

**Committee on Equal Opportunities
Visit to University of Louisville
Summary and Recommendations
April 18-19, 2005**

Approved by the CEO: June 20, 2005

Executive Summary

Purpose and Process: The purpose of the campus visit was to allow the Committee on Equal Opportunities members to review institutional activities that support the objectives of *The Kentucky Plan for Equal Opportunities*. The CEO is charged with monitoring institutional progress toward implementing *The Kentucky Plan for Equal Opportunities* and the Partnership Agreement with the U. S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights. Monitoring is completed through data analysis and campus visits.

The CEO visited the University of Louisville, April 18-19, 2005, to meet with campus leaders, students, faculty, and other members of the campus community. The meetings were designed to give committee members an opportunity to hear from selected members of the university community. Campus visits are not meant to gather scientific, empirical data. The CEO's intent was to learn first-hand about the success of equal opportunity plan implementation on the UofL campus.

Core Focus: The CEO visit report begins by identifying the general focus for review and discussion with the university administration and the campus community. The committee's goal was to learn about the university's strategies and leadership in implementing the objectives of the plan and recommendations from the previous two campus visits and the results of those efforts.

Report Summary: The UofL is uniquely positioned to achieve success in creating a diverse and supportive campus environment for students, faculty, and staff through the innovative application of strategies that shift decisively toward modifying its traditional structure of programs that support faculty and student recruitment and retention.

The UofL has made significant progress towards implementing the objectives of *The Kentucky Plan*. Despite the many pressures and legal challenges to university minority support programs and the pressure to keep such programs low-key, under the leadership of President James Ramsey, the university continues to have a strong commitment to diversity. Information that the university provided to the CEO showed improvements have been made since the 1998 and 2000 visits, resulting in varying degrees of success. In many instances, concerns raised by the university community impacted a majority of the student body or faculty and staff, but may have been more pronounced among African Americans or other ethnic minorities.

President Ramsey's commitment to the *1997 Postsecondary Education Improvement Act* (House Bill 1) is reflected in the programs that have been created and are being implemented during his tenure. Most notably is his insistence that the board include as a high priority in his annual performance evaluation the institution's progress toward campus diversity. His vision for the university is identified in his strategic plan, *Challenge for Excellence*, that consists of the following five interrelated strategic areas: (1) educational experience; (2) research, and creative and scholarly activity; (3) accessibility, diversity, equity and communication; (4) partnerships and collaborations; and (5) institutional effectiveness of programs and services.

Located in Kentucky's largest metropolitan area, UofL has three campuses: the Belknap (main) Campus located in Old Louisville, the Health Sciences Center situated in the medical complex and the University of Louisville Hospital (downtown), and the Shelby Campus located in eastern Jefferson County. UofL leads Kentucky's public universities in the enrollment of African American students (1,806 in fall 2003), though enrollments have fluctuated over the years.

Since the 2000 campus visit, UofL has developed and implemented various initiatives to attract African American and other minority students. Some examples follow.

- Future Scholars Program, USHR
- Undergraduate Students Helping to Recruit
- Up Close & Personal with UofL
- Woodford R. Porter Shadowing Program
- Governors Scholars Reception
- Think College Now
- NIA Junior Conference
- Woodford R. Porter Scholarship Reception

President Ramsey stated that the university is working diligently to foster a community of inclusiveness and that the campus community shares the institutions' vision and goals. The president shared with the CEO that challenges still exist, such as responding to hate groups' requests, campus climate issues, and improving retention and graduation rates.

The focus group discussions and the general presentations reflected good performance, with steady improvement and progress towards *The Kentucky Plan* commitments.

Strategies used to implement recommendations from the 1998 and 2000 reports reveal varying degrees of success. For example, UofL implemented a policy to place greater emphasis on graduate enrollment while deemphasizing or holding steady its undergraduate enrollment. Since 1998, the enrollment of African American undergraduates has basically remained steady, while graduate enrollment has increased. While the university has not seen major increases in undergraduate African American student enrollment, proportionately the university has not lost ground in this area. The university continues to be strongly committed to diversity and has shifted recruitment policy and programs for African American undergraduate and graduate students,

overhauled scholarship and fellowship programs, and formed outreach programs to further diversify the student population. UofL partners with various communities such as Portland and Smoketown, the west end, as well as other areas of Louisville/Jefferson County, to strengthen relationships between the African American community and UofL. The university highlighted the following several programs that help to attract and retain African American students: Pan African Studies, the African American Theatre Program, the Debate Team, and the master's degree program in Pan-African and Women's and Gender Studies.

