

About a month ago, as the School of Management was preparing for a visit by our Advisor from the American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business, I read our self-study report. Under the precondition "the institution should demonstrate continuous efforts to achieve demographic diversity among students, faculty and staff," there was a paragraph which said:

"The SOM has charged its Advising Center with developing a plan for meeting the special needs of minority students..."

Since the advisor was due in the following week, I approached the Associate Dean and asked him whether I was supposed to be working on a "plan." I was relieved when he told me it is a component of the SOM long range strategic plan. Although I am aware that the University is committed to increasing cultural diversity among students, faculty, and staff, I hadn't been charged with developing a plan. I asked the Dean to give me some background, so that I could start looking at some goals and objectives.

Assuming that we are successful, what problems will the university as a whole, and the advising center, in particular, have with minority students? Some problems can only be addressed at the University level (e.g. acceptance by peers, integration into the community, etc). It won't do any good to bring minority students in if they don't persist until they graduate. How can we help them to be successful? The Dean assumes that some of them will come out of high schools that don't prepare them for college. They will be at greater risk; therefore, they will need more attention. One of

the problem areas may be with language. We currently have an Academic Development Program for freshmen which deals with library research, composition, and speech, but if language is a problem, the ADP program will not be adequate to meet student needs. Sometimes the language spoken is not the language required for college students; they need to develop academic English. As Agnes indicated last week, there are different Englishes. College English is different than street English. DiPardo (1993) examined a peer-teaching program targeting underprepared and ethnically diverse freshman student writers at a predominantly Anglo university. Although the mission statement had been amended to reflect a commitment to "groups historically underrepresented in higher education," the policy was far from reality. Time and time again, faculty stated "I'm not a bigot, I'm not biased, I treat all my students the same." This ethnocentric bias denies the awareness of the special needs of minority students because of their multicultural behavioral patterns, values, and diversity in language. In order to welcome minority students and retain them until they graduate, faculty and advisors must acknowledge differences as well as commonalities.

Which minority students are we likely to attract from surrounding communities, New York, New Jersey and the Philadelphia area? They will most likely be African American and Hispanic students; perhaps some Asian Americans. If there are differences, then faculty, advisors, and tutors must recognize them, address them, but get beyond them to accomplish what needs to be done.

Advisors will have to empower students by focusing on their differences and getting comfortable with them.

Since the inception of our advising center in 1988, our philosophy has been that it is a safe place for our students; "a safe place where people are kind and considerate, and if one of us forgets, the rest are ready to forgive." We are, therefore, operating from the right mindset. In addition to professional staff advisors, we use faculty advisors during peak registration periods. For those of you who are not familiar with the School of Management faculty, we have about 45 full time faculty; 10 are women, 17 are foreign born from such countries as Africa, Kuwait, India, Greece, Taiwan, and Wales, and the rest are Euro-Americans. We should, therefore, be in a good starting position to be able to address minority concerns.

Frank Spicuzza, from the University of Tennessee, provides a customer service approach to advising similar to SOM's model. It addresses the needs and expectations of students who are the consumers and faculty who provide the teaching. He relates the business philosophy that his dad used in the family-owned dry cleaning business - "treat them right; they'll come back, and they'll tell others." He learned that the secrets of a successful business involved being courteous, listening to the customer, telling the customer what you could do, doing it in a timely manner, and doing it right. Potential and current customers (students) are the focal point and the reason for our existence. Cooperating with them and offering what they expect are emphasized,

rather than dictating what they receive. Implementation of this kind of advising center involves customer needs, employee attitude, administrative commitment, training and resources, recognition, and evaluation. Higher education can learn from the customer service model with its focus on building relationships and meeting expectations. Minority or majority students need to feel cared about as individuals. Consistent concern for a student's growth and development promotes a supportive environment. Attention must be paid to student diversity and understanding of student uniqueness. Advisors must have communication and problem solving skills, consciousness of the dimensions of individual difference, and an understanding of available resources (Spicuzza, 1992).

