Voices program. This graduate-level documentary program focuses on American Indian issues and concerns. This program is shared by American Indian Studies and the Department of Communication.

3. Engagement with the External Community

Our engagement with the external community includes:

- The Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma. The Center provides a significant interface with media professionals, and many of the center’s programs have dealt with diversity. The spring 2002 "Languages of Emotional Injury" conference, co-sponsored by the Dart Center, featured journalists from Bosnia, South Africa, and Nicaragua as well as the U.S., and included a Chicano poet Jimmy Santiago Baca and an African-American newspaper photographer, Clarence Williams. As an official of the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies, Roger Simpson was instrumental in placing a program on homophobic violence in the convention program in 2000. The Dart Center has also carried out a study of domestic violence reporting, which has important implications for
coverage of communities of color. The first part of that study has been published in the *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* and the second part is under publication review.

- The Department’s Journalism sequence includes a required course (Community Journalism: News Lab) in which students write for local weekly newspapers. Among the newspaper clients are the Northwest Asian Weekly and the Jewish Transcript.
- Our alumni outreach has included people of color. In 2003, the first Distinguished Alumnus of the new Department of Communication was former Mayor Norman Rice. We are developing an Alumni Hall of Fame, and at least one of our first inductees will be a woman of color (already chosen, but not yet announced).
- The Department of Communication has been an important partner in GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs). The department provided crucial administrative support during GEAR-UP’s start-up year on campus; at least three department faculty members a year have taught in the program in its four years on campus (2000, 2001, 2002 and 2003).
- The School of Communications served as a campus host for the National Association of Hispanic Journalists student conference in 1997 and for the UNITY journalists conference in 2000.

We also have engaged with the external community through guest speakers who have talked about diversity or modeled diversity in our courses. In the past few years, those speakers have included:

- Robert Mak, KING-5 reporter, speaker in GEAR-UP and COM 201
- Sarah Jane Green, *Seattle Times*.
- Jim Mallory, *Seattle Times*.
- Alex MacLeod, *Seattle Times* Managing Editor
- Migael Scherer, Seattle author and sexual assault victims’ advocate.
- Jim Riswold, creative director, Wieden & Kennedy, Portland
- Melissa Durfee, media director, BBDO Seattle.
- Whitney Whiton, PR manager, Microsoft.
- Paul Owen, principal, Owen media.
- Maureen Greeley, communications manager, Washington State Lottery
- Patricia Graesser, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- Scott Selby, The Fearey Group.
- Janet Wainwright, media consultant.
- Bill Southern, Seattle City Schools public information officer.
- Dan Williams, Metro Bus Transit, public information officer.
- Cathy Stigant, director, Multiculture and Immigration, British Columbia.
- Susan McDonald, Communication Director, King County Hazardous Waste Division.

### 4. Staff and administrative diversity

There are 13 staff in the Department of Communication.
5. Faculty diversity.
Faculty diversity remains the weakest part of the Department’s diversity record. As of yet, the department has failed to significantly increase representation of diverse populations within the faculty. Of the 30 faculty, one is a full professor; five are associate professors (two of whom are near promotion to full), two are assistant professors, and two are senior lecturers.

Two of the department’s adjunct faculty add to its diversity efforts; one comes from American Ethnic Studies, and the other from American Indian Studies. Three of our faculty are adjuncts in programs related to diversity; one professor is an adjunct professor in the Department of Women Studies; another is an adjunct professor in American Ethnic Studies and a third is an adjunct in Asian American Studies.

6. Curriculum and research

We believe that curriculum is central to diversity; all faculty can provide diversity-related material in their courses. Diversity in the curriculum benefits all students, and helps in retention of students of color.

(A) Curriculum Design
Five members of the current department faculty (Baldasty, Fearn-Banks, Simpson, Silver, Chan) have participated/are participating in the UW Curriculum Transformation Project and are continuing resources for the program as project faculty. Participation in the Cultural Transformation Project has led to the creation of the department’s courses on gender, race and media, the gender and cyberspace course, as well as in specific diversity units in several classes.

(B) Courses that deal with diversity as a key component of their content
Creating a diverse curriculum has been a high priority for our faculty. Our efforts to diversify our curriculum and thus to prepare students for a multicultural, multiethnic, multiracial and otherwise diverse society have been significant.

