

ADVANCING CAMPUS DIVERSITY THROUGH TRAINING

BY JANET EDWARDS



IN this issue of INSIGHT Into Diversity magazine, we focus briefly on three colleges or universities that elect to require diversity training for faculty and staff members. More than a dozen 2012 HEED Award winners self-identified on award applications as schools that require such training, although the scope varies by institution.

"Regarding those schools that mandate diversity training, I view this as a strong indication of their commitment to creating a culture of diversity and inclusion on their campus," says Lenore Pearlstein, co-publisher of INSIGHT Into Diversity magazine. "It sends a clear message to both employees and students that this is a priority – it's not optional."

As part of its Vision 2015 strategic plan, Davenport University rolled out a half-day training program last fall for faculty and staff members designed to kickstart a strategic priority aimed

at making their campus more inclusive. Every February, Pensacola State College hosts an All College Day, when classes are cancelled and faculty and staff attend daylong training sessions, including diversity training. Michigan Technological University requires faculty members who wish to serve on hiring and promotion/tenure committees to earn Diversity Literacy Certification. In addition, all Student Affairs staff members complete a progressive model of cultural competency training over the course of an academic year.

Many universities require compliance training on harassment and retaliation issues. Others go much further, however, by requiring participation in sessions that explore the meaning of diversity as defined by one's particular campus, as well as the responsibilities of individual faculty and staff members in regard to creating an inclusive and welcoming campus environment.



Davenport University

For Davenport University in Grand Rapids, Mich., the training held last semester was a first step toward advancing awareness and understanding of the school's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) priority – one of 10 university-wide strategic priorities identified in its Vision 2015 plan.

“We have the wonderful language that we find in vision statements, but now we need to figure out how, as a university, are we going to achieve this vision. Part of achieving that vision for us is through our faculty and staff development,” says Rhae-Ann Booker, PhD, MSW. Booker is executive director of the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

The purpose of the initial training, which featured discussion and group activities, was to increase awareness and under-

standing of the DEI strategic priority, Booker says. “It was intended to bring all of us to the same starting point as far as our understanding of our framework and the value that we have placed on this DEI priority.”

Four components of the strategy – diversity, equity, competence, and commitment – are a means to inclusion, the fifth component and the end goal, Booker says.

“We spent considerable time learning terminology – what we mean by diversity, what we mean by equity, and what we mean by the other three framework components,” she says.

At the next training level, participants will learn skills development, continuing to hone those skills as they apply them in their own departments.

“Prior to our training, if you were speaking with someone about Davenport in regard to our DEI framework, they would have talked about diversity. It's important to us that everyone understands that diversity is one means to inclusion, which is our end goal,” Booker says.

Pensacola State College

By making a comprehensive effort from hiring onward, various initiatives work together to develop a culture of diversity and inclusion at Pensacola State College in Pensacola, Fla.

“Our overall approach to diversity is systematic and training is a vital component that complements our institutional vision, goals, and initiatives,” says Gael Frazer, associate vice president of Institutional Diversity. “Enhancing diversity is part of the college's mission statement and is incorporated into the college's strategic plan.”

Professional development and training is conducted on a regular basis for faculty and staff. For example, one day each February, Pensacola State College closes classrooms to students and opens them to all faculty and staff. Known as All College Day, the mandatory training features 50-plus workshops across a variety of tracks. One of those tracks focuses on cultural awareness – and it gets more hype than most, says Juanita Scott, coordinator of professional development.

“We make this a stand-out track so that it garners the attention that it needs,” Scott says. “Our local community needs are changing, so we want to be sure to have the resources for our current environment.”

In other efforts, with the help of a five-year, \$1.85 million, Title III “Strengthening Institutions” grant awarded by the U.S. Dept. of Education in 2009, Scott says, Pensacola State has taken steps to ensure cultural awareness training is institutionalized as part of enhanced student learning initiatives. “We're already poised to continue that effort on past the life of the grant,” she says.