

THE UW-EXTENSION PLAN 2008: EDUCATIONAL QUALITY THROUGH RACIAL AND ETHNIC DIVERSITY

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Preface

"Growth demands a temporary surrender of security.' Personal growth requires courage, as does organizational change. In both cases, people naturally resist it."
William C. Richardson, Ph.D., President & Chief Executive Officer, W.K.Kellogg Foundation, quoting Gail Sheehy

The University of Wisconsin-Extension is committed to being an inclusive organization that seeks and promotes diversity in our workforce, program participants, clientele, customers, educational partners and program content. While we have not yet reached the ultimate goal of representational parity throughout the organization, we appreciate that the value and benefits of an inclusive organization are necessary to meet the diverse needs of our constituencies, students, employees, and residents of the State.

The University of Wisconsin-Extension also is committed to creating a workplace environment that enhances and nurtures pluralism as symbolized in our **Vision for Diversity**¹. Creating an organization that is genuinely inclusive will not be accomplished through employing a series of "quick-fix" actions. Few people recognize the extent to which an organization will need to change in order to ensure genuine inclusion and equity. Managing diversity demands that we learn new ways to think, act and communicate. Our list of competencies must be revised so we can learn to work effectively within an environment of increasing racial, ethnic and cultural diversity. The executive leadership and workforce must make a long-term commitment to this strategic plan in order to achieve multiculturalism, pluralism and to effectuate change.

In an effort to assess our progress under the *Design for Diversity* and to collect information to help define our path for the future, UWEX conducted an assessment of the institutional climate for multiculturalism, *The Diversity Profile*. The UW-Extension Diversity Council's *Report and Recommendations on Recruitment and Retention* also was included in the planning and assessment work for the development of Plan 2008. While many of the recommended actions in that report have been implemented, those remaining are incorporated into this plan in goals 5 and 6. The goals and objectives outlined in the *UWSA Plan 2008: Educational Quality Through Racial and Ethnic Diversity*, combined with information reported in *The Diversity Profile*, set the stage for the development of the UW-Extension Plan 2008.

In creating the UWEX Plan 2008, UW-Extension executive, administrative, and managerial leaders, along with the Plan 2008 Steering Committee, assessed accomplishments. That assessment was used to develop new directions and define initiatives to guide us toward becoming a pluralistic organization during the next ten years. Taking stock of our accomplishments is an important aspect of this work. Over the past 10 years, UW-Extension has continually engaged in a plethora of initiatives, programs and activities directed toward increasing workforce

¹ See Appendix A

diversity, improving the workplace climate for diversity and multiculturalism, and increasing diversity among our program participants.

Everyone worked very hard to assure that our goals and initiatives will enable us to be successful while remaining true to our extension educational mission - - teaching, applied research, public broadcasting and communications. In analyzing factors that will have the greatest influence upon success, the Plan 2008 Committee was very conscious of the fact that programmatic substance, not size, is a major contributing factor to the climate of inclusiveness, equity and educational excellence. The Committee also concluded that strong institutional and personal commitments to multiculturalism and inclusiveness are prerequisites to achieving any of the goals outlined in this plan.

The Committee, along with UW-Extension's executive and administrative leadership, utilized the following five concepts as the framework within which institutional goals and initiatives were developed: *inclusiveness, shared responsibility, evaluation, accountability and institutionalization*. It is our collective belief that, for this diversity initiative to be successful, it must be both a "top-down and bottom-up" process that touches all parts of the organization. Everyone, regardless of employment status, has a critical role to play in determining whether UW-Extension reaches the goals of this Plan. Success will be determined not only by decision- and policy-makers, but also by the attitudes and the spirit of cooperation manifested by every employee, stakeholder, partner or constituent.

Last, some will question whether we have over-committed ourselves. Our response is a resounding "No", with a gentle reminder that this is a 10-year plan.

Terms

Culturally Appropriate

Actions, behaviors, processes, and materials that take diversity, ethnicity and culture into account in determining specific policies, directions, decisions, delivery, images and content.

