

**UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON MINORITY FACULTY AFFAIRS**

The Special Committee on Minority Faculty Affairs met on **Thursday, April 10, 2003**, at 3:00 p.m. Chair Tom Colonnese called the meeting to order at 3:06 p.m.

PRESENT: **Professors** Bae, Colonnese, H. Huang
 ex officio members Murata, Gallardo, Eugene, del Rosario

ABSENT: **Professors** Fabien, B. Huang, James, Koenig, Lopez-Guisa, Ramulu, Spigner
 ex officio members Morishima, Remick, Simmons, Butler

Guest – Emile Pitre, AVP, Office for Minority Affairs

Synopsis

1. Approve agenda
2. Approve minutes
3. Minority Student Retention Report – Emile Pitre
4. Benchmarking of Minority Faculty Report

There being no quorum, approval of the March minutes was postponed.

Minority Student Retention Report

Colonnese introduced Emil Pitre, AVP, Office for Minority Affairs, who provided SCMFA members copies of the Minority Retention Study dated February 11, 2003.

Pitre said the Board of Regents asked OMA and several other departments to study minority retention and graduation in educational programs. Using nine years of Under-Represented Minority (URM) data from the Office of Institutional Studies (OIS), Pitre's group established goals for the study:

- To provide “good” news about graduation of Under-Represented Minorities across the curriculum
- To identify areas where improvement may be possible
- To recommend strategies to help with that improvement
- To share interesting facts about students’ preferences for different types of majors

Strategies recommended for increasing URM enrollment:

- Increase recruitment efforts among top underrepresented high school seniors. This would also lead to an increase in diversity in the more competitive majors.
- Increase partnerships with high schools to fine tune the academic skills of those interested, or potentially interested, in college.
- Establish partnerships with community colleges which have high under-represented student populations and target those students for transfer to the UW.
- Establish partnerships with traditionally Black, Hispanic and/or Native American colleges to set up exchanges with UW students. This would give UW students the chance to study in an ethnic majority environment for one year.
- Allow UR students who have been accepted to defer admission and accept transfer credits from other four-year institutions.

Strategies for Reducing URM Attrition

- Set the goal of devising and/or modifying programs to reduce attrition among UR students by 1/3 or more in the next five years.
- Establish a mentoring program with select faculty, graduate and undergraduate students to provide social support and to serve as role models.
- To find out why students drop out and how they could be better supported and/or better informed about resources at the UW, conduct surveys and exit interviews with UR students.
- Conduct a study to identify “critical factors” of “other Asians” - the group with the highest graduation rates. Are these factors transferable to other groups? If so, how?

URM Enrollment in Academic Major

- Once accepted to a major, students are less likely to withdraw from the university.
- Between 1992 and 2000 UR enrollment increased in fourteen (14) programs. Among these were international studies, engineering, chemistry, nursing, geography and art.
- Between 1998 and 2001 eighteen (18) programs experienced a downward trend in UR enrollment and twelve (12) showed a downward trend in UR representation.

Strategies recommended for improvement

- Identify programs with which the OMA could set up a partnership to provide support for majors.
- Talk with people from the most successful programs (the exemplars) to find out what they have done to attract and retain students.

Majors from which URM graduated (1992-2001)

- 4 of the 10 most popular majors were in business or science.
- 3 of the 20 most popular majors were in engineering.
- 8 of the 20 most popular majors had URM representation that was equal to or greater than the average percentage (10.4%) of URM who graduated.
- 4 of the 20 least popular majors had average or above representation.
- Other majors with average or above representation included microbiology, philosophy, geography, society & justice, and environmental health.
- From 1991-2001, the most popular math-based majors for African American, Native American, and Hispanic/Latino students were business; accounting; biology; zoology; and electrical, mechanical and civil engineering.

STRATEGIES RECOMMENDED FOR IMPROVING GRADUATION OUTCOMES

- Make sure students make informed choices about majors. They should know the amount of time they will need to devote to being successful, the GPA requirements to be competitive, the importance of taking courses in the proper sequence, and which professors best facilitate student learning.
- Set a goal for the UW as a whole to graduate 90% of its UR students and implement strategies to reach this goal.

Pitre said that important factors in reducing attrition and improving graduation outcomes are

- Campus Climate
- Advising
- Money
- Mentoring

If students do not have family members who have gone to college, it can be difficult for them to know where to begin in the complex university environment. For engineering students, the Minority Science Engineering Program can be very helpful. This program, which is part of the College of Engineering, has been in existence for 15 years and has done a good job of recruiting and retaining URM students. Electrical Engineering is a leader in this program.

Pitre recommends surveys and exit interviews to investigate the causes of attrition among URM students. He also sees value in studying the reasons why Asian students do better than other minorities. For example, a UC Berkeley study found that Asian students studied in groups and tested each other. They also "talked shop" while they socialized and partied.

Pitre's study revealed the importance of the point at which the major is chosen. This seems to be a critical step in ensuring higher graduation rates. For whatever reason, it appears a student who reaches the point of choosing a major has a much higher probability of graduating - in some cases (nursing, civil engineering) rates are as high as 90%. Higher rates also occur in cases of double degrees and double majors.

Graduation rates for URM students stand at 59%, with Native American and African American students being most at risk. High SAT scores do appear to be a reliable predictor of graduation, Pitre said.

While it's difficult to prove with study data, personal experience shows that climate issues in the classroom can be an encouraging or a dampening factor for all students, but for URM students in particular. Students need to feel validated, comfortable, valued, and welcomed. Interpersonal interactions can make or break a student's career, especially in the case of in-class treatment by a professor. Professors who reach out, honor the opinions of URM students, and expect their classmates to do the same, can signal to URM students that their participation is welcome and that their careers are important and worthwhile. Colonnese remarked that it is all-important to reinforce student participation - every question, he said, is a gate opening up.

Del Rosario stressed the importance of Graduate Education - making a better connection with URM undergraduates and encouraging them to enter Graduate School ensures that we will have faculty and administrators of color.

Mentoring URM students helps them to understand what it takes to qualify for certain degree programs and have realistic expectations for what they can personally accomplish - unrealistic expectations and lack of knowledge about what is required of them practically guarantees that some students will leave the University with no degree and a huge debt load, Pitre cautioned. If this happens, it can reflect badly on the UW and discourage other URM students from attending.

Pitre thanked the group for inviting him to present the study results. The meeting was adjourned at 4:35 p.m. *Minutes by Linda Fullerton, Recorder.*