

June 28, 2001

Dr. Cecilia L. Lopez
The Higher Learning Commission
North Central Association
30 North LaSalle Street
Suite 2400
Chicago, ILL 60620-2504

Dear Dr. Lopez:

Youngstown State University is forwarding the enclosed progress reports required as a result of our comprehensive visit in May of 1998. Two reports were requested: one on implementation of a new general education model and one on the progress made in increasing the representation of minorities in the faculty, staff, and student body.

At the time of the visit, YSU was in the midst of adopting a new general education model, but it had not been approved by the Academic Senate. The University placed the new model in operation in the fall of 2000. We believe the University has made substantial progress in this area. It will continue to do so as the assessment plan is further developed and the data gathered used to make appropriate changes.

The second report documents the significant attention given to increasing diversity at Youngstown State University. The diversity of the campus mirrors that of the region from which it draws students, but not the city in which it is located, which has a higher African-American population than the surrounding area. The report shows that the proportion of minority students at YSU has been very slowly, but steadily, increasing. Unfortunately the number of minorities among the faculty and staff has not. We will continue to place a high priority on meeting this challenge.

Sincerely,

David C. Sweet
President

**PROGRESS REPORT:
MINORITY REPRESENTATION IN
STUDENTS, FACULTY, AND STAFF**

Submitted to
**THE HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION
NORTH CENTRAL ASSOCIATION**

**YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY
JUNE 30, 2001**

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L. INTRODUCTION, DIVERSITY PROGRESS REPORT

The team of consultant-evaluators who made a comprehensive visit to Youngstown State University in May, 1998 called for a report on the progress that has been made in representation of minorities in the faculty, staff, and student body. The team expressed the concern that “Minorities continue to be underrepresented among the faculty, staff, and students, particularly for an institution with a metropolitan mission.”

RESPONSE TO CONCERN

The elements of a long-term strategy for increasing diversity, including a periodically up-dated Affirmative Action Plan and policies and procedures for recruitment and hiring, have been in place for some time. They were described in the 1998 self-study, and the latest versions are included in Appendices A, B, and C. Many of the diversity-related activities described in the self-study have continued and are not reiterated in this report.

The University’s long-range strategic plan, *YSU 2000*, developed in 1994, included two strategies: Expanding Commitment To Diversity and Strengthening Student Recruitment and Retention, each with specific objectives related to diversity. An analysis of the achievement of the goals outlined in *YSU 2000* was conducted in the fall of 2000. The relevant sections of that report document what occurred between 1994 and 2000 and are included in Appendix D. This progress report focuses on new plans, strategies, and objectives for increasing ethnic diversity since the May 1998 visit of the NCA team.

University/Community Task Force on Diversity

In its advisory capacity the NCA team recommended that the President establish a task force that would have high visibility and specific authority to identify actions and strategies to improve minority representation. Following the team’s visit, President Les Cochran appointed a University/Community Task Force on Diversity, which worked throughout the 1998-99 academic year. The objectives of the Task Force were to:

- Develop an understanding and appreciation of the diversity of the community and suggest means to build respect for others;
- Identify institutional and community challenges that must be effectively addressed so the campus and community can more fully utilize its diversity as a strength;
- Delineate means and approaches that will strengthen educational processes so that academic programs, learning experiences, and other community and University

activities can more effectively address issues related to the diversity of our society; and

- Chart short-term initiatives and long-range actions that will make systematic changes in the manner in which the campus and community address and respond to diversity issues.

The Task Force developed a Diversity Plan of Action, which was approved by the YSU Board of Trustees in September 1999. The plan called for the establishment of an Office of Diversity Activities led by a Coordinator of Diversity Activities, and the creation of a University Diversity Council as well as a University/Community Diversity Council. The plan defined actions in the areas of administrative commitment and support, community-based interaction, academic enhancements, employment practices, and student recruitment and retention. The report of the Task Force, *Commitment to Diversity*, is included as Appendix E.

The Diversity Report, released by the Office of Diversity Activities in June 2001, summarizes progress made on implementation of *Commitment to Diversity*. Significant achievements are highlighted here and the full report is included as Appendix F.

Administrative Commitment and Support

Office of Diversity Activities. During the 1999-2000 year the support structures recommended by the Task Force began to be put in place. The Office of Diversity Activities was established and the position of Coordinator of Diversity Activities was filled. The coordinator's duties, which are outlined in *Commitment to Diversity*, include providing assistance, recommendations, and plans for the fostering of faculty, staff, and student recruitment, retention, and development. The Coordinator of Diversity reports to the Director of Equal Opportunity.

Organizational Changes. President David Sweet assumed office in July, 2000, after the retirement of Dr. Les Cochran. Dr. Sweet articulated the three priorities of his administration as Diversity, Enrollment, and Partnerships. He has given the issue of diversity more visibility by making the Director of Equal Opportunity a member of the President's cabinet who reports directly to the President. The Office of Equal Opportunity, including the Office of Diversity Activities is moving to the main administration building, on the same floor as the President, this July.

