

Report of the Diversity Task Force University Libraries

In the wake of the movement of the University of Arkansas to create a more diverse institution, the University Libraries' Diversity Task Force recommends ten initiatives be developed to encourage greater diversity within all aspects of the Libraries and the University community.

Diversity is an essential part of the Libraries' mission with the potential to enrich the education of our students. The Libraries' role in educating students is making information readily available, and an ethnically familiar face in the library might invite more active participation from students of diverse backgrounds. The ultimate goal of the commitment to diversity is to expose students to new ideas and social mores; therefore, the library should aspire to attain a meaningful number of formerly under-represented minorities in its staff makeup. Historically disenfranchised minorities include African Americans, Hispanics, Asian Americans, and Native Americans. For our purposes, we would include other racial, ethnic and religious groups, all ages and abilities, as well as gender and sexual preference minorities.

Diversity of Faculty and Staff

Library users (students, staff, faculty, men and women of all ages) need to see themselves when they walk into the library. They need to see themselves in the display collections, Web sites, and personnel because to see yourself helps establish the first human connection. This type of connection, in effect, extends an invitation to our customers to become lifelong library users.

***We recommend** updating the library's job descriptions/announcements (Assigned to: Janet Parsch & Library Human Resources Advisory Council [LHRAC])*

Recruitment of under-represented minorities in library faculty and staff positions should be more aggressively pursued. The Diversity Task Force suggests the initial step in the hiring process be changed to more naturally appeal to an audience of a more diverse character. The current job descriptions/announcements have a stiffness that could be viewed as unappealing or possibly insincere. We offer some suggestions below:

Revamp the position descriptions by:

- Describing the position potential for moving/changing/growing/creating
- Describing the library's current and future state
- Highlighting the opportunities and highlighting what makes this a "contemporary and interesting" job based on the principles and values of librarianship
- Describing what is attractive about the library, the university, the city, and region
- Describing multicultural/diverse history/current events in the Northwest Arkansas area
- Describing how diversity is valued by the organization, the region
- Describing what makes the library a good environment to advance your career
- Describing represented racial/ethnic communities in the area.
- Describing other library employment opportunities in the area.

We recommend exploring creative advertising for positions (*Assigned to: Janet Parsch & LHRAC*)

To ensure a connection with a qualified, diverse, and hopefully vast pool of applicants, the library should make use of the following ethnic caucuses discussion lists to post position announcements.

Ethnic Caucuses:

CALA: Chinese American Librarians Association <http://www.cala-web.org/>

REFORMA: The National Association to Promote Library and Information Science to Latinos and the Spanish-Speaking <http://lmri.ucsb.edu/mailman/listinfo/reformanet>

BCALA: Black Caucus of the American Library Association <http://www.bcala.org/faq.html>

AILA: American Indian Library Association <http://www.nativeculture.com/lisamitten/aila.html>

APALA: Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association
<http://www.uic.edu/depts/lib/projects/resources/apala/publication.html>

We recommend implementing a hiring philosophy (*Assigned to: Janet Parsch & LHRAC*)

In order to encourage the on-going diversification of the library faculty and staff, it is the recommendation of this Task Force—all conditions among applicants being considered equal—that persons who interview and/or hire new employees appoint a minority candidate if that option is available. As the goal of this recommendation is to increase the working diversity of the library, all forms of diversity and all types of minorities are included.

We recommend starting a minority librarian residency program (*Assigned to: Cheryl Conway, Judy Ganson, Andrea Cantrell & Sharon Hu*)

A minority residency program would be beneficial to the University Libraries and the profession of academic librarianship, as well as to the minority residents, by increasing the diversity of the faculty and staff employed by the Libraries. This program would create opportunities for the residents to expand their knowledge and share their experiences with the Northwest Arkansas community. Peer residents should be able to enjoy social camaraderie, moral support, involvement in group projects, sharing professional knowledge and expertise, motivation, different perspectives, and “career-long” professional relationships. We recommend a two-year minority residency program be initiated in the University Libraries with the long-term goal of encouraging minority librarians to continue in the profession while we provide a supportive initial professional experience.