Disadvantaged

A term defined by Wisconsin statutes to refer to persons who are low-income and/or first-generation college graduates.

Diversity

Differences in individuals, or the differences that exist between and among ethnic groups. At its simplest “diversity” means “variety”: the makeup of the workforce, the student body, the organization reflects the diversity of the U.S. population. It refers to the collective mixture of difference and similarities wherever they might be found. This term includes everyone and is often used to refer to all the human characteristics that make individuals unique.

Primary dimensions of diversity are those immutable human differences that are inborn and/or that exert an important impact on our early socialization and an ongoing impact throughout our lives. The primary dimensions of diversity include race, gender, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and physical characteristics. Secondary dimensions of diversity include marital and parental status, socio-economic (work background, income, tenure, exempt, nonexempt) class, education, religious beliefs, military experience, and geographical location.

Inclusive Organization

An organization that actively practices multiculturalism throughout all phases of its operations by demonstrating a genuine understanding, appreciation and value for all aspects of diversity, the role of culture, and the impact of similarities and differences upon all personal, interpersonal, and institutional/systemic interactions.

Multicultural Education

Teaching and learning that effectively include the histories, contributions and perspectives of all groups and individuals that make up our national identity. Education that recognizes multiple histories, cultural values and learning styles. It also recognizes the role that power, privilege, inclusion, equity, opportunity and justice issues play in much of the conflict over societal differences.

Multiculturalism

Refers to the process of recognizing, understanding and appreciating one’s own culture as well as the culture of others. It stresses an appreciation of the impact of differences – race, nationality, gender, class, age, sexual orientation, religion, and physical ability. Multiculturalism implies an inclusionary rather than an exclusionary process. This process involves cognitive, behavioral and attitudinal elements (i.e., head, hand and heart).

Person of Color/People of Color

A term used to refer to groups of people who are not white or of European heritage, representing diverse ethnic and national backgrounds, such as Africans, African Americans, Native Americans/American Indians, Asians, Latinos, Hispanics, and others.

Pluralism

Acceptance, appreciation, utilization and celebration of similarities and differences at the personal, interpersonal, institutional/systemic and cultural levels.

Introduction

*"...Addressing the specific educational needs of underserved, disadvantaged and non-traditional students."
From the select mission of UW-Extension*

The Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin unanimously adopted the UW System's umbrella Plan 2008 in May 1998. Institutional goals and priorities² are directly linked to the seven goals outlined in the University of Wisconsin System Plan 2008 and UW-Extension's institutional mission.

UW-Extension's mission distinguishes it from the UW residential campuses where the primary objective is to provide quality undergraduate, graduate or professional education. UW-Extension's mission on the other hand, is to provide jointly, with the UW institutions, the Wisconsin counties and other partners, extension programs designed to apply university research, knowledge and resources to meet the community-based and other educational needs of people in this state.

Many of the goals in Plan 2008 focus on improving and increasing higher education opportunities, and college and high school graduation rates for students of color in Wisconsin. Several institutions in the UW System offer pre-college programs that are coordinated by campus continuing education offices or funded through Extension resources. Although PK-12 education and college preparation are not the primary focus of the Extension mission, UW-Extension provides important educational programs for youth and families, and continuing education for PK-12 educators is among the priorities for Outreach and E-Learning Extension.

Consequently, UW-Extension had to be creative in crafting programs and initiatives that are consistent with its mission, while simultaneously enabling it to contribute to the attainment of the system-wide Plan 2008 goals. Yet, because of its potential for influence on the lives of people in this state, UW-Extension is uniquely positioned to positively influence the public's perspectives on diversity. Through its noncredit continuing education programs, off-campus-based credit outreach courses, applied research, Cooperative Extension community-based education, Small Business Development Centers and information disseminated via public broadcasting and communications, Extension administrators and educators can play a major part in educating the public and positively influence their world views about the benefits of diversity and multiculturalism.

