



Diversity Strategic Plan 2011-2016

May 17, 2011

**"We must become a national model for diversity
in higher education, where all combinations of gender,
race, and ethnicity succeed at high rates."**

**President Mark Becker,
April 2009 State of the University Address**

Introduction, Institutional Context, and Definitions

As a globally engaged research institution located in an international city characterized by diversity, Georgia State University (GSU) is charged with providing the highest quality education while strengthening its leadership in conducting and disseminating research. Across the State of Georgia and our nation, institutions of higher education are challenged to address the needs of a population that is increasingly diverse in age, nationality, ethnicity, and culture.

As reflected in the University's 2011-2016/21 Strategic Plan:

As Georgia State has grown, our student body has retained the characteristics that make the University one of the most distinctive public research institutions in the nation while becoming a destination of choice for high-ability students. The opportunity to teach and learn in such a rich environment is one of the University's greatest strengths. Our goal is to continue to position the University as a model of academic success for diverse populations and to lead among research institutions in producing engaged citizens of the 21st century.

For the purpose of this Diversity Strategic Plan (DSP), the definition of diversity historically used by the University has been broadened beyond those that are federally protected (race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, veteran status, and disability) to include sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, and socioeconomic class. Diversity encompasses the representation, inclusion and engagement of these populations. Ideally, the students, faculty, staff and administration of the institution will be representative of the populations the institution exists to serve. The academic community will be an inclusive environment which embraces many points of view and protects the free exchange of divergent opinions. The institution fosters engagement by supporting opportunities for intercultural interaction in research, instruction, community outreach and co-curricular activities.

The GSU student body includes traditional and non-traditional undergraduate and graduate students with diverse backgrounds from every county in Georgia, every state in the nation, and more than 150 countries. Approximately 60% of GSU's students are female, 33% identify themselves as Black, 12% identify themselves as Asian, and 46% self identify as White. Seven percent of students identify themselves as Hispanic / Latino/a. Although the average age for GSU freshmen is 19, the average undergraduate age is 24. Diversity is a primary strength of the institution that should be leveraged to ensure a consistently growing student body, faculty and staff that is global in its outlook. According to the Education Trust, GSU now ranks fifth nationwide in the number of bachelor's degrees granted to African American students (first among non historically black colleges and universities). The graduation rate of historically underrepresented students (African American, Hispanic / Latino/a, Native American) increased by 18.4 percentage points between 2002, when only 32.3% of these students graduated in six years, and 2007, when that rate had increased to 50.7%.

Georgia State University has historically demonstrated its commitment to furthering diversity through academic scholarship, administrative units, student engagement, university governance, and College/Division-wide diversity committees. Examples of existing departments and program initiatives related to diversity education and services include:

The Office of Diversity Education Planning (ODEP) --- Reporting to the Provost
Diversity Colloquia (ODEP)
The Office of Civic Engagement --- Student Affairs
Intercultural Relations --- Dean of Students Office, Student Affairs
Cultural Diversity Committee --- University Senate
Office of Disability Services --- Student Affairs
Office of African American Student Services and Programs
Office of the Advancement of Women --- Reporting to the Provost
Office of Underrepresented Faculty --- Reporting to the Provost
Safe Zone State --- Intercultural Relations / Counseling Center, Student Affairs
Department of African American Studies --- Arts & Sciences
Women's Studies Institute
Center for Human Rights and Democracy
Office of International Affairs
International Student and Scholar Services
Asian Studies Center
Center for Latin American and Latino/a Studies
The Ph.D. Project --- J Mack Robinson College of Business
Office of Educational Opportunity and TRIO Programs --- Student Affairs Latino Student Services and Outreach (LASS) --- Enrollment Services
Middle Eastern Institute (MEI)
College and Departmental Diversity Committees
(See DSP Addendum for descriptions of these programs, departments and services)

Goals and Initiatives

Goal 1 – Student Diversity: To build and sustain the representativeness, inclusiveness and engagement of a diverse student body.

