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**Structured Conversations conducted
For the Office of Diversity and Pluralism
In the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources
At Michigan State University.**

June 12-15, 2006

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I. Report Outline

- Introduction
- CANR Department Heads group
- CANR Graduate Students group
- CANR Faculty groups-1, 2 & 3
- CANR Support staff group
- CANR Academic staff group
- Conclusions and Recommendations

II. Introduction: Study Background

- CANR has an Office of Diversity and Pluralism that will be hiring a new Associate Dean.
- The research was undertaken to better understand the awareness of current diversity and pluralism programs and to discuss with faculty, graduate students and staff their commitment to diversity within CANR.

III. Introduction: Study Objectives

This study has 4 objectives.

- To determine if faculty, staff and students think it is important for CANR to be diverse.
- To better understand if the faculty, staff and students think they had a role in promoting diversity and pluralism in CANR and if so, what role?
- To explore what resources are needed or wanted to strengthen their diversity competencies, skills, and effectiveness.
- To assess if issues of diversity and pluralism are supported in the various departments, within the college and/or the university.

IV. Introduction: Sample/Methodology

- The study consisted of seven 2-hour structured conversations with 6-7 participants in each group.
- There was one group of department heads, 1 group of graduate students, 3 faculty groups, 1 group of support staff and 1 group of academic staff
- Respondents were selected by the ODP
- Respondents were notified that the research was being conducted by IDP
- The conversations were held June 12-June 15, 2006 in a conference room in Anthony Hall

V. Department Heads

A. Do you think Diversity and Pluralism is Important, and if so in what ways?

- All agree that diversity and pluralism is very important
- Businesses request diverse applicants

“MSU as an institution needs to graduate students who reflect the people they serve and reflect the global market, therefore need diverse educated employees”

B. How are Issues of Diversity and Pluralism supported by the CANR Department? College? University?

- Some say the department and college are supportive; others say they are not “adverse to diversity”.
- Some say it’s difficult for diverse faculty to make tenure, so retention is low.
- The University says the right things about diversity but doesn’t support it.
- Careers in CANR need to be emphasized and marketed more.
- Names of departments too traditional, updating them may be beneficial.
- Gender diversity varies between departments.

“Fisheries and wildlife has better statistics of women than other department’s faculty.” (This statement was refuted by faculty and graduate students.)

C. What are Barriers to Diversity & Pluralism in CANR ?

- Grad students have good international population, but undergraduate is lacking in diversity.
- Diverse faculty candidate pool limited
- Lack of money to support faculty
- Lack of interest in agriculture at high school level—need better recruitment

“In horticulture the industry consists mostly of people of color and we don’t have next echelon of managers”.

- Opportunities for diversity exist, but high school counselors don’t fill the pipeline.
- Undergraduate MSU advisors don’t understand agriculture programs.
- Admission for diverse students maybe too difficult; good CANR candidates may not be able to meet overall academic criteria at MSU

“The University needs to change University requirements. Students with a 3.2 may still or will still do very good in programs within the CANR.”

“Not a correlation between students high school GPA to college GPA.”

“Need to look more at 2 + 2 programs and transfer programs”

“Do get a lot of transfers from junior colleges and into our programs and are very successful”

D. How can Diversity and Pluralism be strengthened?

- Dean needs to make diversity a priority.
- Director needs to take message to Central Administration.

“Talk to the V.P undergrad affairs, provost, board of trustees etc. Need to understand what moving G.P.A. up does to recruitment.”

- Separate college admissions program for CANR diversity students
- Need better retention program that helps with study plans, tutors, counselors, full time academic advisor etc. Similar to the one in the Department of Agricultural Economics.
- Recruit students from high school and community colleges.
- Faculty should network at meetings around the country and mentor new faculty.
- Examine the IFT (Institute of Food Technologists) programs which have a more national focus on getting people into the field.
- MSU should compete with other Universities for faculty

E. How can the ODP assist to Promote Diversity and Pluralism?

- ODP should work with advisors to get more diverse students.
- Fine tune the marketing brochures; they “over-promise” diversity. Photos of minorities are disproportionate to reality.
- ODP should help recruit student from high schools and community colleges
- Reach out with face to face contact with department heads during breakfast or lunch meetings.