A book by M.T. Nettles, "The Effect of Assessment on Minority Student Participation" provides usable research data for advisors of minority students, and it is valuable for administrators because it discusses diversity in relation to the entire university. It explains that quality is defined by standards reflecting a culturally limited perspective. Minority students from diverse backgrounds and cultures are expected to meet these same ethnocentric standards. This perspective must be expanded to include consideration of diverse circumstances that influence students. In Chapter 4, it states that "institutions need to assess their mission, their climate, and the ability of all members of the community-students, staff, faculty and governing boards-to function in a pluralistic environment" (Nettles, 1992).

IT'S NOT ENOUGH TO SAY WE ARE COMMITTED TO INCREASING CULTURAL DIVERSITY; THE ENTIRE UNIVERSITY MUST BE COMMITTED TO CREATING A SENSE OF COMMUNITY. Key issues and research questions are student success, diversity of faculty and staff, quality of interaction between members of the community and between students and the academic programs, mission and values, educating for diversity, dealing with conflict, and perceived conflict between diversity and quality. Benefits for the institution that responds to change include curricular revitalization, new approaches to policy and organization, the development of global villages on campuses, dialogue concerning conditions that foster good teaching and learning, development of a consensus on essential values for the academic mission and the creation of a sense of community, diverse teaching approaches, and the excitement of learning in a cross-cultural climate. The answer is not to lower standards but to "do everything possible so that students can learn effectively and demonstrate that they have done so" (Nettles, 1992). The advising center has to be sensitive to the needs of different students and, quite frankly, try to place students with teachers who buy into the "learning" side of education. (Math example)

In a book entitled "Serving Culturally Diverse Populations," an overview is given regarding the status of cultural groups in American society. As Dr. Toloczko stated, while some ethnic groups have been assimilated, others have not -- they are classified as involuntary minorities (those who have been incorporated into the U.S. by colonization, slavery, or conquest). This group includes

African-Americans, Puerto Ricans, Native Americans, and Native Hawaiians. In the advising process, as in the workforce, we have to get to know each individual personally; during initial advising sessions we have to get some information on family heritage and try to determine whether the student is here because he or she really wants to be. It is necessary to have students look realistically at the curriculum. Advisors can articulate, but we have to listen carefully to what is being said (Ross-Gordon, 1990). Different circumstances require a different set of rules (Example-Taiwan Couple). As we heard in one of the tapes, minorities have a history of feeling manipulated. Advisors must be extremely candid...if a student is hoping to just get through the math, he or she has to know that in the business program, statistics follow math courses, and management science follows statistics, and so forth. Students must also know that it's not good enough just to get through the English composition course; almost every teacher I know takes writing skills into consideration when grading.

As I was reading an article entitled "Integrating a Multicultural Perspective into Training for Career Counseling", at first I thought it really had little to do with academic advising. However, as I read on, I changed my mind. It talked about an increased awareness of the important role that culture plays in career choice. Preparing counselors (advisors) to implement this perspective requires training programs to effectively address multicultural issues. This article concentrated on the structure and process of training.

The article goes on to say that a program's training philosophy regarding multicultural diversity has to be more than a statement (in its mission) submitted to accreditation agencies or in recruitment brochures. Instead, a serious commitment by faculty administrators and staff will result in "ownership." Multicultural issues have to be integrated into all aspects of training.

At the individual level, six suggestions are discussed: 1) articulate the training philosophy, 2) teach by example, 3) use formal and informal opportunities, 4) assess an individual's level of sensitivity and competence, 5) design a deliberate and individually tailored plan, and 6) anticipate student resistance (Swanson, 1993).

How can we train administrators, faculty, advisors and staff to develop working strategies for dealing with diversity in an educational setting? Using the training format provided by the instructor, the following is recommended:

A. The target population of the workforce we plan to train are administrators, professional staff advisors, faculty, staff, and peer tutors.

B. Participants are all personnel who come in contact with the student population; admissions, student affairs, registrars, financial aid, advisors, faculty, staff; everyone on campus must be included to a degree.

C. Needs

1. Administration - needs to communicate the university's philosophy to all faculty and staff.

2. Faculty must buy-in to the university's commitment to increase cultural diversity in the classroom.

3. Advisors must gain factual knowledge, learn multicultural behavioral patterns, values, and diversity language. They must develop an awareness of commonalities and differences.

