

1-22-1998

[Report to the Community on the Diversity Agenda at Sarah Lawrence, January 22, 1998]

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Recommended Citation

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SARAH LAWRENCE COLLEGE

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

January 22, 1998

A REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY ON THE DIVERSITY AGENDA AT SARAH LAWRENCE

FROM: ALICE ILCHMAN AND THE GENERAL COMMITTEE

Last spring, General Committee assumed responsibility for helping to address a College-wide agenda for diversity. We write now to make an interim report on the progress of the last several months.

Although reinstating a Diversity Committee was suggested last spring, faculty and staff who had had experience on an earlier "diversity committee" persuasively argued that the most effective way to address the diversity agenda would be to work through the standing committees. It is within these committees that the most significant issues of the College are debated and executed. Accordingly, the role of General Committee is to facilitate discussion and implementation of the diversity agenda, through the standing committees, or appropriate student or staff groups.

In addition to directing issues to the agendas of standing committees, the General Committee has reviewed the report from OAR, the longest written piece in the past two decades on the issue of racial diversity at Sarah Lawrence.

PROGRESS REPORT

I. CULTURAL AWARENESS AND DIVERSITY PROGRAMS

With the help of new funds made available by a generous trustee donor, the Student Affairs Office and the Office of Multicultural Affairs has expanded its programs in these areas. **Of immediate interest, we urge all members of the community -- students, faculty and staff -- to participate in the all-College inter-active dialogue on Racism and Diversity in American Culture, to be held on Tuesday, January 27, at 6:30 p.m., in Reisinger Auditorium.** As announced in the flyer, the dialogue will be led by Lee Mun Wah, director and producer of *The Color of Fear*. We also urge you to attend one of the **screenings of the film in the Film Viewing Room:**

Saturday, January 24 -- 4 p.m.

Monday, January 26 -- 11 a.m.

Monday, January 26 -- 6 p.m.

A rich array of other programs is offered by the Office of Multicultural Affairs. The program for this semester has just been sent to all members of the community.

II. RACIAL DIVERSITY WITHIN THE FACULTY

A. FACULTY HIRING. This fall, the Advisory Committee on Faculty Appointments drafted **Guidelines for Faculty Searches**. The Guidelines, which make explicit the College's commitment to a diverse faculty, were adopted by the faculty in December. They include the following statement:

Establishing a Diverse Applicant Pool

The (search) committee then develops a list of appropriate advertising venues for the position. At this point in the process, particular attention must be given to the issue of racial and cultural diversity. The College has as one of its goals to recruit and maintain a racially and culturally diverse faculty. To that end, each search must be seen as an opportunity to increase diversity and every effort must be made to expand the applicant pool. Openings will be advertised in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, in the journal(s) of the relevant discipline(s), and in professional publications designed to reach candidates of color. (At the present time, all positions are advertised in *Black Issues in Higher Education* and in *Hispanic Outlook on Higher Education*.)

The Guidelines for Faculty Searches make explicit a new policy. In the past, only faculty in relevant divisions were formally notified of faculty openings. Under our new policy, all faculty members will be informed of all current searches. Our hope is that broader knowledge of a search will enable more faculty members to help us identify candidates of color.

Finally, each time a search committee is formed, the Dean of the College reminds the chair of the committee of the importance of developing a diverse applicant pool. Moneys are made available for expanded advertising where appropriate.

III. DIVERSITY WITHIN THE CURRICULUM

A. During the fall semester, the Curriculum Committee worked to develop a taxonomy of areas where faculty expected or wanted the curriculum to expand. The committee asked the members of each division where they would like to see growth, both within and outside the division. Student opinion was also solicited via the Student Senate and in a meeting with representatives of the Diversity Coalition. This material is now being collated and will be summarized in a report to the Curriculum Committee in February 1998. Curriculum Committee will use the survey as a guideline for priorities for future appointments. A guest appointment in African history has been authorized for 1998-99.

B. A number of faculty members have already developed new courses that increase diversity within the curriculum. Two such examples are “The History and Culture of the American Southwest,” and “Literary Nation-Building: An Introduction to African Literatures.” Other faculty members have revised and expanded their syllabi to be more inclusive.

C. The Curriculum Committee is also considering adding a section to the catalogue that would more coherently present our offerings in non-Western areas. Such a section might include both courses with multicultural content and a list of courses where the instructor welcomes conference projects focusing on multicultural issues.

IV. INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS

For some time, we have been working to expand opportunities for students to study in places other than Europe:

a) Our exchange program with Reed College gives students the opportunity to study in Costa Rica, China, and Russia.

b) Faculty members are studying the possibility of establishing programs in Africa and Latin America.

c). We are developing a proposal to expand the numbers of students who can take advantage of programs run by CIEE (Council on International Educational Exchange) and SIT (School for International Training). These institutions sponsor programs in countries such as Cameroon, Kenya, Nepal, India, Indonesia, Brazil, and Ecuador.

V. A MORE DIVERSE STUDENT BODY

The College’s Strategic Plan calls for greater racial, ethnic and economic diversity within the student body. A decade ago students of color represented 10% of the undergraduate enrollment. Today, that figure stands at 16 percent. We are examining strategies that contributed to the progress of the past decade, expanding such strategies, and developing new approaches that will move us closer to our goals. We aim to increase the percentage of students of color at the College to 20% in four years.

These strategies include:

Associate Director of Admissions and Student of Color Coordinator: A search is underway to fill this important position, unexpectedly vacated last November. Responsibility for coordinating student of color recruitment and yield this spring is carried by [REDACTED] who is a graduate student, and the entire admissions staff. A search for a permanent replacement is under way. The successful candidate will have a strong record of experience in student of color recruitment.



Student of Color Intern: The student of color intern works closely with the above-noted staff member to coordinate phonothons, open houses, etc. (see below) and to build a committed group of student volunteers.

Targeted New York City Admissions Recruitment: This year, we have expanded our visits to those high schools and programs in the City with high student of color populations. In most cases, students of color accompanied us to these college fairs.

Multicultural Open Houses: Research has shown that students who visit Sarah Lawrence are far more likely to apply and then enroll than those who do not visit. To this end, this past December we held the first Multicultural Open House organized specifically for students of color.

Student Ambassador Program: Our own students are some of our most effective spokespeople. This year, we re-instituted our student ambassador program where students return to their high schools over breaks to talk about Sarah Lawrence with students, teachers, counselors, and friends.

Student of Color Phonothons: These phonothons are held once in the spring and once in the fall, with current students calling prospective and admitted students to answer their questions about Sarah Lawrence.

Multicultural Newsletter: Working with the student of color recruitment coordinator, Public Affairs, and the student of color intern, we plan to create a newsletter for students of color, their families, and their guidance counselors.

More Faculty and Staff of Color: Increasing the number of faculty and staff of color at the College will be one of the most effective ways to increase the number of students of color who accept our offer of admission.

The next interim report from General Committee will address diversity within the staff, efforts to increase diversity within the trustees, and issues in student life.