F. Executive Analysis of Department Heads

- Participants agree diversity is important but Dean must make it a priority
- Recruitment of high school and community college students is critical
- Some suggest advisors do recruitment
- Careers in CANR need to be more emphasized.

- Consider changing academic requirements to achieve diversity
- University should be more competitive in recruiting diverse faculty.

VI. Faculty

A. Do you think Diversity and Pluralism is Important and if so, in what ways?

- Diversity is important.
- Good efforts with international students, poor efforts in achieving diverse Americans as faculty, staff & as graduate students.
- Diversity is important to gain credibility in the field and with research.
- Need diversity of staff to attract diverse students.

“The institution needs internal diversity, with people respecting each other, look inside, not just outside.”

“If there was more diversity at the university level (we) might have less problems outreaching.”

B. How are Issues of Diversity and Pluralism supported by the CANR Department: College? University?

- No support
- Packaging and Crop & Soil Science report good experiences with accommodating spousal needs in hiring.
- No leadership

“There are workshops and seminars on diversity all of the time but no one attends.”

“We try to get diverse faculty hired, but the ‘University’s hands are tied’ when it comes to offering the people funding or other assistance.”

“The University needs to put their money where their mouth is.”

C. What are Barriers to Diversity and Pluralism in CANR?

- No commitment in the administration
- Not enough undergrads, grads in pipeline
- Not enough money for recruiting
- Faculty are too busy to work with ODP
- Faculty are focused on publishing, getting grants, no time to mentor diverse students
- No incentive for mentoring diverse students; it doesn’t count toward tenure.

- Faculty do not have time to engage in recruitment of undergrads
- Difficulty finding advisors for diverse students
- Programs like ALANA and MAP take too much time to administer. Applicants need too much mentoring

“Diversity is not part of the process and it needs to be. It’s not going to amount to anything unless money is involved.”

“I feel as though MSU is using diversity for appearance sake only. They do not want a truly diverse culture, but only a head count to look good.”

“It’s cheaper for us to hire a post-doc student than a grad student because they can get the work done faster”

“I’ve had four diverse students who had funding and I couldn’t find an advisor for them. We admitted them to the University but told them they wouldn’t have an advisor.”

“We’re all judged on how quickly we can turn out the product (research) and if we bring home the bacon.”

D. How can Diversity and Pluralism be Strengthened?

- Administration must make it a priority
- Better recruiting for high school students & undergraduate students
- Better funding for recruitment
- Faculty exchange programs with other universities
- Student exchange programs at minority universities
- Awarding incentives for mentoring
- Having a mandatory online exam similar to the human research exam, tied to funding for a project.
- University needs to be more competitive in faculty salary packages
- Tie diversity to tenure
- Strengthen communication between the administration and the faculty
- Develop a faculty mentoring program

“We had one faculty member who taught himself a new language to connect with international students but now he is worried he will not get a promotion because he wasn’t publishing”

“If it was part of tenure to go to high schools and give presentations then we would do it, but currently there is only so much we can prioritize”

E. How can the ODP assist to Promote Diversity and Pluralism?

- Get ODP funding availability to faculty in January or February to offer it to qualified diverse grad students. MSU losing students to other Universities who offer earlier funding.
- No emails, seminars or workshops

- Have ODP attend high school science fairs with project demonstrations to recruit students.
- Have ODP develop a web site that highlights careers in CANR & includes testimonials from diverse students.
- Bring current diverse CANR grad students to talk to undergrads about careers in CANR.
- Go to department chairs to get on faculty meeting agenda to discuss diversity opportunities.
- Dean of ODP should be on the road visiting high schools to get info to students.
- Offer on-line communication training to understand various cultures (American cultures)
- Bring more diverse groups to campus.
- Be a support facility for diverse groups similar to the International Center.

F. Executive Analysis of Faculty

- Faculty say diversity is important but don't think the University supports it. They need to see a commitment by the administration.
- Faculty tenure is tied to publishing and "fast delivery of product" which doesn't support mentoring diverse students, who may have "special issues" They want mentoring to be tied to tenure.
- They believe recruitment at the high school, undergraduate and community college is critical, but don't have time to participate—too busy working toward tenure.
- Even tenured faculty says they are too busy.
- They are willing to do faculty exchange programs if tied to tenure.
- They want personal meetings with ODP members.