The University's objectives pertaining to student diversity are to provide meaningful educational experiences and interactions among a diverse undergraduate and graduate student body. We seek to support a University environment that values diversity and promotes intercultural growth for students. We will provide targeted programming and training which allows undergraduate and graduate students opportunities to develop intercultural skills and maturity. The current array of diversity-related services and programs will be enhanced as necessary to better serve underrepresented populations.

Initiative 1. Design a comprehensive dialogue program which provides curricular and co-curricular opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students to engage in directed, sustained conversations related to individual diverse group membership and community issues. Faculty and staff will participate in the student dialogue programs as appropriate.

Initiative 2. Develop a training program to be incorporated into the leadership training for prominent student leader positions. Specific intercultural skills to be addressed include, but are not limited to increased awareness of cultural difference, prejudice reduction, coalition building, understanding of oppression and privilege and intercultural communication issues.

Initiative 3. In order to understand the experience of underrepresented graduate students across the colleges and programs, the Office of Institutional Research will develop tools for the collection and analysis of graduate student data. Information related to underrepresented graduate student retention, progression and graduation (RPG), time to program completion, and the availability of funding (grants, assistantships and fellowships) should be compiled. Exit interviews for graduate students completing programs as well as for those leaving prior to completion should be conducted.

Initiative 4. Explore the development of student -centered programs and services to address unmet diversity- related needs.

Goal 2 – Faculty Diversity: To build and sustain the representativeness, inclusiveness and engagement of a diverse faculty.

Our interest in preserving and increasing our numbers of diverse faculty is linked to the intellectual mission of the University to provide the best possible education for all students. Faculty diversity is educationally relevant because it motivates students to incorporate different considerations, sensibilities, and lines of reasoning, which augment their analytical abilities. A diverse faculty supports the research culture of the institution and enhances the University's relevance to the local and global community. Diverse faculty and administrators contribute different perspectives to the University administration and assist in the recruitment and retention of diverse faculty, strengthen the professional lives of those faculty here through greater

opportunities for mentoring, and reinforce student perceptions of diversity. Having faculty members from a wide variety of groups helps ensure that students are exposed to varied perspectives, which will prepare them to succeed in an increasingly diverse workforce.

Initiative 1. Establish College and Library guidelines for the recruitment and retention of a diverse faculty. Special consideration should be given to those groups that are identified as historically underrepresented faculty. All Colleges at GSU now have approved Guidelines on the Recruitment of Ethnic Minority Tenure Track Faculty and two Colleges also have guidelines for their retention. These guidelines should be expanded to include other colleges, schools and the Library and should encompass the range of diversity defined in this document.

Initiative 2. The University will provide additional resources as appropriate to assist in the recruitment and retention of underrepresented faculty.

Initiative 3. Develop guidelines for the recruitment and retention of historically underrepresented administrators and academic executives. The guidelines will include (a) mechanisms to encourage the professional development and advancement of current faculty members and administrators and (b) for national searches, procedures to insure the institution actively recruits a diverse pool of external candidates for leadership positions.

Initiative 4. Assess the effectiveness of the programs for the Advancement of Women and for Underrepresented Faculty in supporting the recruitment, retention, and promotion of diverse faculty. Assessment should include program effectiveness, recommendations for future directions, resource needs and the consideration of the creation of additional programming structures to more broadly serve diverse constituencies.

Initiative 5. The Office of Institutional Research (OIR) will create an University-wide tracking database for underrepresented faculty, classified by rank, that separately identifies full-time faculty from the full-time transient or visiting faculty. The purpose of the database is to track the movement of underrepresented faculty through the academic ranks. The University will establish periodic surveys of faculty including voluntary exit surveys for departing regular faculty members. Data shall be carefully examined to identify issues relevant to the recruitment, retention, and promotion of diverse faculty. The experience of the tenure track faculty is of particular concern. These data will be discussed with the appropriate administrator.

Initiative 6. Develop a comprehensive mentoring program for underrepresented groups of all academic ranks which supports advancement throughout their careers. Emphasis should be given to attaining tenure, advancing through academic ranks and pursuing administrative roles when so desired.

