

Letter to the Editor: Specific efforts at University diversity continue

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In the Feb. 21 issue, guest columnists Marquis Harrison and Brittany Carter wrote that diversifying the faculty, staff and students "will take the entire University community to not simply talk about it, but to also be about it!"

The Office of Faculty Development and Diversity agrees and, as such, has taken significant measures to attract and retain a more diverse faculty.

For instance, in conjunction with the College faculty diversity efforts, under the leadership of Dean Peter Lennie, we commissioned the country's leading expert in faculty diversity, Joanne Moody, to impart to our deans and faculty diversity officers lessons on how to expand our applicant pool and prevent unconscious bias and so-called "cognitive errors" from permeating the hiring process.

Those lessons were incorporated into a hiring resources package that we created for every academic department in the University. The package included, among other items, information on creating welcoming job ads; lists of publications for job ad placement that target diverse members of the academic community; and Dr. Moody's publication, which serves as a diversity resource for faculty search committees.

The office has publicized the faculty diversity initiative locally and nationally with large, color ads in important national higher education publications. Our new faculty recruitment packages, which highlight the diverse environment of the University and of the larger community, our support for family-friendly policies and information about our exciting new Faculty First Year Program have been distributed across the country, and we have sent representatives to attend conferences that target academics of color.

Our efforts to publicize our commitment to diversity are paying off. In January of 2007, when the faculty diversity initiative was launched, the initiative's homepage received about 5,000 hits. A year later, the page receives over 14,000 hits per month.

I am grateful to the University's faculty diversity officers who have taken on the responsibility for many aspects of the faculty diversity initiative - those best handled at the school, rather than University, level. Although we still have much work to do, we are very pleased with our progress to date.

-Lynne Davidson

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