Operations Improvement Task Force. At the beginning of his administration, President Sweet invited the Ohio Auditor of State to conduct a comprehensive performance assessment of business functions and operating departments at the University. The purpose of the assessment was to provide information to the Operations Improvement Task Force, a group of community and university leaders appointed by Dr. Sweet to assist in increasing enrollment, enhancing financial stability, reversing

perceptions about campus diversity, and establishing and maintaining effective community partnerships.

The auditor's report, **Performance Assessment Summary Recommendations**, contained recommendations for improving diversity. These include giving higher visibility to the issue by creating a cabinet-level diversity position and filling current vacant positions in senior administration with minorities. Both of these recommendations have been implemented. The relevant section of the Auditor's report is included as Appendix G.

University Diversity Council

The University Diversity Council was established as a successor to the University/Community Task Force on Diversity. This council serves as the primary forum for the discussion of campus diversity-related issues, monitors implementation of the Diversity Plan of Action and conducts an annual assessment of diversity activities. Minutes of the meetings are included in Appendix H.

The University Diversity Council initiated a YSU Faculty and Staff Assessment of Campus Climate for Diversity. The survey was used to obtain information concerning campus views of diversity as a basis for campus dialogue and recommendations. It was conducted in the fall of 2000, and a draft report has been circulated. It is included as Appendix I.

Faculty and Staff Development

Concurrent with the work of the Task Force, faculty and staff development activities related to diversity were increased. The kick-off to this series was a two-day workshop led by Dr. Carlos Cortes, nationally known consultant on topics of race and ethnicity. The Office of Equal Opportunity, Office of Diversity Activities, Center for Teaching and Learning, and Human Resources Training and Development have offered a variety of seminars and workshops. Representative titles include:

- Walkin' in your shoes! Managing Diversity
- Breaking Barriers and Building Bridges: Education as a Multicultural Experience
- Let's Talk about Race: A Community Dialogue on Race Relations in Youngstown
- Creating a Community of Mattering in a Multicultural Environment
- A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to Diversity

Community-based Interaction

University/Community Diversity Council. A University/Community Diversity Council, as recommended by the Task Force, was also created to serve as an open forum to discuss diversity issues that affect the community as well as the University. The two councils began to have joint meetings and were eventually merged. Minutes of the meetings are included in Appendix H.

Partners for Workplace Diversity. The Partners for Workplace Diversity, a coalition of 14 organizations and businesses led by YSU's Williamson College of Business Administration, has continued to grow to provide diversity seminars and activities for coalition members:

- A series of half-day seminars e.g. Understanding Diversity in the Mahoning Valley
- Train-the-trainer workshop
- Diversity web page, linked to the YSU homepage and the AAC&U website
- Development of downloadable Diversity Kits for organizations to use
- Sponsorship of a live satellite hook-up to the PBS Town Hall Meeting on Race, Class and Health
- Diversity Works Week, an annual celebration of workplace diversity that includes seminars and workshops

Community Events. The University provides hundreds of activities, programs, and services to the community. Many of these activities place a special emphasis on diversity, such as a recent Afro-Cuban Arts Festival. YSU faculty and staff also participate in community-sponsored diversity initiatives. Many this past year were members of the study circles project "Building a Bridge Toward Unity." Student Activities has conducted diversity conferences with nationally known speakers. Recently the key note was given by Coretta Scott King.

Curriculum

Perhaps the most important element of creating an environment that is welcoming to minority students is the curriculum that they experience. The University's primary focus is student learning, and it is through the academic program that students feel valued and learn to value others. As part of general education reform, the University defined general education goals. Two of the goals are related to diversity:

- Comprehend and appreciate the development of diversity in America in all its forms
- Understand the development of cultures and organizations of human societies throughout the world and their changing interrelationships with Western society

The new general education requirement was implemented in fall 2000. It includes several courses that address these diversity goals. The diversity component of the general education program is described in a brochure titled *Learning about Diversity*, which is

found in Appendix J. For additional information about the general education program, refer to the progress report on implementation of general education, also submitted to the Higher Learning Commission, June 30, 2001.

Employment Practices

As previously stated, equal opportunity hiring procedures for faculty and staff have been in place and are included in Appendices B and C. National searches are conducted for all tenure-track faculty positions. Since the NCA visit the University has expanded its network of local minority-oriented agencies, groups, and individuals to which it disseminates all job announcements. Every job vacancy in the last year was published in at least one minority publication. Job seekers now have direct access to job postings through the YSU web page, a service that was not in place at the time of the NCA visit.

Student Recruitment and Retention

Connections with Schools. The primary sources of minority students to the University are the Youngstown and Warren City Schools. A majority of the graduates of these schools who attend a public institution in Ohio attend Youngstown State. However, the graduation rates and college-going rates are low. These urban school districts face many challenges. The University is committed to collaboration with the schools to increase their students' success and access to higher education.

