APPRAISAL OF DIVERSITY ACTIVITIES
Department of Sociology
(Feb. 18, 2004)

The Department of Sociology is committed to the principle of providing a diverse environment within which it pursues its primary missions of teaching, research, and service. In the past, this has included efforts to recruit faculty and students from under-represented groups, to offer a curriculum that provides a sociological perspective on the experiences of those groups, and to conduct original research on topics related to race, ethnicity, gender, and social class. These efforts are described below, and their effectiveness evaluated.

STUDENT ACCESS

Activities

The Sociology Department makes a serious effort to assure diversity among the incoming cohorts of graduate students. This effort focuses on the following three objectives: (1) expanding the diversity of the applicant pool, (2) targeting our graduate admissions and recruitment efforts to increase the yield of admitted minority and under-represented students, and (3) retaining those who accept our offers.

Expanding the Diversity of the Graduate Student Applicant Pool

We actively pursue opportunities that are critical to enhancing the diversity of the graduate student applicant pool. We participate in the Western and National Name Exchange Programs (including sending personal letters from the Graduate Program Coordinator); our web page for graduate applications contains a link to the GOMAP web page; and we invite applicants to comment on how their individual experiences and/or academic interests will bring diversity to the scholarly perspectives and academic experiences of our community of scholars.

We benefit from the continuing efforts of Professor Robert Crutchfield, who engages in direct outreach efforts to minority-serving institutions in his lead role in the NSF-funded National Consortium on Violence Research. Recently, for example, he was a plenary speaker at a conference held at Fisk University for minority undergraduate students in the Nashville, Tennessee area. Later this year we will build on Professor Crutchfield’s work by contacting members of under-represented groups who have received Ph.D.s from our department. We will ask them to steer their best students to us. Because we have eminent minority Ph.D. graduates (e.g., Townsand Price-Spratlen, Rudolpho Alvarez, Roy Austin), their efforts should increase the diversity of our applicants.

We also believe that because we have added new faculty whose research focuses on race and gender inequality (including Barbara Reskin, Alexes Harris, Stewart Tolnay, and Martina Morris) we have increased our attractiveness to students with these interests.
Increasing the Yield of Admitted Students: Graduate Admissions and Recruitment

Despite our outreach efforts, the number of applicants from historically under-represented groups remains relatively low. Nonetheless, our targeted recruitment efforts have been successful in promoting diversity among our graduate students. Last year the department identified 17 applicants from historically under-represented groups, made offers to 9 of them, and obtained 4 acceptances. Our 50% admission rate for members of under-represented groups was higher than our overall admission rate of 28% (of 150 applicants); but the 44% acceptance rate by these under-represented applicants was only ten percent higher than our overall acceptance rate.

To aid our recruitment efforts we place faculty members with a special interest in recruiting a more diverse graduate student body on the department’s admissions committee, and ask the committee as a whole to seek out and bring attention to strong applicants with diverse backgrounds. Our successes in attracting top minority students have clearly been linked to our ability to offer awards such as the GOP RA, GO-MAP RA positions, and prestigious fellowships such as the Presidential Scholar Award and The Bank of America Fellowship.

We are continuing our practice of making special recruiting calls, and supporting special recruiting visits to campus for admitted applicants who will add to the diversity of our graduate program. We routinely enlist the assistance not only of our diverse faculty, but also of current graduate students whose participation enhances our efforts.

Our department also offers the endowment-based Blalock Award as a recruitment incentive to an admitted applicant who will contribute to diversifying our graduate program. This award was established in honor of Hubert M. Blalock, a nationally renowned member of our department whose scholarship focused on issues of power, inequality, and racial inequities. The award is accompanied by a stipend of $1000.

Retention Efforts

Our commitment to provide continuing funding to students whose presence diversifies the department is a key element of our retention program. In addition, we make every effort to support students in their efforts to secure outside fellowships, such as the American Sociological Association’s Minority Fellowships. We also have a number of programs that foster an atmosphere of inclusiveness. We have ongoing seminar and workshop series in which graduate students are very active participants. We convene at least three professional development workshops each quarter, to which all graduate students are invited. (These workshops cover topics such as academic publishing, writing a research proposal, seeking and applying for fellowships and research grants, negotiating the job market, and so forth.) Notices of any fellowships, both those directed toward minorities and other more general fellowships, are posted to our graduate student email lists regularly. In addition, students who may benefit from participation in special programs, such as those offered by the GOMAP offices, are always encouraged by the Graduate Program Coordinator and/or Department Chair, to participate.

The success of our efforts at retaining students who contribute to the diversity of the department and university is reflected in the continuing progress and accomplishments of those students
recruited with GO-MAP support. Since 1997 the department has been awarded 6 GOP Research Assistantships. Multi-quarter GO-MAP research assistantships have also been awarded to three other students in conjunction with additional RA and TA support from the department. In 2001-02 one of our students was also the recipient of the Presidential Scholar Award and in 2002-03 another was awarded the Bank of America Fellowship. With the exception of one student who went on leave after completing her M.A. degree, each of these new and continuing graduate students is making good progress in the program.