During the developmental phases of this plan, four major themes emerged that significantly influenced the specific initiatives ultimately included in the plan:

- (1) The committee and institutional leadership recognize the crucial role of effective recruitment, selection, and retention strategies.
- (2) Professional development and training for Extension leadership, employees, stakeholders and constituencies is crucial to reaching the goals of this plan, and are necessary to provide a common operational framework to align the organization's culture with its stated commitment to inclusion and diversity.
- (3) Appropriate assessment and accountability measures are needed to motivate employees and stakeholders to actively and positively engage in the change process, try new strategies and take risks; and also to reward achievements and capitalize on successes. And,
- (4) UW-Extension is uniquely situated to use technology as a means to facilitate the exchange of ideas and successes to advance the goals of Plan 2008 on a system-wide basis.

Institutional goals and priorities are generally directed toward enhancing performance and results in the following areas:

- executive, managerial and administrative leadership and systemic change;
- recruitment, selection, retention and affirmative action;
- professional development, training and curriculum transformation;
- more inclusive institutional/campus-family/community connections; and
- faculty, staff, employee development to enhance applied knowledge and skills about multiculturalism.

² UW-Extension Executive Committee adopted Goals 1, 2, 5, 6 and 7 as institutional priorities.
Created by Vicki Washington, U:\Attach\PhaseIINarrative2.DOC1/11/2005

UW-Extension's executive leadership and members of the steering committee understand that our efforts to achieve the goals of this plan will not be an easy undertaking, and that it requires the commitment, work and vigilance of all of us - - executives, directors, managers, supervisors and all employees. Yet, we also believe that these transformational experiences will be among the most rewarding professional and personal growth experiences undertaken by those who work to help achieve the goals.

UW System's Seven Goals, UW-Extension's Institutional Goals and Priorities

The UW-Extension Plan 2008 goals detailed below are noted by the bulleted *italicized and bolded text*, preceded by the corresponding UW System goal. Institutional priorities are tied to UW System goals number 1, 2, 5, 6 and 7. We realize that any successes in building and sustaining relationships and networks in working towards Goals 1 through 4 will necessarily have an overall positive effect on our ability to achieve our institutional priorities: Goals 1, 2, 5, 6 and 7. We also are acutely aware that any unnecessary failures in these efforts may have the opposite effect and seriously impede our progress.

Goal 1 **Increase the number of Wisconsin high school graduates of color who apply, are accepted and enroll at UW System institutions.**

- A. *Expand campus pre-college partnerships and programs that target youth and adults of color.*
- B. *Incorporate themes into current extension educational programs that encourage youth and families to pursue college education.*

UW-Extension, recognizing the relative significance of this goal to the overall success of Plan 2008, selected it as one of its institutional priorities even though adult students rather than recent high school graduates are the primary market for Extension's educational programs. Several of the campuses offer very successful pre-college programs for youth of color that are coordinated by their Continuing Education office and/or supported through UW-Extension funds. Our continuing education colleagues on other campuses recognize the important role pre-college programs can also play for returning adult learners - an audience all UW System continuing educators serve.

Through the development of innovative educational partnerships spearheaded by the Director of the Small Business Development Center, the Outreach and E-Learning Extension leadership and the 4H/Youth Development State Program Area, UW-Extension will contribute to the attainment of this system-wide goal on behalf of UW-Extension. It is important to note that several existing Wisconsin Public Television programs targeted toward school-aged youth support the objectives of this goal. Some of these programs are fed into schools with accompanying videotapes and program curricula.

These efforts, we believe, mutually benefit UW-Extension and persons of color who participate in these programs. Through these partnership efforts, UW-Extension will increase its ability to best meet the educational needs of persons of color and other disadvantaged groups and individuals across the state. Youth, families and adult students of color will become more knowledgeable about extension educational programs. Long-term benefits include participant interactions with extension educators that create more opportunities to learn about extension career options, and increased numbers of degree holders who are potential employees.

