

Diversity Plan Process and Methodology

In 2005, Chancellor Loren Crabtree appointed the Knoxville campus Diversity Council consisting of 22 persons from the administrative, faculty, and student ranks. The Council was given a charge of developing a framework and process whereby campus units could identify goals, objectives, and programs to address the diversity needs within their respective areas. The framework consisted of six basic goals which addressed the areas of recruiting and retaining students and faculty, preparing faculty and graduate teaching assistants to teach a diverse student body, strengthening ties between the campus and Knoxville community, infusing curriculum with intercultural and international information, and creating and sustaining an overall diverse campus climate conducive to welcoming students, employees, and visitors to the university community. The framework was disseminated to every campus department/unit. Members of the Diversity Council met with campus units to provide assistance in developing their individual plans.

As a result of such efforts, 74 individual plans were submitted to the Diversity Council by units representing every aspect of the University—student affairs, academic affairs, and support programs. The Council was then sub-divided into six task forces that reviewed the plans and assessed them by focusing on themes or patterns, best practices, challenges and recommendations. Task forces used a core list of questions to review the plans:

- Is the plan feasible within a one-year timeframe?
- Are the strategies measurable?
- Does the overall plan make sense?
- Does the benchmark match the strategy?
- Are the proposed strategies valuable to help move the campus forward regarding diversity?
- What are the best practices for each goal?
- What are the patterns or themes seen in strategies across plans?
- Are there opportunities for collaboration?

Task force members were assigned the responsibility of reviewing plans submitted by specific goals. A three-point review scale was used:

- 1 is commendable and a best practice at UTK.
- 2 is “meets standard” and has potential but needs further development.
- 3 is “needs improvement” and is low quality work.

Several diversity plans rose to the forefront as indicating overall best practices. These “commendable” plans provided sound, feasible, and often innovative strategies and benchmarks and clear timelines and responsible parties for implementing and monitoring the plans. These units included:

- College of Business Administration
- College of Education, Health and Human Sciences
- Division of Student Affairs
- Extension/ University Outreach and Continuing Education
- Office of Disability Services
- University Libraries

Each task force was to identify themes or patterns of issues that arose from reviewing the diversity plans. These patterns show possibilities for collaborations across campus.