

## **College of Education Diversity Initiatives: 2007-2008**

The Mission of the College of Education is to provide the highest level of leadership in furthering education, life-long learning, and well-being for all citizens of Alabama as members of a global community. In fulfilling this mission, we envision becoming an exemplar for preparing high quality professionals who are committed to maximizing the potential of every citizen to participate fully in a global society.

As part of its mission, the College of Education is committed to broadening students' understanding of different cultures and preparing them for the global community in which we live. The College of Education is committed to providing education majors a wealth of hands on training opportunities in order to prepare them for the diverse workplaces they will enter. Increasing the diversity of our faculty, staff, and students are critical priorities for the College. But our success in achieving this diversity depends upon our ability to create an environment that is both welcoming and academically challenging to those persons we would like to attract to work with us as partners in building a better learning community for all of us.

We believe that an international academic experience, in which students immerse themselves in a different culture and apply what they have learned in their USA classes, can enhance their cross-cultural competence and improve their interpersonal skills. While abroad, students develop a greater understanding and a deeper appreciation of the complexity of cultural, political, environmental, and social issues worldwide which build on the theoretical and practical skills needed to interact effectively in today's global society. Students are encouraged to explore the full range of international opportunities for directed study, teaching internships, collaborative research, or service learning projects available in the College and in other programs across campus.

Beginning in summer 2004, the College undertook an ambitious re-organization plan intended, among other things, to increase institutional diversity and make us more responsive as a College to the external demands of collaborating with our educational partners to improve education for every child. For the past year, we focused our attention on realizing specific objectives organized under a set of major goals. The significant achievements realized in meeting these objectives are presented below:

### **To build academic quality and improve the learning environment**

Several initiatives responded to the challenges of living in a culturally diverse, economically turbulent, and increasingly global environment. The latest University data show retention rates for scholarship students in the College at high to moderate levels for the past two years (90% and 76%, respectively). The College's efforts to recruit and retain minority students continue to lead the University and exceed College goals. Enrollment figures for spring semester 2007 versus spring semester 2008 show very modest gains in percent and raw number of students for

African Americans (22.4% to 24.1%/490 to 500) and for All Minorities (25.3% to 26.6%/555 to 559). Nonetheless, data from the university for students who start out as first time, full-time freshmen, and data from an analysis of transfer students indicate that six year graduation rates are at 42% for first-time freshmen and 44% for transfers.

Significant partnerships were created with the Mobile County Public School System (MCPSS) and the Baldwin County Public Schools (BCPS) to support math and science instruction in area schools, especially for poor and minority students, through competitive grants secured by College faculty.

Because the college plays such a central role in preparing teachers for positions in local school districts, we have emphasized that collaboration with local educational agencies be planned specifically to focus on issues of curriculum and on the recruitment and retention of underrepresented faculty. We have recognized a need for a curriculum review for all programs to ensure that diversity is being incorporated in all classes. Program faculty are restructuring their curricula to include issues of diversity explicitly into their courses to meet new state standards.

Responding to local demand for teachers prepared to work with the area's growing population of non-native speakers of English, a proposal to establish a master's program for English Speakers of Other Languages has been submitted to the ALSDE for review. Expanding our global outreach, collaborative agreements for student and faculty exchange were signed with the University of Salamanca (Spain) and Dongguk University (Korea). Collaboration with the University of Jyväskylä (Finland) has expanded to embrace teacher and leadership preparation in addition to current initiatives in counseling as well as health and physical education. The College sponsored a visit to campus by a team of educators from the University of Costa Rica as part of our previously approved collaborative agreement.

The Advising Center initiated an aggressive program for recruiting candidates from two-year colleges, especially those serving minority applicants.

Professional development programs were successfully implemented to improve multicultural literacy among the faculty and to improve practice that addresses multicultural education in courses and in research. Nationally recognized scholars made presentations to the College community as part of the College's *Distinguished Lecture Series* and these scholars and members of the College community participated in our *Food for Thought* luncheon series of workshops.

### *Distinguished Lecture Series*

**August 27, 2007.** *Empowered Youth Programs: Bridging the Achievement Gap for Children and Adolescents of Color* by Dr. Deryl F. Bailey, Associate Professor, Department of Counseling and Human Development, The University of Georgia.

