

Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis

Executive Summary

**Affirmative Action Office
Hiring and Complaint Procedures**

Submitted by

**Barbara Mawhiney
Diverse Solutions, LLC
2585 W. Oakland St.
Chandler, AZ 85224
602-363-9765**

JUL 08 2008 PM 01:24

**Executive Summary
Affirmative Action Report**

PURPOSE

The purpose of this review was to look at diversity issues with specific attention to hiring practices and discrimination complaint processes. The review consisted of campus interviews on April 28-30, 2008 with representatives from the administration, faculty, staff, and students. Additionally, an open forum was held for interested individuals to share their views on the above topics. Policy and procedure documents were also reviewed.

Recent events on campus led to concerns about the implementation of hiring policies and discrimination complaint procedures by the Affirmative Action Office and these concerns were the central issues discussed in all meetings. Individuals interviewed were promised confidentiality and assured that individual attributions would not be made in this report.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

Communication

A key component of all the specific issues identified during the campus visit was communication: the lack of it, the effectiveness of it, the lack of awareness of it, and the timeliness of it. Additionally, some individuals felt entitled to information that institutionally is considered confidential personnel information. Several conversations addressed the difference between public and confidential information. Based on perceptions of a lack of or ineffective communication, new perceptions of inattention to and/or mishandling of situations resulted. The concerns about communication also aided perceptions of lack of transparency of institutional operations which in turn created mistrust toward various administrative offices.

Diversity

A prevailing perspective offered by those interviewed is that IUPUI has addressed and continues to address a variety of diversity issues, however, the general awareness of what has been done and how effective the action taken was is open to debate. Reports of overt racism in classes, differential treatment among student/employee groups by administrative units, minimal or no representation of various social identity groups among the faculty and administration, lack of communication between social identity groups and university governance groups, and a crisis management approach to diversity were received.

Affirmative Action Office

Among the individuals interviewed, the sense that the office has lost credibility was overwhelming. The credibility issue was most often tied to perceptions of lack of timeliness in both the hiring and complaint processes, as well as, a general perception of lack of service orientation and minimal cooperation with other offices on campus. An office focus on adherence to rigid complaint procedures to determine guilt or innocence rather than on fixing the problem was perceived by several people. Additionally, a perception that the office served as an advocate for complainants and for one specific social identity group was mentioned several times.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In the complete report there are quick fix and longer term recommendations to address the three areas identified. Examples of quick fix recommendations are:

1. The new Assistant Chancellor for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, and new Director, Equal Opportunity are uniquely positioned to share information about what, when and how they plan to communicate as they engage in meetings with individuals and groups. They are also positioned to assess the types of information people most want and share this with other administrators to determine strategies to assure effective communication.
2. Encourage periodic meetings, organized by the Director, Equal Opportunity or the Assistant Chancellor for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, between governance organizations and campus social identity organizations. Additionally, including representatives from other campus offices that address diversity issues (e.g. Office of Women, Adaptive Educational Services) in these meetings will facilitate communication and cooperation among a wide range of individuals working toward similar goals.
3. Define a specific timeframe (e.g. 24 work hours from notice of the need for a review) for AAO review/approval/contact to the department about recruitment reviews and provide this information on the AAO website.
4. Identify a timeframe (e.g. 60 working days) for processing complaints under the current procedures and place this information on the AAO website.

Examples of longer term recommendations are:

1. Develop workshops, open forums, focus groups, and/or email/telephone hotlines to provide information about how to prevent problems/be aware of the impact of language and behavior in a diverse environment and to provide information about how to respond appropriately when in a situation that is uncomfortable or anger producing based on one's social identity characteristics.
2. Create a faculty hiring policy specific to IUPUI; the Search and Screen Procedures do not indicate that following these procedures is a requirement nor does the document contain information typical to policies.
3. Develop a discrimination complaint policy which includes multiple options for addressing discrimination allegations, timeframe for handling complaints, elements potentially included in an investigation, communication requirements with both the complainant and respondent about the results of investigations or resolution actions,

identification of a focus on fixing the problem rather than a rigid determination of guilt/innocence in one option for addressing allegations. Consideration should be given to the appropriateness of including an internal appeal process for discrimination complaints. Some universities include an appeal to the Chancellor/President (depending on the organizational structure of the university) and/or to a faculty/staff/student committee, which has been trained on what constitutes discrimination. If an appeal process is included, clear delineation of what can be appealed is critical (e.g. investigation process, investigation conclusion, discipline implemented by an administrator).

CONCLUSION

While the interviews for this review focused on hiring and complaint processes, these issues were indicative of larger concerns about equity and diversity. IUPUI is a large, urban university committed to providing an educational and employment environment that is inclusive and welcoming. Implementing this commitment is as challenging as it is rewarding because the definitions of “inclusive” and “welcoming” are not universal within the university community. The university population is a constantly changing population, more so for students but also for employees due to retirements and new hires. It is important to remember this when thinking about diversity and how completely this concept permeates every aspect of a university.

IUPUI appears to be at a stage that offers multiple opportunities to maintain the progress made to date as well as to take stock of what might need to be changed now to further demonstrate an inclusive and welcoming environment and that will include anticipation of changes needed in the future to assure a diverse campus environment and community.