Other student retention programs include Resources for Academic Achievement (REACH) Monitored Academic Preparation for Success (MAPS), Caring of New Students Experiencing College Transition (CONNECT), and the Undergraduate Research Program (URP). Several new support programs and student organizations were created to help with student retention, such as the Society of Porter Scholars, Porter Parents, Black Map Rap Sessions (BMRS), a Sistah's Voice, the Association of Black Students, the National Society of Black Engineers, African Student Union, and Extended Family Mentoring Programs. The focus groups identified these programs as being a good first step in creating the kind of campus environment that supports and encourages diversity.

The retention rate for Kentucky resident African American undergraduates has increased steadily since 1998. The retention of first-year African American students, as well as the graduation rate, remains a challenge. Between fall 1999 and fall 2003 the retention of first-year Kentucky resident African American students fluctuated, while the graduation rate for undergraduates increased slightly.

In the areas of research and development, the president noted the institution's commitment to support the SREB Compact for Faculty Diversity as one way to increase the pipeline of properly credentialed minorities going into the professoriate. The SREB program has been in place since the mid-1990s and as UofL participation has increased so has the number of African Americans earning doctoral degrees. UofL created specifically targeted programming to increase diversity through such programs as the "Our Highest Potential Chairs program" that funds endowed chairs for logistics and distribution, cardiovascular research, cancer research, entrepreneurship and small business development, Pan-African studies, urban law, peacemaking and conflict resolution, and early childhood education. Eight endowed chairs have been identified at this point. Three African Americans have been employed as endowed chairs, and a search for the director of fundraising for diversity initiatives is underway. The director will have responsibility for the Our Highest Potential program as well as other programs. These and other programs are intentionally directed at assisting the research programs and professional schools to increase diversity among students and staff.

The university has shown some degree of success in increasing the representation of African Americans at the executive level; however, the CEO noted that more diversity is needed in critical areas. The committee recognizes that high-level positions within an organization do not frequently become available but encourages the president to pursue innovative opportunities to include African American representation. The office of the

vice provost for diversity has played a key role in the area of accessibility, diversity, and equity. The office also supports diversity through initiatives such as unit diversity plans, the diversity monitoring committee, the Commission on Diversity and Racial Equality (CODRE), Multicultural Academic Enrichment Programs (MAEP), the Women's Center and PEACE Program, the Muhammad Ali Institute for Peace and Justice, the Upward Bound Program, the Interfaith Center, the Office of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Services (LGBT), and incentives to hire new faculty.

Recommendations from the CEO

Admissions, Advising, and Diversity Initiatives

1. The university should consider conducting a desk audit of its advising policies and procedures and use the results to develop guidelines that are consistent campus wide. Students reported that the advising and support services are not consistent across departments. They noted that incoming freshmen appear to struggle because they are unable to connect with an effective support system. For example, students said that advising may take place in the freshman year, but many students are forced to locate support and guidance from upperclassmen as they move beyond the first-year experience. The faculty and professional staff voiced similar concerns.
2. While voluntary participation is allowed, the committee recommends that the university consider implementing a policy of mandatory diversity training for administrators, faculty, and staff. Also, diversity training should be consistent across departments and colleges.
3. The university should create scholarship opportunities for transfer students, extend more of the support services currently reserved to Porter Scholars to other students, and align scholarship policies with time to graduation, particularly if the average time to graduation is six years.
4. The university should continue to uniformly communicate the value of the Pathways to Success program to further reduce or eliminate the concern and distrust of the program among minorities. The most prominent concern is the idea of a seamless transition of students from Jefferson Community and Technical College to the University of Louisville.
5. The university should renew its commitment to work with Kentucky State University to provide greater access to professional and graduate programs for qualified KSU graduates.
6. The university should consider establishing and financially supporting summer research or other programs to encourage more interest in graduate programs.

7. The university should investigate the value of establishing a recruitment committee to focus exclusively on the recruitment of underrepresented minority groups at the graduate and professional programs levels.