**September 6, 2007.** *Understanding and Responding to Large-Scale Crises Across Cultures* by Dr. José Navarro Góngora, Professor, Department of Psychology, University of Salamanca.

**February 7, 2008.** *Preparing Teachers for a Changing World: What Teachers Should Learn and Be Able to Do* by Dr. Linda Darling-Hammond, Professor of Education, Stanford University.

**September 11, 2008.** *Crisis Intervention: Reflections Across Cultures* by Dr. José Navarro Góngora, Professor, Department of Psychology, University of Salamanca.

#### *Food For Thought*

**August 28, 2007.** *On Being Black in a Predominantly White University* by Dr. Deryl F. Bailey, Associate Professor, Department of Counseling and Human Development, The University of Georgia.

**September 5, 2007.** *A Cross Cultural View of Families in Crisis* by Dr. José Navarro Góngora, Professor, Department of Psychology, University of Salamanca.

**March 5, 2008.** *On Asados, Gauchos, and the Tango: Packaging Argentina's Cultural Diversity for Educators* by Dr. Brenda Juaréz, Assistant Professor, Department of Professional Studies, University of South Alabama.

**March 20, 2008.** *Meeting the Needs of Higher Education Students from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds* by Dr. Brenda Beverly, Associate Professor, Department of Speech Pathology and Audiology, University of South Alabama.

**March 21, 2008.** *Understanding Perceptions: Factors Influencing African American Students' Achievement* by Dr. Brenda R. Brand, Associate Professor, Department of Science Education, Virginia Tech University

**April 2, 2008.** *Political Awareness as an Essential Element in Diversity Education* by Dr. Fred Scaffidi, Professor and Chair, Department of Health, Physical Education and Leisure Studies, University of South Alabama.

**April 24, 2008.** *Examining the Achievement Gap Experienced by African-American Students* by Dr. André Green, Assistant Professor, Department of Leadership and Teacher Education, University of South Alabama.

**July 15, 2008.** *Education in Costa Rica* by Ms. Melania R. Monge and Dr. Ronald Soto, Visiting Education Faculty, Counseling and Special Education, University of Costa Rica-San Jose.

**September 10, 2008.** *Educational Opportunities at the University of Salamanca* by Dr. José Navarro Góngora, Professor, Department of Psychology, University of Salamanca.

**December 11, 2008.** *Language, Identity, and Classroom Behavior* by Dr. Bryan Brown, Assistant Professor, Department of Science Education, Stanford University.

### *Sponsored Performances*

**April 1, 2008.** *The Literature to Life Presentation of Black Boy* by Mr. Charles Holt, Dramatic Actor, The American Place Theatre, New York, NY.

### **To improve the quality of student life and the campus atmosphere**

Efforts to diversify the faculty continued as one tenure-track Asian male, one tenure-track Hispanic female, and an additional four women were added to tenure track positions. One woman was hired on a renewable Instructor appointment.

Outreach to local communities and schools is a key priority for the College. As the College has moved forward with diversity planning, representatives of agencies served by the College have been actively involved. Faculty are routinely involved in local schools and community agencies as consultants and collaborators on several research projects serving poor and minority students and students with special needs. In addition we have made College facilities available to community groups, especially minority groups, for meetings and events. In addition to the luncheons, workshops, and lectures noted above, the College sponsored the National Conference for Community and Justice's *Make a Change Leadership Institute* (NCCJ) on March 22, 2008, and sponsored faculty-student-staff attendance at the annual Soul Food Luncheon on campus. Students were included in College-sponsored diversity initiatives: we held a student honors and awards banquet, student-parent pre-graduation receptions in UCOM, and a reception for alumni of our Instructional Design and Development program, many of whom are international students.

### **To improve planning and assessment processes**

Although the number of female faculty has increased substantially over the past three years to now represent nearly 60% of the total faculty, women and minority faculty at the Instructor and Assistant Professor ranks comprise nearly 50% of the total faculty. One female currently serves as an Assistant Department Chair and four females are members of the Dean's Administrative Council. In an effort to expand both leadership opportunities and decision-making, a set of roles and responsibilities were formalized and 12 program coordinators were appointed, eight of whom are female.

