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REPORT OF THE GRADUATE CENTER DIVERSITY TASK FORCE

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GOALS:

The Graduate Center's president, Chase Robinson, called for the creation of a Diversity Task Force and charged it with identifying obstacles standing in the way of the Graduate Center's achieving its goals of inclusivity and diversity among all its constituents and in all its operations. The task force was asked to make specific recommendations to overcome these obstacles with the goal of substantially increasing the numbers of individuals from communities that are underrepresented at the Graduate Center. The task force's guiding principle was that a diverse faculty and student body can only positively affect the research and pedagogical goals of the Graduate Center and continue CUNY's mission to "educate the whole people." In particular, throughout its deliberations the Diversity Task Force discussed methods by which the City University of New York and the larger community could be better represented at the Graduate Center.

The Diversity Task Force was especially concerned with avoiding certain traditional assumptions and approaches that have become entrenched in many colleges and universities and which are not appropriate for the Graduate Center. In establishing methods and goals for the recruitment of faculty, the task force acknowledges the GC's ongoing efforts to recruit a diverse faculty, including women and underrepresented racial and ethnic minorities, in selected discipline clusters as outlined in the GC's Federal Affirmative Action Plan, effective until August 2015. Nonetheless, the GC must go beyond minimally required federal guidelines and take a micro approach within its nine discipline clusters also known as Affirmative Action units (AAUs) and identify the lack of women and ethnic and racial minorities by individual program(s). In order for the Graduate Center to be a national leader in these matters it cannot merely match the low numbers of persons of color, women, working class persons, and members of LGBTQ communities at most U.S. colleges and universities. Graduate Center faculty and student diversity should far exceed national utilization averages. In relation to this matter, the Diversity Task Force also recognized the need to find methods to avoid the perception of tokenism, particularly as the Graduate Center continues to diversify its faculty. While appointing small numbers of persons from underrepresented communities to the faculty will help to move us toward some of the Graduate Center's stated goals it will ultimately overburden female faculty, faculty of color, and other faculty from underrepresented communities. This could potentially set the entire Graduate Center community on a path to failing in its efforts to diversify the faculty and student body. This latter concern speaks to the Diversity Task Force's conviction that the Graduate Center must find ways to encourage a climate that is at once energetic and supportive, in which true faculty and student diversity is recognized as a central goal of the senior administration, the faculty, and the student body. In addition, the task force reiterates its belief that the Graduate Center should continually demonstrate in both language and action that it is a national leader in matters of diversity and inclusivity.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Creating a critical mass of faculty from diverse backgrounds and increasing the number of underrepresented students while establishing and maintaining an energetic and supportive climate that enacts and celebrates diversity and inclusiveness is of the utmost importance to the research, pedagogical, and social functions of the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. Taking this into account we recommend taking the following actions commencing Spring 2015:

I. Increasing the Number of Faculty from Underrepresented Groups

The Diversity Task Force joins with all members of the Graduate Center community in its recognition that faculty from underrepresented groups should be hired and recruited in all fields, including the humanities, social sciences, and the sciences. Moreover, we wish to impress upon the community the urgent need to move quickly on these matters. Though the task force recognizes the general good will of most faculty and students with respect to the importance of diversity, the low number of faculty from underrepresented groups (particularly African American, Asian and Latino faculty) makes the Graduate Center a less attractive location for many individuals and leaves it extremely vulnerable to the charge of failing in its fundamental mission of serving the intellectual and educational needs of all citizens and residents of New York City. The task force also recognizes that while these issues are systemic there is a particularly serious problem in the sciences. (This fact is supported by the Ph.D. degree conferred availability data of the Graduate Center's Affirmative Action Plan, appendix B-B21.) Further, one salient issue for the recruitment and retention of diverse faculty is the need to maintain salaries and benefits at levels that are competitive with other top-tier academic institutions as described in the GC's Faculty Diversity Strategic Plan 2013-2018. In addition, the City University of New York's 2013 Performance Management Progress (PMP) Report, Section 2.3 also commits us to the recruitment and retention of a diverse faculty. The Diversity Task Force suggests, therefore, that the Graduate Center's senior administration immediately survey all programs in order to identify programs and initiatives that have low numbers of women, African Americans, Latinos, and other individuals from underrepresented groups on their faculties. The administration should then work with those programs to build feasible plans to address these deficiencies, particularly through the hiring of central line faculty members and visiting scholars.

