

A Showcase of Promising Scientists in Natural Resources

A proposal to the James P. & Shirley J. O'Brien Diversity Endowment

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Submitted by:

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Abstract:

There is almost no gender or ethnic diversity in the faculty of the School of Natural Resources. We recognize that this situation limits our effectiveness as teachers, students, and staff on-campus, and as professionals in outreach situations off-campus. As a short-term remedy and as a vehicle to begin correcting this problem, we propose a series of invited lectures and directed group discussions featuring promising women and minority scientists in Natural Resources. In addition, we will complete a SNR-wide assessment of diversity issues such as the benefits, barriers, and opportunities for creating a more diverse faculty. These activities will take place during Spring semester of 2005. We ask the O'Brien Endowment to support part of this endeavor, and we will secure the remaining funds from other sources.

Nature of the Project:

Invited lecture series and group discussions featuring women and minority speakers who are promising scientists exhibiting great potential in disciplines supported by the School of Natural Resources (SNR).

Goals:

- Raise awareness in the SNR community to the potential barriers associated with non-diverse faculty as well as the benefits of a diverse faculty.
- Provide students with opportunities to make professional contacts with promising scientists in their chosen disciplines.
- Build a shared SNR appreciation for the benefits of a diverse faculty and foster a desire to increase faculty diversity when hiring opportunities arise.
- Raise aspirations of women and minority students in the SNR to pursue advanced degrees.

Students, faculty, and staff have almost no opportunities to interact with women and minority faculty within the SNR. Of the ~24 State-funded faculty positions in the SNR, there are no women faculty members, and as of January 2005, there will be only one minority faculty member. There is one women faculty member whose position is Federally-funded as a scientist through the U.S.G.S. Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit. This lack of faculty diversity is not representative of the SNR Student Body (N= 121 undergraduates and 130 graduates) which is composed of ~52% female and ~10% minorities. We believe that the entire SNR (students, staff, and faculty) will benefit from interactions with promising women and minority scientists, and from the discussions about diversity that will follow from this project. It will illustrate what we are missing, and galvanize our commitment to correct this problem.

Inputs:

An organizing committee will 1) select speakers, 2) organize opportunities for the SNR Student Body and Faculty to interact with each speaker, 3) support an assessment process to inform us about the benefits that a diverse faculty can provide, and 4) convene a SNR-wide discussion about faculty diversity.

Six speakers will be selected to participate in a semester-long lecture series and group discussions in Spring 2005. Selection criteria will include: 1) superior research accomplishments and promise in disciplines supported by the SNR, 2) experience with formal teaching (*e.g.* lecturer or TA) and informal mentoring (*e.g.* supporting undergraduate assistants), and 3) dynamic personality and public presence. Speaker nominations will be solicited from all members of the SNR, and associated programs at the UA.

We want to target speakers who are promising rather than established scientists because their successes were achieved in the same contemporary social/scientific setting that our students now face. Further, they can help us gauge the severity of any barriers that our current lack of diversity may present when recruiting women and minority faculty.

The formal lectures will focus on research activities to showcase outstanding accomplishments; the group discussions will focus on the perspectives each scientist brings to their research and challenges they faced in their careers. Through these discussions, the importance of women and minority faculty mentors and role models for students will be highlighted. There will be three opportunities for group discussion among students, faculty, and the visiting speakers: a formal Directed Group Studies course, a less formal group discussion,

and social activities. The Directed Group Studies course will include discussion of assigned readings relevant to faculty diversity as background, and more focused readings relevant to each of the visiting speakers. We expect these formal and less-formal discussions to include topics such as “tips for success” and “recognizing opportunities”.

The organizing committee will seek advice and participation from Billye Foster, in the Department of Agricultural Education, to develop and implement the assessment process. The assessment will target the SNR students and faculty to identify the current problems associated with our lack of faculty diversity. We will convene a SNR-wide meeting to discuss the outcomes from the interactions with speakers and the assessment process. This meeting will reflect on the short-term benefits gained by this speaker series, and the need to make long-term corrections to our current situation. We will explore the potential for the CALS Diversity Committee to facilitate this convention.

Outputs:

- Lecture series, directed discussions, less formal discussions, and social interactions among the SNR Students and Faculty and each speaker.
- An assessment of student and faculty concerns about the lack of faculty diversity.
- A SNR-wide discussion of faculty diversity.

Outcomes:

- Provide a short-term remedy to the inadequate opportunities for our current students and faculty have to interact with women and minority faculty.
- Build an appreciation for the benefits that a diverse faculty can bring to the SNR.
- Galvanize a commitment in the SNR to correct this problem of low faculty diversity when hiring opportunities arise.

To sustain the successes gained from this initial effort, we will negotiate for a SNR-wide commitment to include accomplished women and minority speakers in the existing SNR lecture series. These speakers may include on-campus faculty as well as visitors. In addition, we will build on this success by pursuing opportunities to hire women and minority faculty whenever possible.

How will it meet the endowment mission?

This effort is fully consistent with the Endowment Mission to support “the awareness of diversity, respect for the richness of diversity..., and belief that diversity brings quality.” This effort conforms to the efforts identified in the Endowment by providing “a lecture series or travel related to diversity”.

Personnel for completion:

The organizing committee will include members of the SNR faculty, undergraduate and graduate students, and a representative from the UA Millennium Report Oversight Committee (MROC).

How will it be integrated into the University community?

The lecture series will be advertised within relevant departments across campus and a large lecture hall venue will ensure that many members of the University community will attend. We will seek participation and assistance from the UA Millennium Report Oversight Committee (MROC) and the CALS Diversity Committee to perform outreach to the greater UA community.

Budget:

The budget is itemized per speaker and the total needed to support 6 speakers.

Category	Cost per Speaker	Total Cost (6 speakers)
Travel (airfare and lodging)	\$960	\$5760
Stipend	\$150	\$900
Total	\$1110	\$6660


Budget justification:

Travel (airfare and lodging) at \$960 is based on 3 nights lodging (\$170/night), 2 days per diem (\$50), a stipend of \$150, and coach airfare at \$350. The stipend will recognize the efforts of the speakers to develop their presentations and participate in numerous discussions with students and faculty.

Extra-budget expenses such as advertising, development and reporting of assessment, and food and beverages associated with informal gatherings will be borne by the SNR and other UA sources.

We fully recognize that most awards do not exceed \$1000. Nonetheless, the SNR is determined to bring this speaker series to fruition by securing funds from a variety of sources. Therefore, any contributions from the James P. & Shirley J. O'Brien Diversity Endowment will contribute to our goal.

Applicant signature & date:



Mitch McClaran, Professor, SNR

29 Oct 04

Date

Supervisor/Advisor signature & date:



C.P.P. Reid, Director, SNR

10/29/04

Date