VII. Graduate Students

A. Do you think Diversity and Pluralism is Important and if so, in what ways?

- All agree diversity is important for their research and their personal growth.
- Diversity within the CANR is limited compared to other colleges like Engineering, Education and Natural Sciences
- Good international diversity; lacking in domestic diversity

B. How are Issues of Diversity and Pluralism Supported by the CANR Department: College? University

- No commitment
- CANR not promoting diversity

C. What are Barriers to Diversity and Pluralism in CANR?

- Most faculty are white males, except in Food Sciences
- Female students feel alienated
- Not enough faculty interaction
- No promotion of diversity
- No support system for diverse groups

D. How can Diversity and Pluralism be Strengthened?

- Have a more diverse faculty/staff
- Sensitivity training for faculty, staff and students.
- Offer courses on networking and developing interpersonal skills.
- More opportunities to interact with faculty (regular potluck dinners).
- More interaction between diverse and non-diverse departments within CANR. (E.g. Food Science diverse; Fisheries & Wildlife not diverse)
- Offer grad students money to do outreach; such as paid registration fees, summer funding, money to visit 4-H clubs, high school science fairs.
- Recruit more undergraduate students.

“Many science students just don’t know how to talk to others. They learn networking in business classes and marketing, but we don’t learn it, workshops would be helpful”

“Graduate TA program offers a great diversity training program each August, maybe CANR can incorporate something like that into curriculum, orientation or meetings throughout the school year.”

E. How can the ODP assist to Promote Diversity and Pluralism?

- Offer seminars, workshops on diversity throughout the school year
- Have advisors inform students sooner of funding for programs and new and emerging areas of interest
- Develop the website to show student/faculty areas or research and interests
- Highlight careers in CANR

“Maybe helpful for undergraduate students to see what graduate students and faculty members are involved in and what research opportunities are available. Ways for undergraduate students to contact graduate students in similar fields may be helpful for recruitment. Some students feel more comfortable talking with graduate students than faculty members.”

F. Executive Analysis of Grad Students

- Want more faculty involvement in diversity
- Want courses in networking and relationship building
- Want small stipend to attend outreach programs for high school recruitment
- Highlight careers in CANR to undergrads and high school students on web site.
- Want more information on funding for programs/research

VII. Support Staff

A. Do you think Diversity and Pluralism is Important and if so, in what ways?

- Student and faculty diversity important, but shouldn't be forced.
- Diversity makes a better University

B. How are Issues of Diversity and Pluralism Supported by the CANR Department? College? University?

- Support varies by department
- College spends funds on study abroad fairs
- Follows University diversity policy

“We’re instructed to recognize special holidays and traditions of individual groups, but that’s it.”

C. What are Barriers to Diversity and Pluralism in CANR?

- Unsure
- Support staff doesn't feel they have an active role in supporting diversity through recruiting students or faculty.

“We need to select the best faculty.”

D. How can Diversity and Pluralism be strengthened?

- Tours of CANR departments, labs for high school students
- Increase relationships with graduate students and undergrads
- High school outreach
- Offer voluntary awareness training
- Increase the MSP program

- Have a connection with Bay Mills Community College. Both land grant colleges and can recruit more Native Americans.

E. How can the ODP assist to Promote Diversity and Pluralism?

- Increase visibility
- Have a web based needs survey for students to match with funding.
- Phone calls, personal visits by ODP staff
- Emails/ Newsletters sent directly to support staff, not through department heads

“I needed to hire several students this summer. If I knew that there were diverse students with funding needing jobs, I would have gladly hired them.”

F. Analysis of Support Staff

- Support diversity but not their role to recruiting students. It should be done by Academic Specialists.
- Recognize that the pool of diverse faculty and staff applicants is small, but they don’t have a role in changing it.
- Diversity recruitment is not their job

VIII. Academic Staff

A. Do you think Diversity and Pluralism is Important and if so, in what ways?

- Diversity important; but more important to hire “the best”
- Important to have interactions with diverse students
- Cultural differences are interesting
- Employers want good minority students

B. How are Issues of Diversity and Pluralism Supported by the CANR Department? College? University?

- Not in touch with what department does
- Lots of red tape
- Summer minority apprentice program

“Isn’t there a requirement of the University to do a minority search? If you don’t hire a minority you have to justify why. There is a lot of red tape to go through.”