The Humanities and Social Sciences

The Diversity Task Force suggests that the President of the Graduate Center develop and announce an initiative to identify and hire no fewer than six persons from underrepresented groups who work in related areas as central line hires in the humanities and social sciences within a maximum of three years. Special emphasis

should be placed on identifying individuals whose work focuses on the nexus of race, class, gender, and sexuality. Appropriate mechanisms for encouraging collaboration and interaction between these individuals should be developed.

The Graduate Center should establish at least two visiting professorships in the humanities and social sciences. These professorships will rotate between programs in the social sciences and humanities on a competitive basis. Use of visitors will allow the Graduate Center to attract dynamic faculty who might not consider a permanent move to New York.

The Graduate Center should appoint no less than two post-doctoral fellows to be associated with programs in the humanities and social sciences. These fellowships should be specifically designed to increase the diversity of the GC faculty (and the professoriate more generally) and will rotate on a competitive basis between the programs in the humanities and social sciences.

The Committee would like to emphasize the importance of a critical number of faculty working in related areas with the necessary structures and support for collaboration and interaction. As we mentioned earlier, the Graduate Center should become a nationally-known center for cutting-edge scholarship about racialized and marginalized populations. This can only happen through taking measures to avoid perceptions of tokenism, selection of faculty with careful attention to the topics of their scholarship, and support for interaction and collaboration.

The Sciences

In the particular case of the sciences we also recommend developing a set of alternative protocols with which the Graduate Center might attract talented scientists to its faculty as a) visitors, b) part-time faculty members, including persons with appointments at other institutions such as Rockefeller University and the Museum of National History, and c) post-docs, particularly in theoretical fields. In all cases, we expect that the attraction for such individuals will be their recognition of the Graduate Center as a location particularly committed to increasing the numbers of scientists from underrepresented communities.

We also recommend the establishment of The Committee for Diversity in the Sciences.

The Committee for Diversity in the Sciences

Rationale: The sciences present a unique problem in recruiting and retaining women and faculty from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups. A special committee should be formed to seek ways to increase the number of underrepresented faculty in the theoretical, bench, and clinical sciences. At the same time the committee will work to create centralized programming at the Graduate Center in order to encourage

collaborative and interdisciplinary research and to foster a shared sense of community among the science community—especially scientists from underrepresented communities—across the whole of the CUNY community. This committee would be tasked with creating university wide events (perhaps utilizing the science center) to celebrate and promote the scholarship and research of scientists from underrepresented minority groups. These events will help to bring members from all of the sciences to a centralized location on a regular basis to help create and sustain a shared community of scholars in the sciences. While this committee will include faculty and students who are already part of the Graduate Center community, it should also be used as a specific mechanism with which to identify, recruit, and hire scientists capable of advancing the college’s mission to diversify its faculty while also encouraging the highest levels of scientific inquiry.

Operation and Goals:

Members of the senior administration should be tasked immediately with identifying current faculty members who will provide the nexus of the Committee for Diversity in the Sciences. These faculty members should receive release time as should all subsequent faculty members appointed to the committee.

The Committee for Diversity in the Sciences should have no fewer than four student fellows each year. These fellows will act as full members of the committee. Fellows should receive stipends.

In consultation with senior administrators and the faculties of the Graduate Center’s science programs, the Committee for Diversity in the Sciences should be tasked immediately with establishing procedures to hire six central line faculty members in the “bench,” clinical, and especially theoretical sciences. Again, flexibility in the status and the work requirements of these new hires is key. All new hires will be invited to join the Committee for Diversity in the Sciences.

The Graduate Center should establish at least two visiting professorships in the sciences to be rotated among all of the science programs on an annual or biannual basis. Visiting scholars will allow the Graduate Center to attract dynamic faculty who might not consider a permanent move to New York at this time. These visiting professors will also be invited to the Committee for Diversity in the Sciences.

The Graduate Center should appoint no fewer than two post-doctoral fellows to be associated with the Committee for Diversity in the Sciences. These post-doctoral fellowships should last two years each. Post-doctoral fellowships should be continued throughout the existence of the Committee for Diversity in the Sciences.

