MHEC
MARYLAND HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION

Report on Institutional Programs of Cultural Diversity
MSAR #8751

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Lawrence J. Hogan, Jr.   Boyd K. Rutherford
Governor   Lt. Governor

Maryland Higher Education Commission

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Alexia Van Orden   Barbara Schmertz, Ph.D.
Principal Author   Director of Research & Policy Analysis

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The State of Maryland places a high value on cultural diversity, equity, and achievement for all students. Recognizing the important role that diversity plays in education, Maryland Education Article §11-406 requires that all Maryland postsecondary colleges and universities create, implement, and report on a plan for cultural diversity. Maryland Education Article §10-211 also requires that all state-aided independent institutions submit to the Maryland Independent Colleges and Universities Association (MICUA) an annual report detailing institutional programs designed to promote diversity within the institution.

While institutional diversity plans' initiatives and strategies differ, there are a number of common elements among Maryland institutions as they work to create more diverse communities and increase success for those who have been historically underrepresented in higher education. These include:

- Utilizing targeted recruitment and retention strategies to attract and retain students from historically underrepresented populations;
- Creating programs providing additional academic, social, and financial supports to encourage retention and completion among underrepresented students;
- Utilizing recruitment and retention plans to increase the number of minority faculty;
- Increasing the diversity of graduate students to diversify the pool of underrepresented individuals qualified to serve as faculty;
- Infusing diversity in the curriculum via general education course requirements, relevant or related majors and academic programs, and incorporation of diversity concepts within individual course curricula;
- Creating institutional programming that celebrates and informs the community about topics related to diversity;
- Supporting student-led/-driven organizations that build diversity awareness through their own programming and educational events; and
- Continuing to seek out resources that may help reduce barriers to increasing diversity.

Institutional narratives contained in this report (Volume II) detail the many programs and initiatives campuses have undertaken to enhance diversity on their campuses in accordance with their individual diversity plans.

INTRODUCTION

Increasing representation and success of those who have been historically underrepresented in higher education is critical in ensuring access and equity for all citizens. Continuing to focus on reducing disparities in both access and outcomes across a variety of demographic categories, including racial and ethnic groups, gender identities, disability statuses, and age, is critical if Maryland wishes to remain economically competitive and to achieve other state priorities. It is also important that, given the increasingly interconnected nature of our society, residents are prepared to enter into and succeed in a multicultural world. The 2017-2021 Maryland State Plan

for Postsecondary Education, *Increasing Student Success with Less Debt*, emphasizes the key role that diversity should play within the higher education system

In accordance with the high level of value the State of Maryland places on diversity within its higher education system, Maryland Education Article §11-406 requires that all public colleges and universities institute and maintain diversity plans. While the State Plan emphasizes increasing access and success for all students, it also identifies specific populations that may merit special attention when developing plans to increase access and success. These include students who are members of demographic groups that have been historically underrepresented in higher education, including racial and ethnic minorities, those with disabilities, non-traditional students, and veterans, among others. Most institutional plans address some or all of these populations.

Maryland statute further requires that all public colleges and universities submit an annual progress report detailing the implementation of the plan to the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC). These plans are included, unedited, in Volume II of this report. MHEC is responsible for ensuring that institutions remain compliant with the diversity goals of the State Plan.

Maryland Education Article §10-211 also requires that all state-aided independent institutions submit to the Maryland Independent Colleges and Universities Association (MICUA) an annual report detailing institutional programs designed to "promote and enhance" diversity within the institution. Based upon these reports, MICUA is required to submit a report to MHEC on best practices to promote diversity at Maryland independent colleges and universities. The MICUA report is also included, unedited, in Volume II of this report.

As noted above, this report consists of multiple volumes. Volume I contains a brief summary of programs focused on increasing diversity at Maryland colleges and universities, and the degree to which institutions are in compliance with the diversity goals contained in the State Plan for Higher Education. Volume II contains institutional progress reports, unedited, as submitted to MHEC. Volume III contains summary data regarding the diversity of Maryland's institutions, including snapshot and trend data concerning students, faculty, and staff.

INSTITUTIONAL INITIATIVES

Maryland colleges and universities, both public and private, have adopted a wide array of initiatives designed to increase cultural diversity throughout the campus community, and to promote a culture that reflects the value institutions place on diversity. Many of these programs focus on increasing the numerical representation of traditionally underrepresented groups, through efforts that focus on student, faculty, and staff recruitment and retention, and providing additional supports to promote the success of these populations. There are also many programs that highlight the important role that diversity plays in today's multicultural world and aim to address issues of diversity both on campus and within the broader community.

Student Recruitment, Retention, and Success

A key contributor to increased diversity on campus is building a diverse student body. Institutions utilize a wide array of strategies to recruit students from traditionally underrepresented populations. Many institutions, particularly community colleges, have built

"one-stop shop" programs, where college representatives visit local high schools, and students can take placement exams and register for classes on-site.

However, many colleges and universities face constraints imposed by local demographics. This is a particularly notable factor at many community colleges, which are driven by a mission to serve their local area. Drawing students from a pool that is not particularly diverse makes it more challenging to increase the number of students from underrepresented demographic groups. In an effort to reach as broad a population as possible, institutions maintain a significant community presence, to ensure that students are aware of the opportunity.

Additionally, concern about paying for college can pose a significant challenge to recruiting students, particularly first-generation and other underrepresented students who may be less aware of options related to financial aid. As one tool to combat this, institutions conduct a substantial number of financial aid outreach sessions in venues that reach a large number of potential students and families from underrepresented populations. A number of institutions also operate financial aid programs – generally grants and scholarships that will minimize the amount of debt students will incur – that target students from underrepresented groups. Taken in tandem, these programs attempt to address a sizeable barrier to enrolling and retaining students from underserved populations.