4. Staff and tutors must be sensitive to the needs of multicultural students.

#### D. Plan and Procedure

##### 1. Goals and Objectives

a. First, developing a plan to attract minorities into the student body.

b. Defining the necessary elements of multicultural training.

c. Viewing multiculturalism as a developmental process; anticipates individual differences in terms of readiness to learn multicultural beliefs, attitudes, knowledge and skills.

##### 2. Steps to meet the goals

###### a. Diversity of students and faculty

There should be a concerted effort to increase the diversity of the faculty as well as the students through recruiting activities. Recruitment is the appropriate time to communicate the university's philosophy and objectives. If the faculty and staff are visibly diverse, students may be willing to commit themselves to our university.

b. Overall curriculum - The entire curriculum should be reviewed and updated to include cultural diversity



coursework. While individual courses cover a wide variety of multicultural subjects, this topic should be imbedded into existing courses. (e.g. Topic could be included in courses such as Monetary and Financial Economics, Business Policy and Strategy, Total Quality Management - graduates must know how to address cultural diversity when they move into the workplace.)

c. As previously stated, minorities sometimes feel they are being manipulated. Actions that can moderate students' perceptions that the university represents a hostile or racist environment include the following:

(1) Sensitizing faculty and administrators to the problems confronting minority students by employing more qualified minority faculty members and administrators.

(2) Integrating special support services for minority students and those who staff them into the mainstream of university activity.

(3) Publicizing the university commitment to minority student achievement through targeted financial assistance and guarantees of continuing support for categorically funded programs of demonstrated effectiveness. (Financial Aid Office)

(4) Conducting and publicizing needs assessments in such areas as residence halls, child care, parking, and security. Needs identified should receive priority in university resource allocation procedures. (Student Affairs)

(5) Improving opportunities for minority students to feel that their culture is represented and respected on

campus. Faculty members respect minority cultures most in institutions where enough minority students are enrolled to constitute visible evidence of their importance to the future well-being of the university. Students feel more at home in institutions where they see members of their own race in key administrative and faculty roles. (Clubs/moderators)

(6) Developing cohesive, cooperative learning groups among new minority students (in the Learning Resources Center. (Richardson/Bender, 1987).

d. Target Junior Colleges - Minorities are represented in 2 year colleges at levels close to their proportional representation in the population (about 21%). However, they are underrepresented in 4 year colleges (14.5%). Hispanics have the highest concentration in 2 year colleges (Richardson/Bender, 1987).

e. Specific areas for academic advising - While some faculty members suggest such strategies as providing more remedial courses and additional tutoring services, a more coherent set of principles was articulated by a comprehensive college that primarily served minorities. They suggest we:

(1) provide a good orientation program with strong follow-up contact beyond the first session;

(2) use proficiency exams to force students to confront deficiencies and deal with them early on;

(3) monitor progress closely and intervene as soon as problems appear;

- (4) make the entire staff accessible;
- (5) provide tutoring that is linked with particular classes;
- (6) enforce explicit standards of progress tied to appropriate regulations for dismissal;
- (7) make certain that registration procedures are designed to prevent students from enrolling in classes they are not prepared to take;
- (8) encourage the development of strong student organizations to provide cohesive groups (Richardson/Bender 1987).

f. Select a trainer who is well-versed in cultural diversity. Use exercises to illustrate a point, create an awareness, or teach a skill (e.g. try to determine students' nationalities just by looking at them {coloring, eyes, manner}; does your perception change once you learn their given names?).

g. Bring in culturally diverse speakers to address staff. This will help them to develop an awareness of other cultures.

h. Focus attention on language, motivation, stereotypes, ethnocentrism.

E. Evaluation - We will be able to assess whether our goals have been met -

1. When our curriculum includes courses and coursework relating to cultural diversity (number and quality of courses, test results, etc.)

2. When enrollment figures show an increase in the multicultural student population (5 year statistics, percentages, etc.)

3. When hiring figures indicate there is a concerted effort to increase minority faculty and staff employment.

4. When retention figures indicate that multicultural students persist to graduation.

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