Communications

1. The university should communicate to the university community a uniform interpretation of diversity and diversity objectives. Currently, there are conflicting interpretations across departments and colleges within the campus community. Faculty and staff seem to be unaware of a uniform definition or interpretation of diversity and diversity planning.
2. The role of faculty in the process of recruiting minority students should be clearly communicated, particularly to graduate and professional programs. African American graduate students voiced the belief that faculty and staff rely too heavily on minority students to recruit minorities into graduate and professional programs.
3. The diversity unit chairs' efforts to establish a climate and communicate the university's expectation that opportunities be made available for all employees to develop to their fullest potential should be sanctioned and communicated to the campus community.
4. To facilitate program success, diversity events should be included on the university's master calendar.

Advancement and Upward Mobility

1. The university should implement innovative strategies to increase the representation of African Americans at the highest level of policy development, particularly since such positions become available infrequently.
2. The university should consider implementing a rewards program that publicly acknowledges the success of deans and chairs for achieving diversity objectives, such as recruitment and retention of African American faculty and staff. While the president and provost indicated that deans and chairs are held accountable in their formal evaluations for diversity, focus groups conveyed to the committee a perception that there are no incentives for the deans and department chairs to view diversity as a priority.
3. A formal, well-communicated program should be established to assist junior faculty and staff interested in pursuing professional development opportunities. Mentoring and identification of career development opportunities should be a high priority for promising junior faculty and staff.
4. The university should have a clearly communicated policy that consistently provides release time for both faculty and staff to participate in campus environment team meetings (CODRE) and other support program activities.

5. The university should complete a desk audit to confirm that the affirmative action office is properly structured and is effective in identifying and addressing weaknesses and meeting the needs and expectations of employees.

Student Issues

1. African American graduate and professional students enrolled at the Health Science Center reported feeling disconnected from the main campus. Students also stated that they often are subjected to disparate conversations or requirements. For example, they are the focus in discussions regarding affirmative action or quotas, and they feel pressured to defend their rights to enroll in graduate and professional education. If implemented, the committee's recommendation regarding uniform diversity and sensitivity training would address this issue.
2. The university should review and align its scholarship policy to support students over the six-year period to graduation. African American undergraduate students raised concerns regarding the ability of scholarships (except those awarded to Porter Scholars) to support them to graduation.
3. Support services for minority students are limited. The university should consider providing all incoming freshmen and transfer students a resource guide containing information regarding academic support services, organizations, contact names, telephone numbers, E-mail addresses, and faculty and staff office locations. The guide should be distributed to all minority students as a resource to connect minority students, in particular, those that are newly admitted.

Recommendations or Concerns to the CEO

1. The CEO/CPE should look for ways to convince the Kentucky Department of Education to leave funding (scholarships and pipeline programs) in place for the recruitment of minority teachers for P-12 institutions.
2. The CEO should encourage the Council to work with institutions to allow and provide incentives for a university to offer its program--(for example social work in Louisville- with faculty not losing credit for teaching in Louisville). Also, such an arrangement should not conflict with an institution's right to serve a particular region (some type of dual enrollment).
3. The CEO should encourage KSU and UofL presidents to discuss potential opportunities for collaboration. The exercise might result in increased opportunities for KSU students to enroll in graduate and professional programs while UofL might reap the benefits of increased diversity.
4. The CEO should ask UofL, to the extent possible, to invite more African American students to participate in the undergraduate focus group discussions during the next

campus visit. Also, the CEO should allow as many as possible participants in prior visits to be invited to participate in future visit focus group discussions.

5. Service learning is central to and should be directly linked to the president's and board's vision to connect town and gown and the success of partnerships with the university community. The CEO should encourage the Council to work collaboratively with universities to create a role for service learning in the tenure and promotion systems for faculty and professional staff.

Discussions with Constituent and Focus Groups

Discussion with the President and Leadership Team: The highest priority of *The Kentucky Plan for Equal Opportunities* and the Partnership Agreement with the U. S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights is to create campus and community environments that are inviting and supportive of diverse student, faculty, and staff populations.

President James Ramsey and university administrators presented information regarding programs and strategies that have been implemented to achieve the objectives and commitments outlined in *The Kentucky Plan* and the Partnership Agreement. Administrators introduced programs that shift university efforts towards strategies that strongly support diversity (intellectual capital, and the enrollment and graduation of underrepresented minority students) and foster a sense of community. The president highlighted the mission of the university, as well as its strategic plan that focuses on the following five areas: Educational Excellence and Quality, Building Research Programs, Accessibility, Diversity, Equity, and Communication, Partnerships and Collaborations in the Community, and Institutional Effectiveness of Programs and Services.

