

**Cultural Diversity Enhancement Plan
Applied Economics Department
College of Food Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences
2009**

Departmental Overview

Departmental Mission Statement

Our mission is to develop and apply economic concepts and methods for the analysis, design, and management of social, biological, and physical systems. We create and disseminate knowledge and information which addresses important issues focused on our four key areas of emphasis.

We are committed to excellence in research which is the foundation for all our teaching, extension, and outreach programs. Our work is problem driven and policy oriented, and it engages public and private sector decision makers. Careful problem formulation, objective and rigorous analysis, and clear communication ensure that our research has both professional and public impacts. We often work with scholars from other disciplines and other specialties within economics.

We use our knowledge and expertise to serve others. We advise and counsel our students. We offer insights and guidance to small and large businesses. We help inform and shape public policies. Our faculty, staff, and students are engaged in local, national, and international communities.

Demographic Changes

Demographic facts of life will pose important challenges to the state's educational system, including the University of Minnesota, in coming decades. The traditional college age population soon will begin to decline. That cohort will also become more diverse, as more than half of our population growth comes from minority populations. K-12 enrollments for minority students are increasing rapidly – by 68% for Hispanic students between 2000-01 and 2006-07 and by 34.5% for black students – while white student enrollment is declining. Many of the new minority students do not speak English at home, and most importantly, their high school graduation rate falls well below that for white and Asian students. This means an increasing proportion of the state's college age population will not be prepared for college. Education is the key to productivity for new entrants to the workforce. Achieving a strong high school graduation rate and sound college preparation for all Minnesota children will be one of the critical determinants of our economic success in the next half century.

Hiring

Approximately one-third of our tenure and tenure track faculty are sixty years old or older. While there is no fixed age for retirement, we know that many of these highly productive individuals will retire in the coming years. The hiring decisions made as these faculty members are replaced will shape the direction of the Department for the next quarter century.

These changes also offer opportunities, however. With significant ongoing research on educational policy issues ranging from preschool education programs to minority population access to higher education that are complemented by the high-impact outreach programs of the Minnesota Council on Economic Education, the Department is uniquely positioned to help Minnesota achieve the strong high school graduation rate and sound college preparation for all Minnesota children that will be one of the critical determinants of our economic success in the next half century.

Current Activities Related to Diversity and Social Justice

Applied Economics is uniquely positioned to engage issues of diversity because many faculty incorporate the economics of social justice into their research and courses. Several examples already exist, including:

Professor Joe Ritter – *Publications and work in progress on racial profiling, employment benefits and race discrimination, field studies of earnings inequality and racial influences among highly educated workers. Also teaches courses in labor economics and addresses directly issues of race and discrimination in the workforce.*

Professor Elton Mykerezi – *Work is in area of social justice and poverty issues. Within those areas Dr. Mykerezi focuses on food insecurity issues among underserved populations, wage gap issues based on race and income levels, the earnings impact of historically black college attendance and others. A new project with Professor Jean Kinsey and funded by Second Harvest will address the economic impacts of chronic hunger in Minnesota.*

Kevin Klair and Dale Nordquist – *Won 2007 Distinguished Diversity and Inclusion Award for their program “Training in Agricultural Risk Management Tools to Provide Effective Crop Insurance and Financial Education to Underserved Producers”. This project targeted several 1890 universities as well as organizations including the Bureau of Indian Affairs.*

Professor Tade Okediji – *Joint appointment with African American and African Studies and Applied Economics, addresses issues of ethnic fragmentation and the role it plays in economic growth in developing countries. Dr. Okediji is currently*

developing courses in economics of African and African American Diaspora studies.

Professor Elizabeth Davis – *Addresses issues of child-care selection choices and poverty as well as placement of troubled youth.*

Professor Judy Temple – *Works in the area of the economics of early childhood education programs and their effects on performance.*

Professor Ben Senauer – *Conducting research on the impact of Hispanics speaking English in the U.S. and its impact on nutrition and obesity.*

Minnesota Council on Economic Education – *The Minnesota Council works on programs related to personal finance and economic education. Their programs in these areas are often targeted at low income families and children and include mentorship relationships. Claudia Parliament is heavily involved in developing economic education programs with the government and Universities in South Africa with particular focus on underserved communities.*

Creating a Plan for Intentional Diversity and Inclusion

Building Awareness

The department has not yet developed a strategic plan addressing diversity. Toward that objective we will conduct an Intercultural Development Inventory to measure how people view intercultural differences and to build awareness of our perceptions related to cultural differences. This will be a precursor to engaging in an ongoing conversation on developing a more inclusive department. We will incorporate CFANS' Diversity and Inclusion website into our departmental website so that there will be greater awareness of grant, educational and professional development opportunities related to diversity and inclusion.

Evaluating Incentives for Commitments for Diversity

The promotion and tenure committee is charged with annual review procedures for faculty and staff and will be tasked to evaluate methods of providing incentives and rewards for incorporating diversity into professional activities. One concern is that because some faculty research inherently incorporates analysis of underserved populations that we will need to develop a relative metric that does not inherently disadvantage those whose work (particularly research) has limited opportunities to incorporate diversity issues. We will also view elements of community engagement, student engagement and recruiting and other activities as components of the incentive structure.

Faculty Hiring

As indicated previously, over the next several years approximately 1/3 of our faculty will likely retire. This will offer an opportunity to increase the diversity of our faculty composition. We will develop improved guidelines for designing position descriptions which are inclusive and attractive to diverse professionals. We will include provisions to 'oversample' in historically disadvantaged populations such as the 1890 land grants and black colleges in an effort to specifically attract underserved populations to our faculty. We expect that this effort will lead to complementary improvements in graduate and undergraduate student recruitment and retention.

Student Recruitment

The department does relatively little recruitment of any students due to the nature of central admissions. We would welcome the opportunity to do more direct recruitment to our programs. We believe that our emphasis on issues of social economic justice, poverty, food insecurity and public policy is inherently attractive to very diverse backgrounds. We have high exposure in many urban schools that have a high representation of underserved communities. This includes college in the schools programs as well as the Minnesota Council on Economic Education programs in K-12 programs on economic literacy. We will seek to leverage those activities to recruit students from underserved populations to our programs. We view this as a priority activity as the future gains in diversity are likely to arise from the new generation of students. We will explore opportunities with Karl Lorenz and CFANS admissions to increase applications to our program from underrepresented students. Our undergraduate coordinator will send a personalized mailing to the CLA SEAM 1301 First Year Seminar class participants (section having its focus the area of business management).

Curriculum Inclusiveness

Applied Economics is a pilot program for student learning outcomes. One of the seven outcomes is "*Understand diverse philosophies and cultures within and across societies*". Many of our courses include sections related to the economics of discrimination, or issue of income inequality for example. Each year during annual reviews, we review courses that faculty teach and their performance in the courses. An additional item will be added to that conversation to ask if there are ways to incorporate lectures or exercises about diversity in course material so that it will be part of an ongoing course development process. This would be similar to addressing what new technologies or new materials are included in the course.

Community Engagement/Outreach

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Applied Economics has a history of engaging international and domestic underserved communities. We currently have memorandums of agreement to assist with research and educational activities with The University of the Free State and Pretoria in South Africa and Renmin University in China. Many faculty are engaged in research and outreach activities related to economic education, the economics of education, food scarcity, hunger and poverty and other issues. Based on this model we will look for opportunities for more domestic outreach to underserved communities who face many of the same issues and are closer to home.