In addition to financial aid programming and assistance, Maryland colleges and universities have also adopted a variety of academic and social support programs targeting specific underserved populations identified by the institution (for example, Montgomery College's Boys to Men program and the University of Maryland, College Park's Student Success Initiative focus on supports for black male students, while the Trailblazers Program at Notre Dame of Maryland University targets first-generation Latina students. More complete information regarding these types of programs is available in the institutional narratives contained in Volume II of this report). Some of these also include financial assistance, such as dedicated grants or scholarships, as an element of their programs. These programs are designed to enhance the likelihood of student success by addressing factors that might be most likely to impact outcomes, such as the likelihood of persistence or completion.

Faculty and Staff Recruitment and Retention

Some institutions also face significant barriers in attracting and retaining diverse faculty and staff. A number of factors, both within and outside of the institution's control, may affect the diversity of its faculty and staff. Maryland colleges and universities utilize a wide array of strategies to attempt to increase the diversity of their employee applicant pool, ensure equity in the hiring process, and provide additional supports to encourage the retention and success of minority faculty and staff members.

There continue to be substantial challenges arising from the need to increase the supply of individuals with the credentials necessary to serve in faculty and staff roles. One key strategy institutions use to address this is ensuring a diverse applicant pool through advertising in venues such as job search websites and publications focusing on diversity (e.g., Diversityjobs.com and *Diverse Issues in Higher Education*) or professional organizations that specifically target minority populations (such as the Society of Women Engineers or the National Association of Hispanic Nurses) that may reach a high number of individuals from groups that have been

underrepresented in higher education. Additionally, many colleges and universities are increasingly using tactics such as Skype interviews, which might help to alleviate some of the concerns regarding demographics of local areas.

Institutions are also focusing on increasing the supply of qualified minority candidates – for faculty positions, in particular – by implementing strategies designed to increase the diversity of the professoriate as a whole. These programs provide additional supports to promote minority representation and success in graduate school. Additionally, there are a number of partnerships between institutions that seek to increase the number of individuals from underrepresented populations qualified to serve as faculty or staff members.

Recognizing that attrition can be a particular concern for faculty and staff members from underrepresented groups, institutions have a number of initiatives specifically focused on retention of minority faculty and staff. Mentorship programs that provide additional support to encourage minority faculty and staff are common, particularly in STEM fields. These programs are designed to help acclimate new employees to the campus generally and encourage their success regarding specific issues such as the tenure process. Additionally, many institutions place a heavy emphasis on professional development opportunities to encourage retention. While professional development opportunities vary widely from campus to campus, many campuses offer targeted funding for faculty and staff to attend professional conferences and engage in curricular design projects for projects related to diversity.

Incorporating Diversity within the Classroom

All of Maryland's public colleges and universities incorporate cultural diversity in their general education requirements. This takes different forms at different institutions; while some institutions require some form of freshman seminar courses that explore topics related to cultural diversity, others require that designated "diversity" courses be included as elective courses. What is consistent across campuses, however, is that there is growing awareness of the importance of incorporating diversity and multiculturalism into the academic curriculum. Professional practice programs incorporate coursework regarding working within diverse communities and with diverse populations within their field. Most institutions also offer a number of multidisciplinary academic programs covering subjects related to diversity, such as gender studies or area studies programs.

Many institutions have increasingly begun to emphasize the importance of including issues related to diversity throughout the curriculum. A number of institutions offer professional development programming focusing on helping faculty members identify best practices regarding how to infuse diversity into their curricula. Many institutions also offer programming related to how to engage with a multicultural student body in the classroom, such as sensitivity training and the use of inclusive language.

Increasing the Culture of Diversity within the Campus Community

Another key component of addressing the cultural diversity within a campus community is creating a community that places a high value on and celebrates diversity. To this end, institutions maintain a wide variety of programming designed to foster appreciation for diverse people and cultures. While this programming varies from campus to campus, institutions

typically offer an array of activities focused around a particular theme, such as a speaker or forum series, informational displays, or festivities designed to celebrate a particular aspect of a culture.

While many of the other initiatives described elsewhere in this report leave students as the consumers of the programs, at many campuses co-curricular programming is primarily student-driven. For example, student organizations are generally founded by and run by students in response to perceived needs among the campus community. It is these organizations which tend to organize and present activities such as days celebrating specific cultures or individuals of particular prominence within a community. These activities may serve a particularly important role in encouraging students to engage directly with issues of diversity within their own communities.

Barriers to Increasing Diversity

Maryland colleges and universities place a high value on increasing diversity on their campuses. However, there are some factors that may serve as barriers to achieving the goals institutions strive to reach. Many of Maryland's colleges and universities report that they are seeking to identify best practices that will support further diversification on the campuses.

Additionally, many of Maryland's institutions face barriers imposed by their geographical location. In an attempt to remedy some of these concerns, colleges and universities continue to seek to identify creative recruiting strategies for students, faculty, and staff. By focusing on attracting students and employees from outside their immediate geographic areas, institutions seek to increase the representation of groups that may have been traditionally underserved by higher education.

CONCLUSION

As noted throughout this report, Maryland's colleges and universities continue to develop and implement programs designed to increase cultural diversity on their campuses, both in terms of numerical representation of groups historically underrepresented in higher education and in creating a campus culture that values diversity. The institutional narratives contained in Volume II of this report detail many of the initiatives taking place across Maryland's campuses.

Cultural diversity and multiculturalism continue to be the topic of much attention and concern, both within higher education and throughout society more generally. Creating a diverse and educated citizenry is critical as Maryland seeks to accomplish the goals established in the State Plan for Postsecondary Education, and to maintain a strong and growing economy. Maryland's colleges and universities will continue to play a key role in ensuring this growth.