From the Director

The Institute for Diversity, Equity, and Advocacy (IDEA) is a research and community-building initiative that convenes scholars from the University of Minnesota to build a strong and connected community of like-minded scholars to support innovation across disciplines, departments, colleges, and campuses. We are one of a handful of similarly organized central administration higher education initiatives around the country seeking to transform the university by enhancing the visibility and productivity of an interdisciplinary group of faculty and community scholars. IDEA offers opportunities for faculty to connect personally and professionally with others on campus and within the local community. Resources include: an expertise and grant database; faculty multicultural research awards; sponsorship of symposia and lectures that illustrate the synergy of diversity, equity and advocacy; curricular diversity workshops; and mentorship and professional development opportunities for junior faculty of color.

When IDEA was launched in Spring 2009, we sought to enhance the recruitment and retention of faculty from underrepresented groups and raise the visibility and, thus the significance, of scholars and scholarship on diversity and equity and advocacy. To achieve this goal, we built on important efforts initiated by long-time campus leaders like former System Vice President Robert Jones and former Vice President and Vice Provost, Rusty Barceló. IDEA's strategy to achieve these objectives has been three-fold: 1) showcase existing programs to maximize awareness of available resources; 2) work with faculty to identify gaps in our systems of support; and 3) support administrative leaders in their efforts to integrate faculty and curricular diversity in their teaching, research, and community engagement missions.

This bulletin provides a brief overview of numerous new initiatives, programs we support, and products we have created to advance diversity and equity and improve the campus climate. As we complete the fourth year of this effort, we strive to continue to be innovative and vigilant in our approach. This year, under the direction of an inter-collegiate committee of faculty, we will support the development of a comprehensive mentorship model that will assist in our recruitment and retention efforts, and ensure that we build a pipeline of diverse faculty into administrative leadership positions. Using a faculty-centered approach to this work, we hope to ensure that our work is sustainable. All ideas on how we might improve are welcome. We look forward to hearing from you!

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Integrating Diversity in to Curriculum

Developed and offered for the first time in Fall 2011, Diversity in the Curriculum: Transforming Your Syllabus two-part workshop facilitated by IDEA Faculty Fellow Catherine Squires (School of Journalism and Mass Communication) and Anita Gonzalez (Center for Teaching and Learning) engages and assists faculty in revising their course syllabi to include more consideration of diversity. The first session of the workshop provides faculty with the “why and what” of diversity and tools to begin identifying where and how to integrate changes in their syllabi. The second part of the workshop pairs faculty with a team leader and colleagues from similar fields to work on a revised syllabus. By the end of the second session, each participant has developed a working draft of a syllabus or syllabus segment.

Participants use ideas for redesigning assignments, expanding the types of classroom exercises, get information about where to get more diverse content, and learn different ways to increase student participation and feedback.

During the 2011-12 academic year, 60 faculty from more than 15 departments participated in four workshops held across the Twin Cities and Rochester campuses yielding numerous courses that have been enriched with diversity content and pedagogical practices that support our increasingly diverse student body. This year workshops have taken place on the St. Paul campus and more are planned for this spring on the east bank campus.

IDEA Lectures: Promoting Diversity of Thought

Each year, IDEA invites and sponsors dynamic speakers to come to campus and stimulate discussion on current issues in higher education and local communities. In 2010-11, IDEA faculty Fellows Alex Lubet (School of Music) and Kendall King (CEHD) oversaw a provocative series entitled: Margins within Marginalizations: Diversity and Equity across Disciplines and Contexts. A few of the topics in this exciting series included “Autism and the Somali Community,” “Hmong Diaspora,” and “Cinematic Poetics: Sign Language and Deaf Gain.”

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In Spring 2012, the IDEA Advisory Committee sponsored “Experiences of Hmong/Asian Pacific Islander LGBTQA” as part of Transgender Awareness Week. The talk featured members of Shades of Yellow, a St. Paul-based non-profit and the only of its kind in the world providing support specifically for Hmong LGBTQ. We look forward to continuing to sponsor and support lectures that illuminate the complexity and strengths of a diverse society.