Goal 2 **Encourage partnerships that build the educational pipeline by reaching children and their parents at an earlier age.**

- A. *Increase partnerships with the business community to strengthen educational programs and provide access to technology for youth of color and families.*
- B. *Expand partnerships with community-based organizations and agencies that work with youth of color and their families.*

Like Goal 1, this goal also is an institution-wide priority for UW-Extension for the same reasons as previously indicated. Again, initiatives and programs to achieve this goal will be of sustained mutual benefit for UW-

Extension, and for communities of color and individuals who are economically disadvantaged. Through improved and expanded programs for K-12 teachers, campus continuing education offices and Outreach and E-Learning Extension have significant opportunities to construct effective strategies and methods to improve teaching outcomes for PK-12 students. Also, both Cooperative Extension and Wisconsin Public Television (Broadcasting and Media Innovations) have programs for pre-schoolers that support early education for student success. Wisconsin Public Television's Outreach unit has and will continue to partner with both the business community and with community-based organizations on projects that have impacts for youth of color and their families. At the community-level UW-Extension educators, administrators and learners will share knowledge, and engage in the development of learner-centered programs to advance educational objectives for economically disadvantaged individuals and for communities of color.

Goal 3 **Close the gap in educational achievement by bringing retention and graduation rates for students of color in line with those of the student body as a whole.**

- A. *Enhance education programs designed to impart skills, knowledge and strategies for teachers to improve the academic performance of students of color.*
- B. *Strengthen working relationships to form effective partnerships and joint outreach programs to reach more adult learners of color.*
- C. *Use credit outreach courses to encourage adult learners of color to begin degree programs.*

Achieving this goal will have a significant impact on diversity across all UW campuses, although its objectives are not a natural fit for UW-Extension with respect to the typical student pursuing undergraduate education. Within UW-Extension, the objectives of this goal -- closing the gap in educational achievement and improving graduation rates for students of color-- can best be supported through efforts led by the Outreach and E-Learning Extension Division and its partners, continuing education extension educators at UW institutions throughout the UW System. This can be accomplished in several ways: 1) by expanding and strengthening continuing education programs for PK-12 teachers to improve their skills and effectiveness in multicultural classrooms; 2) by increasing continuing education options for adult learners by expanding community-based learning programs and creatively using credit outreach to ultimately increase the number of adult students of color college who graduate from UW institutions; and 3) by implementing pre-college programs that engage youth of color in preparing for and succeeding in higher education.

Goal 4 **Increase the amount of financial aid available to needy students and reduce their reliance on loans**

- A. *Develop and expand financial support programs that provide incentives for students of color to obtain degrees relevant to Extension careers.*
- B. *Hire more college and graduate students of color for internships, work-study and graduate project assistantships*

Recent data indicate that lack of financial resources to pay for their educational expenses is a major reason for poor retention rates among economically disadvantaged students and students of color. Success with this goal will undoubtedly have a tremendous impact upon improving retention rates for students of color across the UW System. UW-Extension's ability to support the objectives of this goal, however, is limited by the scope of the Extension mission. Consequently, UW-Extension initiatives under this goal have three focal points:

- (1) dissemination of culturally-appropriate financial aid materials to youth of color and their families through the HELP³ function;
- (2) expansion of internships and student employment opportunities throughout the year; and
- (3) provision of tuition reimbursement opportunities for employees of color and other underutilized group members to pursue college and graduate degrees.

³ Higher Education Location Program
Created by Vicki Washington, U:\Attach\PhaseIINarrative2.DOC1/11/2005

Goal 5 Increase the number of faculty, academic staff, classified staff and administrators of color so that they are represented in the UW System workforce in proportion to their current availability in relevant job pools. In addition, work to increase their future availability as potential employees.