We recommend creating a student library career discovery program (Assigned to: Janet Parsch and LHRAC)

The Libraries should help promote careers in librarianship to students. This Task Force suggests developing a program to introduce undergraduate students to librarianship through a form of internship. The Libraries could provide the opportunity to undergraduate students the chance to get a closer look at what a professional librarian does. Many people are not aware that “librarianship” is a career choice. Undergraduate students, given an opportunity to learn more about the library, its role and how it runs, might boost the number of those interested in becoming librarians. For interested students applying for work/study and hourly positions, the Libraries could offer more flexible and challenging work, with the intention of recruiting students into the field of librarianship. We could offer hands-on experience and guidance in pursuing graduate work if the student should choose to continue. Special consideration should be given to minority students, but the program should be open to any interested student. The American Library Association, through its Spectrum Initiative (administered by the Office of Diversity), offers a number of \$5,000 scholarships each year to eligible recipients for graduate school.

Racial/ethnicity Awareness Programs

We recommend celebrating diversity through regular event planning (Assigned to: Molly Boyd)

Cultural intelligence creates and helps feed a diverse workforce. The library should continue its efforts to provide programs, lectures, and exhibits that celebrate diversity. Event planners in the libraries need to regularly check Web sites such as: www.diversityhotwire.com, which supplies a calendar for month-long celebrations and contains resources for additional religious holidays and festivals, historical/cultural events, and dates that call attention to discrimination against groups such as women, people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, and gays/lesbians.

Additionally, EMIERT (the Ethnic and Multicultural Information Exchange Round Table) of the American Library Association (ALA) keeps up-to-date information regarding programs, meetings, and celebrations on their Web page at www.lonestar.utsa.edu/jbarnett/emie.html. At www.diversityweb.org, a project of the Association of American Colleges and Universities, is a compendium of campus practices and resources about diversity in higher education. This site is designed to serve campus practitioners seeking to place diversity at the center of the campus’ education and societal mission.

Understanding the multicultural uniqueness of library patrons, as well as the diverse staff, is crucial to offering excellent service in a comfortable, relaxed atmosphere. All departments within the Libraries interact with patrons or fellow faculty/staff members whose different racial, cultural, religious, etc., backgrounds deserve to be understood and respected.

We recommend developing a diversity awareness program for library faculty and staff (*Libraries will work with University-initiated human resources and academic programs, as appropriate*)

Since our need for awareness in this area is on-going, the Task Force recommends developing a regular diversity awareness program for library faculty and staff. The objective of information-sharing sessions on these various issues is learning about values and behaviors common to people of other cultures and ideals, and developing an awareness of the influence other cultures have on our own values and behaviors. Attendance at these sessions would be strongly encouraged. We also recommend that all new employees attend an introductory diversity awareness session as a part of orientation.

Services and Collections

We recommend selecting more popular ethnic literature for the library collection (*Assigned to: Collection Management teams*)

We encourage the collection development groups to focus on updating the library's collection of popular literature. In the spirit of diversity, the collection should be reviewed. The Libraries need a substantial increase to the collection in current popular literature, keeping in mind the Hispanic, African-American, Native American, Asian-American, and gay/lesbian authors.

We recommend purchasing self-teaching tools (*Assigned to: Collection Management teams*)

The Task Force recommends the collection development group acquire self-teaching tools such as foreign language kits (i.e., *Rosetta Stone Language Library*), and that the administration encourage staff to make use of them.

We recommend establishing a multicultural/diversity video library (*Libraries will work with University Human Resources to assist with video holdings*)

The Task Force recommends establishing and maintaining a virtual multicultural resource/diversity enhancement video library. The addition of a local subject heading to bibliographic records in the library catalog, such as MULTICULTURAL VIDEO COLLECTION or DIVERSITY VIDEO COLLECTION, would allow patrons to obtain a list of video titles the Libraries own from a wide range of topics educating viewers on diversity issues. The Libraries should identify the video titles currently owned and continue to add pertinent videos. Through advertising by means of such University tools as *Daily Headlines*, the Libraries can make these items known and easily identifiable to the teaching faculty for use in classrooms or other activities. *Videos for Understanding Diversity: A Core Selection and Evaluative Guide* (LC1099.3.S75 1993) is available in the collection as a resource. See also South Dakota State University, Office for Diversity Enhancement's video library selections at:

www3.sdstate.edu/StudentLife/StudentUnionActivities/MulticulturalAffairs/MulticulturalResourceLibrary/Index.cfm

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