Classes that specifically deal with diversity as a major component of their content:

- COM 489, Ethnicity, Gender and Communication. Cross listed with American Ethnic Studies and Women Studies.
- COM 567, Ethnicity, Gender and Communication. Cross cross-listed with Women Studies.
- COM 478, Intercultural Communication.
- COM 322, Global Communication. Cross listed with Political Science
- COM 495, Cultural Diversity in/and Cyberspace
- COM 578. Intercultural Communication
Our faculty have worked hard to include diversity content throughout the curriculum. Some examples:

- Introductory courses as well as technology and society classes include material on “digital divide” technology issues tied to race and ethnicity differences.
- Introduction to Communication (COM 201), the core mass media and society course required of all majors, includes discussion of media images of gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. Topics include representations of racial and ethnic minorities in news content (including information on the Kerner Commission, importance of diverse news sources, and news practices that may limit diversity in news coverage, representations of women and people of color in news content), racial and ethnic diversity in ownership of media companies and “digital divide” technology issues tied to race and ethnicity differences.
- Introduction to Communication II (COM 202) examines diversity through the study of language, nonverbal communication, and culture and communication. When considering language, students examine how accent and speech patterns reveal group identity or trigger perceived stereotypes. The study of nonverbal communication reveals how norms vary cross culturally and how nonverbal cues gain meaning from situational and cultural contexts. The culture and communication segments of the course are structured around the concept of diversity, with a thorough exploration of what culture is, why it is important, and how different cultures look and sound.
- One of our international communication courses has a module on how international cultural diversity influences news presentations.
- Interpersonal communication courses examine how accent and speech patterns reveal group identity or trigger perceived stereotypes.
- Nonverbal communication courses examine how norms vary cross culturally and how nonverbal cues gain meaning from situational and cultural contexts.
- Communication history courses deal with roles of women and people of color in the history of journalism, traditional news images of women and people of color and the history of ethnic media in the United States.
- Communication technology history courses cover issues of media technology and urban/rural cultural divides, women as employees of telegraph and telephone companies, women as a targeted radio audience, and opportunities for -- and stereotypes of -- African Americans in radio and music.
- Politics of mass communications course includes discussions of different social groups in news, the effects of commercial media markets on diversity of contents, and techniques and strategies used by marginalized groups to receive coverage in mainstream news.
- Press and politics course incorporates discussions of newsroom diversity, presence of “racially coded” discourse in political advertising, and the influence upon news coverage of the increasing presence of women in Congress.
Journalism classes focus on the use of sources to diversify the news; editing class segment on photography and newspaper design examines visual racial and gender stereotypes.

Politics, media and religious fundamentalisms in America; impact on women and minorities of conservative religious thought.

In argumentation courses, students debate racial profiling as a law enforcement technique to fight terrorism.

Media law course segments on minorities and the law of hate speech, women and the law of obscenity, and libel and issues of race (often focusing on the civil rights movement).

International and intercultural courses deal with cultural identity and cultural difference.

Media effects courses examine media portrayals of minorities (race, gender, ethnicity, age and sexual orientation); the class explores the effects of crime coverage in which African Americans are more likely to be portrayed as crime perpetrators than victims.

In the communication and environment class, diversity is considered in the context of environmental organizations and grassroots environmentalism. Students examine the makeup of such groups, in which the more local, grassroots organizations are the more diverse, compared to the large, national organizations dominated by white, middle-class males.

In one of our advanced reporting classes, we invite media professionals as guest speakers to discuss the realities of diversity issues. In spring quarter of 2002, for example, Jerry Large, an African American Seattle Times columnist, spoke about such issues. (Mr. Large also co-taught a course in opinion writing in autumn 2003).

The journalism editing and design course includes a presentation on photography and newspaper design, which includes a discussion of visual racial and gender stereotypes. The course also includes an in-class exercise on multicultural sensitivity in which students interview each other about how they feel the news media treat members of their ethnic/racial/gender group.

(D) Teaching Assistants and Diversity

Teaching assistants are assigned to support faculty members and teach in a large number of our courses. Diversity is a key part of their training, both in the orientation that occurs before the academic year begins each autumn and in the ongoing Communication Pedagogy course that meets throughout the year (COM 596).

For instance, TAs are required to attend sessions at the annual orientation that revolve around sexual harassment, student engagement, and leading discussions. The latter often deals with ethnic/cultural, racial, and gender differences that influence the extent to which students speak out in the classroom and engage with others. In these training sessions, TAs learn how to effectively engage students and ensure that diverse voices and opinions are heard and respected.
These questions arise consistently during the school year as well, and the Communication Pedagogy course (COM 596) offers a venue in which to discuss and address them. The course draws on a myriad of innovative teaching techniques (e.g., role-playing, videotaped scenarios) to provide TAs with the opportunity to further their understanding of diversity. An example involves student actors creating a scenario in which a feminist or conservative student aggressively attempts to impose her views on the rest of the seminar participants. TAs are asked what they would do in such a situation.

In addition, guest speakers and readings in COM 596 address such concerns as: university policies, issues of affirmative action and recruitment issues regarding people of color, how instructors can create a syllabus that can accommodate different learning styles. Examples of readings include chapters from Barbara Gross Davis’ *Tools for Teaching* (Jossey-Bass, 1993; Chapter 22: Learning Styles and Preferences) and excerpts from Maryellen Weimer’s *Improving your Classroom Teaching* (Sage, 1993).