The College has had an active program of leadership development for female and minority faculty. An active mentoring program for minority faculty was continued with the hiring of Dr. Johnnie McFadden, who is the Benjamin Elijah Mays Professor of Educational Psychology and

Director of the African American Professors Program at the University of South Carolina. He was appointed Visiting Professor in the College to support multicultural curriculum transformation and to serve as a resource in writing for publication and multicultural issues.

A mentoring seminar for female faculty was implemented as part of a concerted effort by senior faculty to work with junior faculty to help them transition into becoming effective members of their respective departments. A special workshop was held on tenure and promotion where faculty could ask questions about expectations and responsibilities associated with positions in higher education.

The College has undertaken the development of a serious and well thought-out diversity plan based on an objective assessment of the College's needs and strengths. A comprehensive survey of faculty, students, and staff has been developed by the Diversity Council and is scheduled to be administered in Spring 2009.

A series of discussions was held with stakeholders (faculty, students, staff, alumni, in-service teachers, administrators, and community members) that represent the racial, socio economic, gender and linguistic diversity of the university, community, region, and state to revise our strategic plan and align the College's goals more closely with the recently revised *USA Goals and Objectives (2008-2013)*. In December 2008, we completed the revision of our mission and vision statements and developed a revised set of goals and objectives. The specific objectives related to diversity include:

### **Goal 1: To raise academic quality and enhance the learning environment**

#### ***Objectives***

- 1.1: Facilitate student achievement of knowledge and skills necessary for teaching and learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (e.g., critical thinking, problem-solving, entrepreneurship, interpersonal communication, multicultural competence, teaming and collaboration, and global awareness).
- 1.2: Renew our commitment to provide all human and institutional resources necessary to graduate every student with the skills, knowledge, and dispositions to be effective as an ethical professional educator.
- 1.3: Improve coordination of recruitment, supervision, and mentoring of high quality students across all programs and with our educational partners.
- 1.10: Build a culture within the College to support new curricular innovations in Clinical and Counseling Psychology, ESOL, and Instructional Leadership.

### **Goal 2: To maximize the quality of student life**

#### ***Objectives***

- 2.1: Expand the range and quality of responsive services for traditional and non-traditional graduate and undergraduate students and improve responsiveness to student-initiated concerns.
- 2.3: Develop a responsive student retention program focused on improving advisement, mentoring, and evaluation.

### **Goal 3: To embrace diversity**

#### ***Objectives***

- 3.1: Create a welcoming environment by providing culturally-sensitive supports to retain faculty, staff, and students from under-represented groups.
- 3.2: Revise, implement, and evaluate action plan to enhance diversity and advance the multicultural competencies of faculty, staff, and students consistent with the University's strategic diversity plan.
- 3.3: Expand faculty and student involvement with potential international collaborators, promote existing collaborations in Europe, Asia, and Central America, and encourage applications for international fellowships.
- 3.4: Increase opportunities to enhance diversity through international faculty and student exchange programs and study abroad programs.
- 3.5: Continue current plan to infuse multicultural competencies and a global perspective into a curriculum that prepares students for life-long learning and collaboration in a diverse world.
- 3.6: Develop proposal for Global Education Program in collaboration with other units on campus.
- 3.7: Increase focus on diversity in college activities, expand involvement in College Diversity Council, support *Future Teachers for Freedom Dreams*, and promote outreach to diverse communities.
- 3.8: Evaluate effectiveness of current initiatives (e.g., Diversity Council, Food for Thought seminars, Make-A-Change).
- 3.9: Review, revise, and expand efforts to recruit and retain academically well-prepared students from minority and other underrepresented groups.
- 3.10: Continue to explore means to diversify existing faculty through targeted recruitment, visiting faculty program, part-time employment, grants, and endowed professorships.

### **Goal 6: To ensure appropriate planning and assessment**

#### ***Objectives***

- 6.6: Mentor faculty and staff from underrepresented groups to assume leadership positions in the College.