

Update on UNLV's Strategic Diversity Project

March 2017

Strategic Diversity Project Prelude—Brief History of the Williams Report

- **January 2014**—Nationally renowned diversity consultant Dr. Damon Williams agrees to assist UNLV with its diversity planning process.
- **April 2014**—Damon Williams conducts a two-day site visit at UNLV, speaking with campus leadership and constituency groups.
- **Spring 2014**—Damon Williams and the Office of Academic Affairs engage in months-long telephone and email conversations and exchange of documents relating to diversity at UNLV.
- **July 2014**—Damon Williams provides a preliminary report of observations to UNLV leadership.
- **January 2015**—Damon Williams conducts another site visit at UNLV.
- **March 2015**—Damon Williams provides his final report to UNLV (Williams Report).
- **May 2015**—UNLV begins work on its response to the report, which will be known as the Strategic Diversity Project.
- **Ongoing**—Strategic Diversity Task Groups identify items and engage them.

Strategic Diversity Project Implementation

The Chief Diversity Officer (CDO) and an initially small, and then larger, steering committee set about planning how to use the Williams Report as a guide for UNLV's diversity efforts. This shaping of the response to the Williams Report occupied the remainder of 2015. The thought that came out of this exercise was to identify distinct areas of focus in the report and then select the least difficult item in each area of focus to work on. Upon completion of a particular task, the next most difficult task would then be addressed. In this way, momentum could be developed and sustained as the tasks continued to become increasingly difficult.

Beginning in the spring of 2016, the larger steering committee was then distributed into eight task groups corresponding to the initial eight tasks. Some steering committee members served on more than one task group and some did not serve on any. Additionally, select outside members were recruited to join the various task groups. Most of the task groups began their work in mid to late spring, while others began in the summer. Following is a listing of the eight tasks selected, along with a synopsis of each.

- **Initiating a diversity branding campaign**—Other than mentioning UNLV's status as the second most diverse campus nationally, there was no specific marketing related to diversity.
- **Improving diversity fundraising**—There was no specific fundraising done related to diversity.
- **Developing a major, annual campus diversity celebration/event to be convened by the UNLV President**—This is to be a symbolic event at which the President will emphasize his support for diversity efforts at UNLV. The idea is for a half-day event that might in time grow to become full-day. The celebration would include a keynote speaker, and address by the President, awards to employees & students, and possibly a campus dialogue on diversity. VPs and Deans would be required to attend, and it would also provide an opportunity to invite community leaders.

- **Creating an annual University & Dean/VP diversity reporting structure**—Although there is an annual report to NSHE put together by Student Affairs and ODI, there was no regular report to campus regarding diversity. This initiative sought to create a report template for VPs and Deans (with variances as appropriate) that would in part inform the preparation of a campus diversity report. Both the VP/Dean reports and the campus report would focus on identified problem areas such as diverse faculty hiring & retention and division/college/campus climate for example. These reports could potentially provide a basis for establishing diversity criteria for annual evaluations, beginning at the VP/Dean level and moving downward to subordinate leader evaluations over time.
- **Examining low-pass-rate courses for disproportionate impacts along racial/ethnic/gender dimensions**—This task group was to undertake an exploratory examination and analysis of low-pass-rate (D/F/W) courses to see if such grades are distributed evenly along racial/ethnic/gender lines or if there is reason to suspect disparate outcomes for some student populations.
- **Assessing the Faculty Diversity Hiring Program (FDHP) [To commence upon release of the FY16 FDHP report.]**—Nearing completion of its third year, the FDHP was ripe for evaluation by this task group. The group assessed whether the FDHP is having a positive effect—whether on actual diverse hiring or simply on enhanced attention to diversity by department search committees. The group also considered how the program might be strengthened
- **Exploring the adequacy of the current diversity curriculum (multicultural and international general education requirements)**—These two General Education requirements have been in place continually for nearly 20 years. Do they serve adequately the task for which they were intended? Are they sufficient, are they useful, should they be adjusted/amended/replaced with something else? This task group was to examine this issue and suggest changes, if appropriate.
- **Developing the 2016 campus climate survey**—No longer something that required fighting for, the campus climate survey had become an annual expectation. This task group reviewed the experiences of the 2010 & 2015 surveys, and worked to develop an effective survey for deployment to campus in the fall of 2016.