- A. *Adopt effective hiring policies and procedures to achieve a multicultural workforce.*
- B. *Educate employees and stakeholders involved in the recruitment process to apply multicultural concepts to the employment process.*
- C. *Implement effective retention strategies for employees of color.*
- D. *Implement effective strategies for recruiting employees of color.*

UW-Extension's ability to reach this goal is undoubtedly an overriding factor in its ability to successfully achieve its other institutional priorities under this Plan. It also is the most challenging! Extension leadership and the Plan 2008 Steering Committee understand that goals 5 and 6 are inextricably linked. No affirmative recruitment strategies can be truly successful without linking effective retention strategies while simultaneously addressing environmental issues relating to genuine inclusion. UW-Extension has made a significant commitment to this goal and expects to expend a significant portion of its resources in reaching Goals 5 and 6. Across the institution, UW-Extension units are painfully aware of organizational needs in this area.

Extension administrative leadership is committed to continual critical examination of all recruitment and selection practices to remove impediments to making diverse hires. To achieve this goal, recruitment, interview and selection committees must be composed of people representing diverse communities, experiences, perspectives and backgrounds. Committees need to incorporate multicultural language and concepts into their deliberations, assessment of candidates strengths and weaknesses and recommendations to the hiring authorities. Across the organization, administrators and managers have committed to increasing educational opportunities for staff, and for search and screen committee members to enable them to apply the principles of multiculturalism and inclusion to the entire recruitment and selection process. Internship opportunities, where they exist, should be restructured or strengthened to accomplish our goals.

Goal 6 Foster institutional environments and course development that enhance learning and respect for racial and ethnic diversity.

- A. *Administrators and managers will provide leadership in applying multiculturalism in all aspects of organizational work.*
- B. *Implement learning opportunities to increase cross-cultural skills and knowledge for employees to ensure success for students of color.*
- C. *Provide multicultural education for stakeholders & constituencies.*
- D. *Create more collaborative educational programs with communities of color.*
- E. *Expand partnerships with businesses, community-based organizations and schools to promote multiculturalism.*

Multiple opportunities exist for UW-Extension to have far-reaching positive impacts upon UW System's ability to reach this goal and attain its objectives. The compelling need for effective multicultural education for *all* UW-Extension employees is the underlying premise of most of initiatives outlined in Goal 6. Diversity and multiculturalism will continue to present formidable challenges for business, education, health care, the criminal punishment system, and other public and private enterprises. As a statewide organization, UW-Extension fulfills the outreach education mission of the university system. It is positioned to influence the culture of this state and to enhance learning and respect for racial and ethnic diversity. UW-Extension can dramatically influence and shape the world-views of State residents through interactions with faculty, teachers, youth, adult learners, businesses and manufacturing enterprises, community-based organizations, and through applied research expertise. UW-Extension is committed to better prepare its workforce to embrace multiculturalism and consider it in all that we do.

Goal 7 Improve accountability of the UW System and its institutions.

- A. All administrators, managers and supervisors will provide leadership and be responsible for creating a multicultural organization.*
- B. Establish goals and timelines for all employees to measure attainment of Plan 2008 goals.*
- C. Develop and implement effective measurements to evaluate success of Plan 2008 and its initiatives.*
- D. Make appropriate reallocations of resources to accomplish goals and priorities defined in Plan 2008.*

Goal 7 is the linchpin of this plan, for without effective accountability measurements and assessment points, this Plan is only another document filled with lofty ideals. The UW-Extension Deans/Directors, administrators, directors and managers must exercise leadership in decision-making, policy-making and budgeting authority to assure that we achieve the goals of this plan. However, the bottom line is that every person in every unit across UW-Extension must in some way become involved in this effort.

An important part of accountability is continuous program and organizational improvement. At the programmatic level, success is defined by each of the individual goals and objectives throughout this Plan. The impacts, outcomes and accountability factors listed for each subgoal will be used to guide systematic and on-going evaluation of progress made, lessons learned, and successes achieved. These results will be reported and shared with colleagues at all levels of the organization, facilitated by administrators and managers, so that progress toward inclusivity and student success happens at all levels and in all units of the organization to result in genuine changes throughout all of UW-Extension.