

Office of Intercultural Programs and Services

Benchmarking Report

July 2003

The Office of Intercultural Programs and Services conducted its benchmarking process during the spring 2003 semester to assess the quality of programs and services provided to students. Using a series of questions targeting specific issues the unit faces, staff contacted comparable institutions that focus on diversity programming and involved in retention efforts for students of color. The institutions selected for benchmarking included:

Ball State University
Bowling Green State University
Clemson University
*Kansas University
Miami of Ohio University
University of California - Riverside
University of North Carolina – Greensboro

* Assessed KU's "Hawmlink" retention program

Data was collected through telephone interviews, e-mail, and web site review.

The following is a compilation of findings from this Benchmarking Process:

- Student Affairs at ISU provides one of the best Graduate Assistant support programs staffing the Office of Intercultural Programs and Services office with 4 GAs. Most of the institutions assessed either had no GAs or no more than 2.
- All institutions assessed had at a minimum one Director supervising an Associate Director or 1 to 2 Assistant Directors. The hiring freeze at ISU prevented OIPS from filling its Assistant Director position for 2002-2004 and services were impacted by the vacancy. The position was approved for a search in spring 2004.
- The Director for most institutions report directly to the Vice President or Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs. This lends the credibility of the importance of diversity programs and services for the institutions.
- Half of the institutions assessed are housed in stand alone facilities (houses or small buildings) or in student services/student center types of facilities.
- ISU and Bowling Green have the only programs that provides support for GLBT issues. Miami of Ohio is beginning to provide support.
- Most of the institutions assessed provide retention programs for students of color. Ball State has the EXCEL program, Bowling Green has SMART, Kansas University has the Hawmlink program, and ISU has the First Year Student Mentor Program.
- Ball State, Bowling Green, and UC-Riverside has funding support through grants and student fees. All others are funded with student fees.

- There is a growing trend towards cultural centers utilizing the web for publishing newsletters and cultural calendars. Clemson, Miami University, UNC-Greensboro and ISU each publish an online newsletter. Others have newsletters planned for the future.
- Ball State, Bowling Green, and Kansas University all sponsor regional/national conferences targeting either African American or Latino recruitment and retention issues.
- Bowling Green and UC - Riverside offers a “pre-college” summer enrichment program targeting students of color.
- There is a growing trend to provide separate full time staff responsible for each underrepresented group or provide separate and distinct unit functions for each group.
- Bowling Green is the only institution with a Financial Aid Specialist assigned to the unit to assist students of color with their financial aid issues.
- Most of the units assessed have a “resource center” that provides books and videos on issues of diversity.

Areas for Exploration Resulting from Benchmarking

- Seek out external funding for diversity programs and services through grants.
- Kansas University has the “Hawklink” program for retention of students of color. A number of components of that program have been adapted and infused in ISU’s First Year Student Mentor Program for fall 2004 implementation.
- None of the institutions assessed utilize the full potential of computer technology for student services. ISU is exploring the use of “virtual office hours” and streaming video tutorial services.
- ISU sponsored its first Recruitment and Retention Workshop during the spring 2004 semester. Discussions are being made to make this an annual event.
- ISU is continuing to explore the need to relocate OIPS to the Bone Student Center to increase student access and usage.
- Develop a regional/national conference focused on a diversity related issue.
- Continue to revise the unit’s website to make it more appealing and useful for students. Functions would include diversity resource links, list serv information, space reservation forms, online forms for peer mentors, office hours for each staff member, virtual office hours, and streaming video tutorial services.
- Continue to explore the development of a “train the trainer” program to develop groups of faculty and staff who can provide diversity training. This was an initiative being developed by the Office for Diversity and Affirmative Action but dropped due to the departure of its director in fall 2003.

Summary

Illinois State University’s Office of Intercultural Programs and Service has been able to provide programs and services comparable to its assessed peer institutions despite the

challenges of a lack of a full time director prior to 2002. The University hiring freeze also posed unique challenges that were overcome with the hiring of a half-time Graduate Assistant. In order for the unit to continue to operate at its current level or exceed its peer institutions, the unit will have to sustain its budget or increase funding for programs in order to provide quality and attractive programs.

One of the reasons the unit has been successful in facilitating its programs is its ability to develop partnerships with other units to collaborate on programs. Partners include the Student Life Office, University Housing Services, Student Counseling Services, Career Services, and Athletics.

The unit has begun to venture into “flagship programs that are more impactful on a campus-wide level. The *Tunnel of Oppression* was facilitated for the second time in the fall 2003 semester. More than 1000 students, faculty, and staff were educated through this program and it has become a flagship program for the unit for the fall. The *Educating Illinois State – Recruitment and Retention Workshop* was the first venture into the workshops designed to address the issue of recruiting and retention from an institutional perspective. It is a goal to solicit funding from various offices to make this an annual spring program.

The First Year Student Mentor Program is being restructured and its name changed to *Minority Academic Scholar Achievement Initiative (MASAI)*. It will have a faculty/staff advisory committee to provide leadership for the program and it has been proposed to have Minority Academic Scholars required to participate in the program. Funding is also being sought through external sources.