C. What are Barriers to Diversity and Pluralism in CANR?

- No funding to hire Spanish speaking educators
- Budget tightening—good faculty members “bought out”

- People are not tolerant of others
- Lack of understanding why diversity is important

“How do you promote diversity if you don’t have a diversity problem? Some departments have large numbers of female students, so that’s very diverse.”

- Poor recruitment

D. How can Diversity and Pluralism be Strengthened in CANR?

- Get more urban students who are interested in CANR
- Need more scholarships for African-American and Hispanic students
- Need more minorities enrolling in the University
- Most departments pretty diverse
- Expect new assistant dean to be a good leader and have ideas
- Educate students on diversity
- Make it a department priority

E. How can the ODP assist to Promote Diversity and Pluralism?

- Recruit minorities
- Explain ODP objective
- Explain pluralism
- Better communication

“What is the difference between diversity and pluralism? How is the office going to serve me if I don’t even understand the title?”

F. Analysis of Support Staff

- Many don’t understand the importance of diversity conversations
- Most believe MSU as a whole is diverse
- Support staff doesn’t have a role in recruiting students, faculty or staff
- Lack of communication with department heads
- Lack of understanding about ODP
- No interest in diversity training

IX. Conclusions

- Overwhelming theme is that while diversity is important for the good of research, personal growth and our culture, but the University and CANR have little if any commitment to promoting diversity—and the lack of commitment extends all the way up to the President of MSU.
- Faculty is focused on publishing and securing funding for their projects; no time to seek out diverse student body.
- Non-diverse applicant pool of students.
- Department heads believe MSU academic standards are too high to achieve diversity in CANR.
- No financial reward for faculty to recruit diverse students.
- Promotions slowed of those who worked with minorities; chastised by their superiors for not publishing; so they have stopped.
- Faculty focused on money and how quickly they complete their research. Will hire post-doc students over grad students because they can “work quicker with less supervision.”
- Faculty say Department Heads do not “go to bat” for diverse faculty members.
- They are disappointed that they have recommended diverse people for faculty positions, only to lose them to other Universities.
- CANR and the University do not try to retain the diverse faculty.
- Faculty’s poor attitudes about CANR and the University’s lack of commitment to diversity trickle down to staff and students.
- Large disconnect between the wants of the graduate students and those of the faculty. Faculty and staff do not want workshops, seminars, potluck dinners or parties with the grad students, but the grad students want more interaction with the faculty and they want more diversity training.
- Academic and support staff don’t feel a responsibility to promote diversity but rather to support it.
- Responsibility for diversity recruitment should fall within the office of ODP.
- Need to reach more high school, undergraduate and community college students.
- If ODP could excite students and their parents about careers in CANR, the diverse applicant pool would expand.
- The new ODP Assistant Dean should have personal visits with faculty members and travel to minority colleges recruiting graduate students.
- ODP staff should attend high school science fairs, demonstrating careers in CANR and expand the MAP program.

X. Recommendations

- Dean of CANR needs to make diversity a priority.
- Dean of CANR needs to clarify who is responsible for recruiting diverse students.
- Monetary rewards and other recognition need to be tied to recruiting a diverse student population.
- Mentoring and recruitment should be tied to tenure.
- Faculty who do spend time recruiting and mentoring diverse students shouldn't be penalized on their tenure track.
- Communication between administration and faculty should be strengthened regarding diverse faculty recruitment, their salary packages and their spousal employment.
- CANR or ODP should design its website to include careers in CANR to entice urban students.
- Expand the role, responsibilities and staff of ODP.
- Market careers in CANR for urban high school students.
- The website should include photos of grad students and information about their research and their links, so potential students can visit.
- The website should have on-line diversity training courses.
- Establish relationships with area community colleges, urban high schools, and MSU advisors to steer potential students into CANR.
- Expand MAP program
- Recruit the diverse students and bring them to the departments.