Our graduate curriculum also fosters awareness of cultural, ethnic, gender, and sexuality differences. In addition to graduate courses that focus on media and diversity, we offer the Master’s Degree program, “Native Voices.” In conjunction with the UW Center for American Indian Studies and directed by Professor Dan Hart, the program gives students an opportunity to study, research, and produce documentary films and digital media relevant to Native American communities and the nation as a whole.

One of our graduate students was selected for a UW Huckabay Award in 2003-4; her course is titled: Women Making Meaning, Women Making Media: Feminist Media Studies

**E. Research.**

Within a research university such as the University on Washington, research on diversity-related issues is a key indicator of a department’s commitment to diversity.

In the Department of Communication, faculty research on diversity-related issues includes:

- News coverage and public opinion on Initiative 200;
- How language, news choices and images in U.S. news media shape citizens’ racial and ethnic stereotypes
- Race, gender and sexual orientation within cyberspace
- Role of news in creation of gender ideology
- History of Pacific Northwest African American newspapers
- Biography of leading Asian American silent-screen actress
- Cultural identity and media
- The Holocaust Museum and tolerance
- Reality Television and racial profiling
- Representation of people of color in prime time television
- State of diversity in journalism education
- Gender and television viewing
- Variations in perceptions of drunk driving between Anglo and Hispanic New Mexicans
comparative international news as influenced by diverse cultural perspectives
current study on international media framing of global cultural diversity trends
intercultural dialogues on cultural identity and diversity
Racial profiling and news sources
Racial profiling and news in the aftermath of September 11
News media, immigration and the priming of racial perceptions
Patriot Act and liberties of racial/ethnic and religious minorities

Graduate student research dealing with diversity includes:

- Journalists and news coverage of race
- News media, racial perceptions and political cognition
- Latino political engagement and images of media
- Race and the construction of news: press coverage of the Tuskegee Study, 1972
- Independent Media Center’s efforts to increase media representation of marginalized groups (women, people of color, low-in-come groups, immigrants, etc.)
- News framing of abortion, partial birth abortion in key U.S. media
- Women in radio history
- Race representation in child-targeted television commercials
- Young women’s TV viewing behaviors
- Race and advertising in prime-time television
- State of diversity in prime-time network television
- Representation of women in prime-time television
- Representation of Asian female characters in computer console gaming and digital computer gaming
- Gender, violence and victimization in top selling video games
- Mass media gender images and wishful identification with media characters
- Gender and class issues in Pokemon.
- Messages about men and masculinity in boys’ favorite media
- Media influence on gender roles from Martha Stewart
- Gender-related role advice in television
- Role of communication in African American enrollment in higher education
- Subcultural/minority reactions to popularization and commercialization of their cultural artifacts
- Francophone cinematic productions in Egypt and issues of “orientalism”
- How people of Arab descent express their different collective identities through particular communicative means.
- Communication and health issues among workers in Costa Rica.
- Occupational health problems for women in the workplace (with a focus on violence and ergonomics).
- How the rhetoric of certain Christian Right groups in Oregon has worked actively to limit or eliminate gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender civil rights through
- All Girl radio 1950s.
Communication theory and major social issues (e.g. ethnic/racial stereotyping and teaching about homosexuality in elementary schools).

Recent theses and dissertations dealing with diversity include:

**Theses**
- Newell, Robert V.  ‘They Got More than Just Game’: Negotiating Gender in Print Coverage of the 1999 FIFA Women’s World Cup. (2001)
- Curphey, Shauna M.  To Tell their Own Stories: An Examination of Tribal Print Journalism in Washington State. (1999)

**Dissertations**
- Delwiche, Aaron A.  Frog under the Well: The Relationship of Global Media Use and Cosmopolitan Orientation among Hong Kong Youth. (2001)

(F).  **Native Voices M.C. Program**

Native Voices, the premier Native American media training center in the United States, in cooperation with the Department of Communication and the Center for American Indian Studies, offers a M.C. degree program in Native American documentary production. Native Voices students explore the documentary tradition from an Indigenous perspective and produce documentary programs which speak to critical personal, social, and political issues in their lives. For Indigenous people, the creation of their own stories is an issue of survival. Making media about their experiences has become a significant project for the colonized world. Indigenous peoples of the world have had to create a shared language to understand colonialism. Their film and television work has centered upon issues which link Indigenous communities around the world--while retaining homeland, language, family, and social institutions. This work can be seen as an ongoing struggle to claim humanity, intellects, imaginations, and emotions.
7. Climate

We still have much work to do in the Department on creating a climate in which diversity is central to our identity and day-to-day activities. Our greatest challenge is in hiring faculty; we have not been successful in recent years in hiring faculty of color in recent years.

We have been more successful in creating a diverse curriculum and fostering research related to diversity.