Assessment

The table reproduced below describes the characteristics of the last eleven incoming cohorts of graduate students by: gender, race/ethnicity, nativity. The Department has been quite successful in maintaining a reasonable gender balance among incoming graduate student cohorts. In fact, the trend in recent years has been towards cohorts with a large majority of female students. In contrast, there remains considerable potential to improve the representation of racial and ethnic minority students. There is sharp competition among the best Sociology Departments in the country for the most highly qualified minority students. Our department faces a number of challenges in this competition. One important challenge is the generally lower level of compensation that we are able to offer to incoming students. A second challenge is Seattle’s and the University’s distance from the major population centers from which many students of color are recruited.

Diversity in Eleven Years of Entering Graduate Cohorts

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STAFF AND FACULTY

Activities

The Sociology Department has made efforts to assure that its faculty and staff are inclusive of under-represented groups. Over the last five or six years, the Department has conducted two
“targeted” faculty recruitments. Those efforts resulted in the hiring of one Asian American full professor and one African American assistant professor. During that same time period, eight of the sixteen faculty members hired were female. Less direct efforts have been made to assure that the departmental staff includes members of under-represented groups.

**Assessment**

The results of our efforts to achieve diversity among the Department’s faculty and staff are best described as “mixed.” Nine of our thirty faculty members are women. By rank, four of them are full professors, three are associate professors, two are assistant professors, and one is a senior lecturer. Thus, 30 percent of the faculty are female. Women are 22 percent of the full professors, 60 percent of the associate professors, and 40 percent of the assistant professors. The faculty currently includes two African-Americans (one full professor and one principal lecturer), one Asian-American (a full professor), and one assistant professor who is from Korea. In the fall of 2004 we will add an African-American female assistant professor. During the last year we also lost one Asian-American assistant professor who took another position at a different University, and one African American full professor who retired.

There are many possible ways to view, and assess, the current composition of the faculty. Clearly, we have been more successful in our recruitment of female faculty than we have in hiring faculty from under-represented racial groups. If one takes a longer historical perspective, the Department has made very impressive progress toward achieving a more even gender balance, though women are still under-represented at the full professor rank. That same historical perspective offers a less positive assessment of the Department’s progress in recruiting faculty of color. The latter is an issue that deserves more of the Department’s attention in the coming years. Despite the keen national competition for sociologists of color, it should be possible for our department to conduct successful targeted recruitments in the near future that will build on our strengths in the substantive areas of race and ethnicity.

A somewhat similar “mixed” assessment can be made of the Department’s success in achieving diversity among its staff. Among our 11-person staff, eight are women, including our Administrator, Programmer, and two Advisors. Our Director of Student Services is Asian-American. The strongest influence on the diversity of our staff is the composition of the applicant pools created when open positions are advertised.

**CURRICULUM AND RESEARCH**

**Activities**

**Curriculum**

By the very nature of the field of Sociology, our undergraduate and graduate curricula offer students great opportunity to take courses and to pursue study related to the topic of “diversity.” For example, the following undergraduate courses are listed for our department in the University’s Course Catalog:

Sociology 260, “African American Family”
At the graduate level, the Department offers two popular specialty areas that are directly related to societal diversity as defined by race, ethnicity, gender, class, and sexual identity/orientation. They are “Stratification, Race, and Ethnicity,” and “Sex and Gender.” Students can take their Ph.D. Qualifying Exams in these areas and write MA Theses or Doctoral Dissertations on topics included within these specialty areas. In addition, these same diversity-related topics, as well as others, are included as special foci within other specialty areas such as “Demography and Ecology,” “Family and Kinship,” and “Institutional Analysis.”

Research

The research programs of several Sociology faculty and graduate students are rooted firmly in substantive areas that deal directly with societal diversity. These are too numerous to list completely, here, but include studies that focus on the following:

- racial, ethnic, and gender differences in educational ambitions and attainment,
- the effect of racial stratification in the labor market on crime,
- gender differences in housework,
- perceptions of hate crimes against racial minorities and gays and lesbians,
- international comparisons of women’s labor force participation,
- migration patterns of African Americans,
- the history of racial violence in America,
- sexual behavior and sexual orientation,
- recent trends in income inequality, and
- occupational segregation by race/ethnicity and gender.

Assessment

By virtually any measurement metric, the curricular offerings of the Department of Sociology are successfully: (1) introducing undergraduate students to the important issues of societal
diversity, and (2) providing graduate students with an opportunity to pursue diversity-related specializations. This success is due partially to the fact that these same subjects are the areas of special expertise for many of the Department’s faculty members. Clearly, this is an example of how the research and teaching missions of the Department are inter-related and mutually reinforcing.

**SUMMARY**

The Department of Sociology has taken steps to encourage diversity within many areas of its institutional mission. To be sure, we have been more successful in some efforts than in others. Turning, now, from a survey of past performance and accomplishments to an agenda for the future, the following two objectives should receive our greatest attention: (1) Initiating well-planned targeted recruitment of new faculty from under-represented racial and ethnic groups, and (2) Attempting to increase the racial and ethnic diversity of our incoming cohorts of graduate students. As these objectives are pursued, it is important that they be done in a way that builds on, and takes advantage of, the strengths of the department, while also maintaining the high quality of our programs.