Sharing Secrets to Successful Proposal Writing

In Fall 2011 and 2012, IDEA and the Office for Diversity in Graduate Education collaborated on a 2+day workshop for graduate students and junior faculty of color seeking to apply for fellowships and grants in the humanities and social sciences fields. The workshop drew participants representing various disciplines ranging from education and public health, to child psychology and history. Nineteen graduate students participated Fall 2011 and thirty-five graduate students took advantage of this great opportunity to hone their skills in proposal writing in Fall 2012. This highly interactive workshop addressed project design, strategic self-representation, avoiding common pitfalls, developing a work regimen to submit a competitive application, and post-workshop individual consultations for three months pursuant to the submission of an application.

The most recent workshop was facilitated by Dr. Ben V. Olguín (Associate Professor of Literature and Creative Writing and Assistant Director of National and International Scholarships and Fellowships in the Honors College at the University of Texas at San Antonio) and University of Minnesota faculty Esam El-Fakahany (Experimental & Clinical Pharmacology, Pharmacy), Rhonda Franklin (Electrical and Computer Engineering, COSE), and Bic Ngo (Curriculum and Instruction, CEHD), all of whom brought considerable expertise to share.

The workshops have been very well received with the majority of participants giving the overall workshop experience a rating of excellent. Participants indicate they particularly appreciated receiving individual feedback on working drafts and the opportunity to be part of an intellectual and supportive community.

Participants of the 2011 workshop received the following six awards: Postdoctoral fellowship to study in China; UMN Global Spotlight Major Faculty Grant; IDEA Multicultural Research Award; UMN Graduate School Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship; National Institute of Mental Health Traineeship; and UMN Digital Content Library Fellowship. Honorable Mentions were given for two Ford Predoctoral Fellowship applications and one National Science Foundation.

Supporting Faculty of Color Writing

One of the most oft-heard concerns of new faculty is how to make time to write. This issue can be especially acute for faculty of color, who are often called upon to contribute additional service and support to departments that are still in the process of building up diversity. Some preliminary research has noted the value of creating writing groups specifically for faculty of color.

To address this concern, IDEA Faculty Fellow Catherine Squires launched the Summer Writing Workshop for Faculty of Color in Summer 2011. The program provides pretenured faculty participants with designated time and resources to support their writing. Through goal-setting exercises, peer editing, and access to materials about campus resources for writing and research, the summer workshop fosters collegial relationships and new writing strategies for pre-tenure faculty. In addition to receiving coaching and feedback, participants who complete a draft of their manuscript are provided an opportunity to identify a leading scholar in their field who can read their manuscript and provide critical feedback. These outside readers are given a stipend for providing this important peer review. The workshop was repeated in Summer 2012.

Based on the tremendous success of the summer workshop, a writing group for faculty of color was launched in Fall 2011. Recently featured in the Minnesota Daily, this initiative continues to support faculty writing throughout the academic year by providing previous and new participants with designated time and resources to support and encourage the writing process. The group meets approximately six to eight times each semester, and beginning this year, two sessions per semester will be devoted to crafting the research, writing, and service statements for the tenure dossier.

Since its inception, over two dozen pre-tenured faculty of color have taken advantage of this opportunity and regularly attended the fall and spring writing sessions. Pre- and post-tenure faculty are welcome at these sessions as well. Faculty members are welcome to join at any time and as many times as desired.
Cultivating Community Among Faculty of Color

The Faculty of Color Initiative (FOCI) is a community-building project supported by IDEA. It is an inter-collegiate effort to recruit and retain faculty of color at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities campus by providing opportunities to socialize, network, and develop mentoring and collaborative relationships with colleagues across campus. This project was inspired by efforts originally launched and supported by the College of Liberal Arts.

FOCI gatherings provide opportunities for faculty of color to build and strengthen communities of support. They are generally held two or three times a year in the early evening at the home of a University of Minnesota faculty member. IDEA provides full funding of the event and assistance in all aspects of preparation making the evening relaxing and enjoyable for both host and attendees. Thus far, these gatherings have been hosted by UMN faculty members Lisa Park (Sociology) and David Pellow (Sociology); Angélica Afanador-Pujol (Art History); Lesa Clarkson (Curriculum and Instruction); Jimmy Patiño (Chicano and Latino Studies) and Vichet Chhuon (Curriculum and Instruction); and Catherine Squires (School of Journalism and Mass Communication).