Administrators discussed the program, "Our Highest Potential," a community partnership that is intended to address issues affecting African Americans. They also noted that two African Americans have been recruited to participate in the Bucks for Brains program. Special recruitment initiatives for African American undergraduate students also were introduced. The initiatives include the following: the Think Tank Now, Up Close and Personal, and University Students Helping to Recruit (USHR). Special scholarships and outreach programs also have been created. Students identified specific faculty members for providing encouragement and support when they required guidance or experienced difficulty in various departments or programs.

President Ramsey established a vision for diversity, Our Highest Potential, as well as a strategic plan, Challenge for Excellence, to encourage the university community to become actively engaged in a shared vision and goal. While the president's vision is that the campus and community embrace diversity, there appear to be pockets of resistance. The university seeks to solidify its vision through partnerships with the Louisville community (using examples such as the Johns Hopkins University, Morehouse College, and the University of Pennsylvania approach) by collaborating with the Ann Casey

Foundation to implement programs in certain geographic areas and create an expectation that all academic units actively support partnerships, strongly encourage that internal and external resources be used to implement the partnerships, and through collaborative engagement get buy in from the president, faculty, and staff. The university is considering a required (core) course that involves community service –particularly for students in law, medicine, dentistry, and social work.

African American Faculty and Professional Staff: An objective of *The Kentucky Plan* is to increase the number and proportion of African American faculty and professional staff at public postsecondary institutions. Because of competition, a limited pool of potential candidates, and internal institutional variables, recruitment and retention of African American faculty and staff remains one of the most difficult challenges that confront higher education institutions. While progress had been made in the recruitment of faculty, members of the focus group noted that support for African Americans is inconsistent from department to department, and programs aimed at retention are fragmented. Opportunities for upward mobility and career enhancement are not well publicized or well communicated. However, the group highlighted several initiatives that were intended to increase the presence of African Americans among the faculty. The group cited Dr. Blaine Hudson’s mentoring program for assistant professors, the Black Faculty and Staff Association, and an African American debate team that is headed by an African American communication professor. Some faculty and staff commended the administration for identifying diverse ways to address a variety of issues, and a significant number were encouraged. Dr. Mordean Taylor-Archer also was recognized for having spearheaded a number of improvements and changes that had taken place.

Faculty and staff noted that individuals in the academic community have a limited knowledge and understanding of cultural diversity and that minority students often experience alienation and isolation in their departments, having been subjected to stereotypical implications regarding their admission to the university at the undergraduate and graduate levels. There is a disparity among faculty and staff regarding the granting of release time to participate in meetings such as the Black Faculty and Staff Association, the campus environment team, and the Committee on Diversity and Racial Equality, whose role is to provide recommendations on equal opportunity issues directly to the president and university administrators. Some professional staff described the state of race relations at the university as “poor” and the environment, “as dysfunctional.” They believe more accountability is needed university-wide to increase diversity efforts and to effectively improve the environment.

African American faculty expressed support for service having a greater weight in the tenure and promotion process. Many of the faculty are assigned to committees and are involved in community activities that uplift the minority population in the Louisville area. They want community service specifically related to the university mission and partnerships to count towards tenure and promotion. Faculty and staff stated that African American students often rely heavily on them for academic and emotional support, and while they serve roles as academicians, advisors, counselors, lecturers, and friends, they do not receive acknowledgement or recognition for these activities. Because the

university ultimately determines what to include or exclude in the tenure process, the focus group suggested that the administration reevaluate the service component and increase its weight in the tenure and promotion process.

Academic Deans and Department Chairs: The deans and department chairs noted that progress had been made in increasing African American faculty representation over the past few years. The most successful effort came under the Swain plan of the late 1980s and early 1990s that netted approximately 25 new African American faculty members in one to three years. However, the university had difficulty retaining them. Recently, UofL hired three African Americans (a chemist, a mathematician, and a physicist) in areas that were once considered difficult. The university indicated that as of fall 2004 there were 81 African Americans employed as faculty, compared to 73 in fall 2003, and 61 in fall 2002.

President Ramsey's strategy for developing a diverse environment is to involve the campus community in sharing responsibility. Several department representatives shared examples of strategies used to impact and encourage growth in their departments. For example, the chairperson of the chemistry department joined the African American and Black Chemist Association to recruit faculty into the department. As a result, several African Americans with potential to be on the faculty were invited to interview at UofL. Also, two library internships were created specifically for African American students. Focus group members stated that the library fosters a diverse climate. A large percentage of minority students make use of the library. The new doctoral program in nursing created strategies designed to encourage African American students in master's degree programs to enroll in graduate education. Finally, the department of psychology was recognized for making significant progress and offering incentives to reach diversity objectives. The focus group felt that the strategies used by the psychology department should be replicated in other departments across the campus.