The President of the Graduate Center should appoint a faculty director and administrative staff for the Committee for Diversity in the Sciences.

The Graduate Center should provide a dedicated budget, office and meeting space for the Committee for Diversity in the Sciences.

II. Increasing the Number of Students From Underrepresented Groups

Fellowships

The Graduate Center should increase the number of Magnet Fellowships from eight to at least sixteen.

Recruitment Officer

Rationale:

The Graduate Center has long needed a member of the senior administration who is primarily responsible for student recruitment and retention. This individual should be tasked with forming relationships with both undergraduate institutions and organizations working specifically to increase the diversity of the graduate student population. The goal should be to present the Graduate Center as a desirable location for graduate study early in students' undergraduate careers and to find methods by which to facilitate the entry of all students, especially students from groups underrepresented at the Graduate Center, into all programs.

Operation and Goals:

This individual should report directly to the President. They will be responsible for overseeing the work of program based diversity committees, developing and maintaining relationships with Graduate Center feeder institutions both inside and outside the CUNY system, and developing a positive learning environment for students of color, women, and members of LGBTQ communities. Particular attention should be paid to students' first year experiences and the question of timely completion of their degrees. The individual must have the authority and skill to work with tenured faculty.

The Recruitment Officer should be intimately involved in the development--including consulting with members of the Doctoral Students Council and other concerned G.C. constituencies--and implementation of diversity and inclusion climate surveys.

The Recruitment Officer should work with Graduate Center programs and the senior administration to insure that admitted students from underrepresented groups are considered for all available sources of student aid. This includes but should not be limited to Gileece Fellowships, Magnet Fellowships, and Enhanced Chancellor's Fellowships.

III: Implementing Diversity Standards at the Program Level

Program Level Diversity Committees

Rationale:

For matters of inclusion and diversity to become central to the everyday activities of the Graduate Center Community, the Diversity Task Force recommends that all programs be required to create standing Diversity Committees. These committees will work with the Recruitment officer to address ways in which they can specifically work to recruit and retain faculty and students from underrepresented communities (particularly members of black and Latino communities as well as women, lesbian, gay, and trans-gender persons). These committees will also be charged with working with the constituents of their programs to create climates welcoming to all members of the Graduate Center community.

Operation and Goals:

Concerns of the committees should include: Identifying ways to increase the diversity of the student body and the faculty, paying particular attention to the severe underrepresentation of black and Latino persons at the college; identifying specific goals of diversity for individual programs; assessing how the faculty in the programs reflect those goals and contribute to their realization; and assessing how curricula can serve these goals better. The program level diversity committees should report annually to both their individual executive committees and the Recruitment Officer. The report should include a discussion of the work of the committee and the progress of the programs within which they are embedded. General meetings of all the program diversity committees should take place at least once a semester. The committees should use these meetings as opportunities to report on their activities, develop group strategies, and set collective Graduate Center wide goals. As programs institute these committees at an informal level, the President's office in consultation with the structure committee of the Graduate Center should consider formalizing these committees as program level standing committees.

IV: Climate Surveys

Beginning with the 2015/2016 school year the Graduate Center should begin regular climate surveys of all the Graduate Center's constituencies in order to assess where the college is in relation to achieving its goals of inclusivity and diversity. The results of these surveys should be made readily available to the GC community and the general public as quickly as possible after their completion. The surveys should be repeated at least every three years. Related to this is a need to identify the admission rates and experiences of lesbian, gay, and trans-gender members of the student body. In the process, the sexual minority and trans-gender categories should be disaggregated.

V: Outreach

Website

The Graduate Center should create a Diversity Website that captures all of its diversity initiatives, accomplishments and highlights academic and popular achievements of its faculty, staff, and students. In addition, the GC's current homepage must be improved to capture the diversity of its current faculty and students.

Visibility Officer

The Graduate Center should recruit a senior administrator to improve its visibility within and outside higher education in order to strengthen its branding and communication strategies and to build partnerships with the corporate and non-profit sectors. Building such partnerships could potentially provide funding for GC diversity initiatives, events, and recruitment efforts.