Recently YSU was the only university in Ohio and one of only 25 in the nation to be awarded a \$2.5 million USDOE Title II Teacher Quality Enhancement Grant. The purpose of this Tri-County Partnership in Excellence in Teacher Education program is to improve language arts, math, and science outcomes in Youngstown, Warren, and Beaver Local schools as well as to improve pre-service and in-service teacher education. The grant places YSU faculty in the schools working with teachers and students.

Since the 1998 NCA visit, the University has been successful in obtaining a TRIO grant for an Upward Bound program to work with students from Youngstown City Schools. An African-American faculty member has been leading Project Seed (Summer Educational Experience for the Economically Disadvantaged), funded by the American Chemical Society for high school students. Other programs are Health Quest, which aims to attract minority youth in grades 5-12 into health careers, and the National Summer Youth Sports Program, which brings disadvantaged city youth to campus for recreational and educational activities.

SMARTS (Students Motivated by the Arts) is another recent example of a university-school partnership that reaches out to minority youth. The Beeghly College of Education and the College of Fine and Performing Arts began SMARTS at Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary School to infuse arts into the curriculum. The program is now expanding to the entire city school district.

Other proposals to improve the college-going rate of urban students are currently under consideration by funding sources. One of these is a GEAR-UP proposal with Warren Schools to the U. S. Department of Education.

Athletics. Intercollegiate athletics has developed a Minority Opportunity Plan to guide recruitment and retention of student-athletes as well as employment within the athletics department. The plan is included as Appendix K.

Retention. In order to improve the retention rate of all students, including minority students, additional resources have been targeted toward improving the program of developmental education. Additional developmental courses will be offered this fall and a pilot program to provide intensive support to at-risk students is being implemented. The Supplemental Instruction program has been expanded.

Communication

Internal and external communication to promote YSU as a diversity-friendly campus has been improved. Coverage of events of interest to ethnic minorities has expanded in the student newspaper. The Office of University Relations has expanded its distribution of information to be more inclusive of various segments of the community. The Office of University Relations has compiled a directory of faculty and staff willing to speak or do volunteer work in diversity-oriented activities.

MINORITY REPRESENTATION

The diversity of the campus generally mirrors that of the region from which it draws students, but not the city in which it is located, which has a higher African-American population than the surrounding area. The percentage of African Americans in the age range of 18 to 54 in the city of Youngstown is 38%. The chart and tables on the following page compare YSU student ethnicity to census bureau data about ethnicity in the region. These data document that the proportion of minority students at YSU has been very slowly, but steadily, increasing.

Percent Minority Representation in the YSU Student Body

	1987	1997	2000
African American	7.1	7.6	8.38
American Indian	.1	.2	.25
Asian	.4	.6	.64
Hispanic	.6	1.2	1.61

In December, 2000, the Ohio Board of Regents released the first **Ohio College and University Performance Report**, which contains statewide data on student diversity. Information from the report, contained in the following table, illustrates that YSU's ethnic distribution is quite similar to the state distribution for university main campuses. However, YSU has a lower percentage of Black Americans than the average for urban campuses.

Percent of Undergraduate Students on Selected Diversity Measures – Fall 1999

	YSU	Ohio Main Campuses	Ohio Urban Campuses
Asian American	1%	2%	2%
Black American	9%	10%	13%
Hispanic American	2%	2%	2%

Minority representation on the faculty and staff also reflects the region, but not the city. There has been almost no change over the past ten years. The total number of employees has been reduced by about 10% over the past decade as the University has adapted to a shrinking enrollment. Frequently positions are not replaced when vacancies occur, which reduces the impact that affirmative action hiring procedures would otherwise have.

Minority Representation/Faculty and Staff by Year

	1988	1991	1994	1997	2000
Faculty	45/471 9.55%	43/478 9.00%	48/466 10.30%	46/426 10.80%	45/403 11.17%
All Staff	66/624 10.58%	83/662 12.54%	75/631 11.89%	72/592 12.16%	75/639 11.74%
Prof/Admin Staff	20/198 10.10%	29/214 13.55%	31/210 14.76%	39/300 13%	29/241 12%

CONCLUSION

In 1998, the visiting team report stated: “Although progress has been made, particularly in the employment of women, minorities continue to be underrepresented among the faculty, staff, and students given the mission and location of the university.” Unfortunately, this statement is still accurate despite the attention and resources focused on change. Many of the new initiatives, such as extensive involvement with the city schools, are long-term strategies, which are expected to show results in increased minority enrollment in the future. The issue of minority representation remains a concern that will continue to receive priority attention at Youngstown State University.

The University is about to launch a new strategic planning process. The information compiled for this report will be valuable input into that process. The quest to attain a more diverse and inclusive campus community is a continuous process and a high priority for the institution.