Several department chairs also identified innovative approaches to recruit African American faculty by focusing on the supportive environment of the Louisville community. The music education department and the School of Nursing collaborate with school districts, and students and faculty assist with mentoring workshops. For example, the department works with the Harambee Education Center in the Smoketown housing project. Some areas continue to be challenged to achieve significant progress related to diversity. The focus group noted that the university has a limited number of African American among its senior faculty. This was generally identified as a disadvantage at many public institutions and is not unique to UofL. The university plans to address this issue by utilizing leadership roles to alter the climate. For example, Bucks for Brains will be a critical component in impacting the campus environment, and each year two minority scholars-in-residence are hired to interact with African American students and faculty.

The university should encourage department chairs and deans to embrace innovative ways to support the recruitment and retention of minority faculty. The president and his

staff should consider using incentives for department chairs and deans to recruit more minorities.

Graduate and Professional Students: The graduate and professional schools students engaged the committee in an open dialogue regarding their experiences at UofL from the perspectives of residents and non-residents. Some students believe that there had been limited change in the environment since 1999. Some students stated that they often feel disconnected from the larger Belknap Campus and overall their experiences at the UofL Health Science Center campus had been both positive and negative. The biomedical department was recognized for embracing diversity. The English department also was identified as being supportive of diverse groups. Students in the dental school stated that African Americans have a good relationship with the administration and that professors had been supportive of their needs. Overall, dental school enrollment had been steady, however, the students would like to see an increase in African American faculty representation. The students suggested that the university should recruit a broader base of individuals earlier in the process and consider developing a recruitment committee at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

Students identified several recruiting strategies used by the graduate and professional programs. Students created the Black Biomedical Graduate Student Organization (BBGSO) to recruit African American undergraduates to the department. Faculty members from various departments also take African American students on recruitment trips to encourage minority students to enroll in graduate and professional programs at UofL. Several students representing a single department stated that academic administrators and professors in their department should more actively recruit minority students instead of relying solely on them. Administrators suggested that they emphasize, “school is free,” when they engage perspective students in conversation. However, the students feel uncomfortable doing so and stated that some students considered creating a workshop to advise faculty on best practices for recruiting African American students.

Some students believe that they have experienced overt discrimination in several departments. Students observed that they often feel forced to defend and justify their decisions to enroll in the graduate and professional programs and are frequently questioned about their credentials. They also discussed the power differential between professors and students and how they feared retribution if they discussed issues they were having with their superiors. The perception among students was that because they are limited in number it would be difficult to report incidents without their professors being able to identify them. They also suggested that African American enrollment may have decreased because the university appeared to do little to improve the environment once the students enrolled. Students believe that the scarce number of African American faculty also may contribute to the decrease in enrollment. They recommended that professors attend a mandatory diversity-training course to teach them how to interact with diverse groups of students. The university should create policies, programs, and incentives that strongly encourage the health science community to embrace diversity, to establish a process for identifying and addressing student issues, and to expeditiously rectify student concerns without fear of retribution.

Campus Environment Team: The Campus Environment Team is charged with identifying strategies and making recommendations to the president and board of trustees about ways to create a supportive and welcoming campus and community environment for faculty, staff, and students. The Commission on Diversity and Racial Equality (CODRE) was established in 1998 and charged with serving as the president's chief policy advisor on issues of diversity at UofL. The CODRE holds monthly meetings in an effort to reach its objectives.

Members of the CEO had dinner with the CODRE to receive general information about its success in engaging the university and Louisville communities in collaborative efforts to improve the campus and town and gown relationships. The CODRE meets monthly during the spring and fall semesters. The meetings are open to the university community, as well as relevant groups, organizations, and partners in the larger Louisville community.

A number of issues and concerns had been presented to CODRE because of its charge. Some issues were longstanding (Pathways, access, and retention of student, faculty, and staff), and each received a response from the university. The committee recognized that the institution should reflect a more cosmopolitan diversity in its faculty, staff, and student populations than other colleges and universities in the state. These and other recommendations have been proffered to the president and provost. The CODRE believes that accomplishment of much of the university's public agenda and partnerships with the Louisville community depend on the president's vision including the critical areas of service learning, student community service, and support for unit diversity chairs.

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