

RIT's Multidimensional Diversity Framework

Like most institutions of higher learning, Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) is committed to growing and sustaining a diverse and inclusive campus community. To help meet this goal, the university has developed a framework designed to guide the integration of diversity efforts across the campus. Shaped by RIT's core values, the Inclusive Excellence Framework infuses diversity practices into the university's recruiting, admissions and hiring processes, curriculum, and administrative structures and practices. The framework consists of four dimensions — access and success, campus climate and intergroup relations, education and scholarship, and institutional infrastructure.

Access and Success

The goal of the framework's access and success dimension is to achieve a more diverse and inclusive student body, faculty and staff. RIT's Office of Faculty Recruitment and Retention (OFRR) plays an integral role in this effort. OFRR works closely with colleagues across the institution, including deans, faculty members and senior administrators, to help recruit and retain diverse faculty and to address issues that arise in the domain of faculty success. OFRR's core mission is to build a relationship network with women and African Americans, Latina/o Americans and Native Americans (AALANA) and scholars, faculty and executive-level professionals. OFRR provides support, direction and training to search committees conducting faculty searches and plays a significant role in assisting human resources in attracting and recruiting candidates of color and women to faculty positions.

Faculty Retention. OFRR provides leadership and oversight for RIT's AALANA and Women Faculty Associates (WFAs) initiatives. WFAs provide leadership and guidance to their colleagues by offering support on navigating the promotion and tenure process and other duties in support of the success of faculty members.

Faculty Recruitment. In 2012, OFRR provided support to faculty search committees for approximately 53 faculty positions including AALANA and women referrals within all nine colleges and RIT's Golisano Institute of Sustainability. OFRR collaborates with human resources on continuous process improvements and recruitment best practices and works with search committees to help them transition from a "screening and selection" ideology

to a recruitment committee paradigm with special emphasis on greater institutional consideration. OFRR also provides multicultural and bias awareness training for search committees.

This fall will mark the 10th year that OFRR has hosted its nationally recognized signature event, the Future Faculty Career Exploration Program (FFCEP). This innovative program brings students from around the world who are nearing the end of their doctoral studies to RIT for an all-expenses-paid weekend to explore potential career choices through exploratory interviews; presentations of their research; meetings with deans, department heads, students and RIT's president; and campus and community tours. AALANA students and individuals from other underrepresented and minority groups are encouraged to apply for the program.

In 2012, FFCEP received a total of 186 AALANA applicants and an additional 20 non-AALANA applicants from 113 institutions representing 38 states and six countries. Twenty-three prospective faculty members participated in last year's program. Six participants from the 2012 program have applied for faculty openings to date, three of which participated in the interview process and one of which was offered a tenure-track position.

Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations

The goal of the Inclusive Excellence Framework's campus climate and intergroup relations dimension is to create and sustain an organizational environment that acknowledges and celebrates diversity and employs inclusive practices throughout its daily operations.

GLBT Task Force. In December 2011, RIT President William Destler assembled and charged a GLBT task force to examine the climate and related issues for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender faculty, staff and students on the RIT campus. The institution's director for diversity education co-chaired the committee, overseeing an 11-person group comprised of faculty, staff and students. The group completed a comprehensive report last fall, outlining 16 recommendations that addressed various GLBT issues within the RIT community. The report was based on members' assessments, benchmarking, an examination of best practices regarding GLBT employment practices, extensive research, feedback from on-campus focus groups, and an employee survey.

Recommendations included changes in organizational structure, redefinition of policies, clarification of procedures, enhanced training for supervisors and managers, and increased options related to GLBT curriculum.

Partnerships in Pluralism. RIT's Partnerships in Pluralism, now entering its 10th year, facilitates a more interconnected and welcoming environment by encouraging interpersonal relationships between RIT faculty and staff from diverse backgrounds. The program pairs up diverse colleagues who otherwise might not be able to connect easily and provides structured opportunities for them to get to know one another. Partners are encouraged to meet over lunch or during work breaks every couple of weeks. The program provides exercises and activities for the partners to use to help them get acquainted.

Global Leadership Certificate Program. The Global Leadership Certificate Program creates a cultural experience for students to learn from others within RIT's diverse community. The program provides an opportunity for participants to learn and study with students from different cultural backgrounds and allows for peer-to-peer and professional mentoring.

2012 Employee Engagement and Climate Survey. The office for diversity and inclusion and human resources partnered last year to redesign RIT's bi-annual employee engagement survey to include the integration of 17 diversity-related climate items assessing employees' perception of the institution's commitment, support and promotion of diversity; their work environment with senior management, supervisors and colleagues; and race, gender, religion and sexual orientation bias in the workplace.

Education and Scholarship

The goal of the Inclusive Excellence Framework's education and scholarship dimension is to engage students, faculty and staff in learning varied perspectives of domestic and global diversity, inclusion and social justice.

Bridges Certificate Program. RIT's Bridges Certificate program is designed to educate faculty and staff on the Inclusive Excellence Framework's principles and guidelines. The program is focused on topics geared toward helping participants better understand the value of diversity in the real-world workplace. The format focuses on blended presentations, emphasizing

simulations and group participation. Participation has generally reached occupancy of the room, with waiting lists occurring on a number of occasions.

Leadership Training Program. The office for diversity and inclusion collaborated with human resources to design and implement a diversity-based class within the leadership training program for one of the university's largest divisions — finance and administration. In the last 18 months, the program was offered to approximately 200 managers, supervisors and leaders across 11 service units in finance and administration. Participants learned about subtle ways in which people exhibit exclusive and potentially discriminatory behavior, ways to discern the behavior, and how to respond to it in a meaningful and respectful manner. The program is now offered university-wide.

Institutional Infrastructure

The goal of the Inclusive Excellence Framework's institutional infrastructure dimension is to create and sustain an institutional infrastructure that effectively supports progress in achieving the diversity goals in the university's strategic plan. This component creates an expectation of assimilating diversity efforts into the core of institutional functioning. Elements of the framework are embedded into the university's strategic plan, including annual performance commitments specific to AALANA and female tenure-track and staff hiring and achieving high levels of stakeholder satisfaction among faculty and staff.

A Catalyst for Excellence

RIT continues to adopt and develop institutional capacity for the cohesive, coherent and collaborative integration of diversity and inclusion into the institutional pursuit of excellence. The Inclusive Excellence Framework reflects the understanding that diversity and inclusion are catalysts for institutional and educational excellence and ensures that diversity and inclusion efforts are invited and integrated into the very core of the educational enterprise. 

For its diversity efforts, Rochester Institute of Technology was a nominee for CUPA-HR's 2013 Inclusion Cultivates Excellence Award. To learn more about RIT's Inclusive Excellence Framework, visit www.diversity.rit.edu. To read about this year's Inclusion Cultivates Excellence Award recipient, Central Michigan University, visit www.cupahr.org/excellencethroughinclusion.