Initiative 7. Address Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, Queer, Intersex and Questioning (LGBTQIQ) faculty issues. In particular, the University will conduct a needs assessment to identify gaps in the benefits package and will explore alternative means of addressing these gaps.

Initiative 8. The Center for Teaching and Learning shall offer training and support to assist faculty and graduate students in developing effective pedagogies related to diversity. This is particularly needed given the great diversity of the student population.

Goal 3 – Staff Diversity: To build and sustain the representativeness, inclusiveness and engagement of a diverse staff.

Diversity among staff and administrators at Georgia State University is essential to the operational success of the university, as well as to the achievement of the university's academic mission. Cultivating a work force of individuals with different backgrounds, perspectives, life experiences and ideologies enhances the university's ability to meet the needs of and provide services to an increasingly diverse student body. Implementing targeted initiatives to provide opportunities across all levels for advancement, mentoring and professional development to a diverse workforce leads to increased staff retention and productivity. Recruiting, promoting and supporting a critical mass of diverse staff and administrators contributes to the personal and professional lives of everyone at the university.

Initiative 1. Establish guidelines for administrative units for the recruitment and retention of a diverse staff and administration. In addition to giving special consideration to those groups that are identified as historically underrepresented, the guidelines will encompass the range of diversity defined in this document.

Initiative 2. The University will provide additional resources as appropriate to assist in the recruitment and retention of underrepresented staff.

Initiative 3. Mechanisms to encourage the professional development and advancement of current staff members and administrators will be supported. National searches should include procedures to insure the institution actively recruits a diverse pool of external candidates for leadership positions. The institution should assist employees in the recognition of competencies necessary to advance to higher staff and administrative positions internally and should be supportive of their efforts to prepare themselves for advancement.

Initiative 4. Develop a comprehensive mentoring program for underrepresented groups of all ranks which supports advancement throughout their careers. Emphasis should be given to skill development to support advancing through administrative and staff ranks.

Initiative 5. The Office of Institutional Research (OIR) will create a University-wide tracking database for underrepresented staff and administrators by personnel classification. The purpose of the database is to track the movement of underrepresented employees through the administrative ranks. The University will establish voluntary exit surveys for departing employees to better understand why they leave the University. Data shall be carefully examined to identify issues relevant to the recruitment, retention, and promotion of diverse staff and administrators. These data will be discussed with the appropriate administrators.

Initiative 6. Address LGBTQIQ issues of staff. In particular, the University will conduct a needs assessment to identify gaps in the benefits package and will explore alternative means of addressing these gaps.

Goal 4 – Disability Diversity: To support the inclusiveness and engagement of students, faculty and staff with disabilities.

The University has engaged in an ongoing effort to be accessible to those with disabilities. It has created institution-wide policies and procedures consistent with federal law pertaining to students and employees with disabilities. These policies and procedures include the Office of Disability Services New Student Services Guidelines, the ADA Employee Accommodation Policy and Procedures, the GSU Accessibility Map, and the Web Accessibility Policy. The ADA Amendments Act of 2008 significantly expanded the definition of “disabled,” and has resulted in a larger number of individuals eligible for services.

The University’s objective pertaining to disability diversity is to create an inclusive campus climate for those with disabilities by improving institutional and educational access through the principle of Universal Design, in adherence with Board of Regents policies and both state and federal laws. Universal Design in education seeks to create a campus environment in buildings, curricular materials, and communications that is usable by all members of the institutional community. Universal Design offers a proactive approach that takes into account the full range of possible disabilities that our faculty, students, and staff may present, and will make our University truly accessible for them.

Initiative 1. Insure all University employment policies relating to disabilities to insure that they comply with the ADA Amendments Act of 2008.

Initiative 2. Continue to address problems of ADA compliance in campus built environment that were noted in the 2006 Heery Report, including all areas such as sidewalks, routes, parking lots, and building and campus signage.

Initiative 3. Develop mechanisms to insure that all University web based materials are available to all who attempt to access them in compliance with the GSU Web Accessibility Policy.

Initiative 4. Centralize coordination of University communications regarding disability issues through the Office of the Provost.