Strategic Diversity Project Results

Operating at varying speeds, the several task groups set about their work with enthusiasm and great deliberation. No diversity related project of this scope has ever been attempted at UNLV; and, moreover, this initiative had the full support of the executive administration. The task groups began at different times, worked for different periods, and finished at different times as well. Following are synopses of the task groups and their portions of the Strategic Diversity Project.

- **Branding campaign**—The steering committee recognized early on that this task was so specialized that it would be best if the Office of Media & Public Relations worked on it exclusively. Beyond this, the office was gearing up for major branding and marketing ahead of the October 17 Final Presidential Debate. Prior to the Debate, Media & Public Relations unveiled the “Different. Daring. Diverse.” Slogan; and while it was not created specifically to meet the Strategic Diversity Project task, it nonetheless very nicely serves as what is likely UNLV’s first diversity branding effort.
- **Fundraising**—Because of the specialized nature of the issue, as in the case of branding, the steering committee thought it best that the UNLV Foundation evaluate ways UNLV might engage in a diversity fundraising campaign. Due to reorganization of the Foundation and Advancement offices, including the search for a Vice President for Philanthropy & Alumni Engagement, this task was put on hold for a number of months. It is a late start, but the Foundation has already identified ways it can engage with items in the Williams Report.

- **Campus symbolic event**—Because of the consensus that spring would be better than fall for this event, and because of the uncertainty that the spring 2017 legislative session will impose on the President’s availability, this event is planned for spring 2018.
- **Campus/Dean/VP annual reports**—This task group decided to first identify the elements that an annual campus diversity report might contain, and then second to identify the elements in a Dean report and a VP report that could populate or otherwise inform the campus report. The campus report template was completed, and can be amended or changed by the incoming CDO. The simultaneous development of a Deans’ Diversity Hiring Plan template by a different task group resulted in a questionnaire that would include much of the information envisioned in a college report. Therefore, so as to not require Deans to prepare duplicative reports, the Deans’ Diversity Hiring Report will serve the function of the College annual report, and the CDO can extract relevant data from it for inclusion in the annual campus diversity report. This leaves open the question of an annual VP report, something the new CDO may wish to pursue.
- **Low-Pass Rates**—The work of this task group is being absorbed into a larger Provost’s Office effort to address low-pass-rate courses in general. The core membership of the task group will remain in place. This larger effort will be able to direct more resources toward the task. The Faculty Senate is also partnering by providing faculty volunteers to assist in this effort, which has been a clear need for a number of years but has failed to initiate.
- **Faculty Hiring**—This program has been revamped significantly, details of which are in the FY16 FDHP Annual Report to campus. Several requirements that had been deemed onerous to departments have been removed. In their place, the responsibility and accountability has been moved from the level of the department to that of the Dean, with a new faculty diversity hiring form having been instituted for the FY18 cycle. Deans will complete this form as part of their academic hiring requests to the Provost.
- **Diversity curriculum**—This task group evaluated a number of considerations surrounding diversity courses and how best to ensure that UNLV’s diversity curriculum meets today’s needs. Ultimately, the task group suggested that the General Education Committee to add “social justice” to the criteria for a multicultural course. It is now being worked through within that committee.
- **Campus climate survey**—The 2016 Campus Climate Survey was conducted during a two-week window in November. The results of the survey are expected to be released in spring 2017. Planning will soon be underway for the 2017 Campus Climate Survey.

Strategic Diversity Project Next Steps

Several of the tasks (branding, climate survey, diversity curriculum) have been completed. In these areas, the next most difficult tasks should be selected, task groups formed, and goals identified. Other areas (symbolic event, faculty hiring, annual reports) have been completed or partially completed but still require implementation. Finally, some tasks (fundraising, low-pass rates) are still in the early stages of development. In cases for which new tasks need to be selected, the soon-to-be hired permanent Chief Diversity Officer should be part of the process. Therefore, those areas are on hold until that hire is made.