Enhancing Diversity in the STEM Fields

By focusing on the advancement of research that allows insight into the best practices for broadening participation in STEM, the STEM Competitiveness and Diversity Research Cluster (SCDRC) seeks to increase diversity in the STEM fields. This group works to transform the practices and strategies of recruitment and retention administrators, teachers, faculty, parents, and policymakers. Led by Senior STEM Fellow and Associate Professor Lesa Clarkson, the SCDRC pursues a multidisciplinary and inter-institutional approach to conducting research. Current members represent the departments of Curriculum and Instruction, Biology, Mathematics, the Institute for Mathematics and Its Applications, and the Materials Research Science and Engineering Center. Past clusters have focused on issues such race and ethnicity; gender; and a graduate program in Disability Studies. IDEA continues to explore ways to support research clusters among those with similar interests.

Increasing Innovative Research

In order to strengthen community and networking among scholars and researchers on campus, IDEA annually invites proposals for research that address issues related to its mission “to transform the University by enhancing the visibility and advancing the productivity of an interdisciplinary group of faculty and community scholars whose expertise in equity, diversity, and underrepresented populations will lead to innovative scholarship that addresses urgent social issues.” Since 1996 more than 1.5 million dollars have been awarded to 140 recipients of the IDEA Multicultural Research Awards. Award recipients are required to present their work each year in the annual Diversity through the Disciplines Symposium. Presentations in Spring 2012 included Permissible Murders: Black Women, Premature Death and Urban Resistances presented by Zenele Isoke; Diverse Experiences of Motherhood in U.S. Hospitals presented by Katy Backes Kozhimannil; Developing a Multicultural Ideology presented by Moin Syed; and Asian American and Latino Voters in the 2008 Election: The Politics of Color in the Racial Middle presented by Enid Logan.
Connecting Experts with Opportunities

IDEA works to facilitate community building and to promote research that addresses pressing social issues. To support this effort, IDEA maintains an Equity and Diversity Expertise and Grants Database for IDEA scholars and collaborators to enhance networking and collaboration abilities.

This database offers experts in equity, diversity, and advocacy a chance to network with other research collaborators who share similar interests, as well as explore potential grant opportunities. We invite University of Minnesota faculty, graduate students, and staff, as well as community-based researchers to join and utilize the database. First-time users simply request an account to create a profile and provide some information about their work and interests. An important component of this database is a search engine for grants and experts, sortable by the interests, keywords, institutions, and administrative units within colleges of our scholar affiliates or community collaborators. Each criteria chosen affects the amount and relevancy of the search results. We invite university and non-university experts to join and use this database.

IDEA Publications

Best Practices in Recruiting and Retaining Diverse Faculty at the University of Minnesota: A Handbook for Institutional Leaders and Faculty Search Committees offers insight into best practices culled from documented efforts by colleagues from around the country.

Welcome to Your Community: A Guide to Diversity Resources at the University of Minnesota and in the Twin Cities was developed to assist new faculty with finding their unique and individual communities.

PDF versions of these publications can be downloaded from our website.

Advisory Committee

IDEA’s advisory committee members represent an array of disciplines, research interests, and methodological approaches that maximizes the depth and breadth of perspectives necessary to fulfill our mission. The continued insight, guidance, and advice of advisory committee members will be crucial to our success. We thank all advisory committee members for their important work.

Louis Mendoza, AVP, Office for Equity and Diversity
Joan Howland, Law School
Priscilla Gibson, School of Social Work, CEHD
Janet Haynes, Department of Social Work, UM-Duluth
Kola Okuyemi, Family Medicine and Community Health, Medical School
Alex Lubet, School of Music, CLA
Naomi Scheman, Philosophy, CLA
Charmaine Stewart, Gastroenterology School of Medicine
Erika Lee, History/Asian America Studies, CLA
Ruby Nguyen, Epidemiology, School of Public Health

For more information about initiatives, events, or workshops, visit: diversity.umn.edu/idea/

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