

**UIC** DIVERSITY STRATEGIC  
THINKING AND PLANNING

# Through the Lens of Diversity

University of Illinois at Chicago  
Diversity Strategic Thinking

WORKING DRAFT  
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# Through the Lens of Diversity

## University of Illinois at Chicago Diversity Strategic Thinking

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## FOREWORD

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Dear Readers:

The University of Illinois at Chicago continues to be a leader in diversity by many measures. We take great pride in knowing that diversity is a key characteristic of UIC. Currently, the composition of our student population is one that many institutions dream of achieving, one in which no racial or ethnic majority exists. Historically, UIC has been nationally recognized for supporting the success of groups traditionally underrepresented in higher education. However, we know that we cannot rest on these achievements. We must strive to realize even greater strength from the diversity we have – making it a more active and central part of working, learning and living at UIC. We must fully actualize our commitment to integrating diversity into our core mission and daily activities.

It was with excitement that I established the Diversity Strategic Thinking and Planning Committee in 2009. The committee was charged with conducting a diversity strategic thinking and planning process on campus, to probe the meaning of diversity and its value to UIC’s multifaceted mission, and to suggest ideas for incorporating diversity more deeply into the fabric of the institution in meaningful ways. Over the past year, the DSTP Committee and its subcommittees have visited numerous units and constituent groups, led diversity strategic thinking exercises and initiated on-going conversations across the campus. They have examined what it means for UIC to be a diverse institution, the benefits that UIC gains from diversity, and how our current activities relate to diversity.

I am proud of the work the committee has completed over the last year, and it is with enthusiasm that I share their results in this draft “thinking document” called *Through the Lens of Diversity*. *Through the Lens of Diversity* represents the results of a critical process for the campus, incorporating hundreds of hours of discussion and labor and a multitude of viewpoints. I believe this document and the process that produced it positions us to transform UIC and to provide even truer “Access to Excellence” for a diverse community. *Through the Lens of Diversity* will help us to understand the challenges and opportunities we face as a uniquely diverse campus and guide us to the next stage, developing a campus Diversity Strategic Plan.

The Diversity Strategic Plan will make concrete recommendations on how to advance our ability to offer an outstanding education to a diverse student body and insure that the continued excellence of our research and educational programs is enriched by the diversity of the people engaged in these activities. The plan will also emphasize the value of working collaboratively and encourage us to be more creative in building new collaborations on campus. Diversity will remain one of UIC’s singular strengths, a fundamental part of our identity and an extraordinary opportunity for the institution. My hope and vision is that the Diversity Strategic Thinking and Planning process will make UIC – already a leader – even stronger.

R. Michael Tanner  
Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

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## MESSAGE FROM THE DIVERSITY STRATEGIC THINKING AND PLANNING (DSTP) COMMITTEE

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In the fall of 2008 Provost Michael Tanner requested a large-scale study of diversity at UIC. Nominations were sought from Deans and Vice Chancellors of individuals to serve on a campus-level Diversity Strategic Thinking and Planning Committee and co-chairpersons were named to oversee the project: William Walden, Special Assistant to the Provost for Diversity; and Lon Kaufman, Vice Provost for Planning and Programs.

After preliminary work to outline the DSTP process, the Committee devoted 2009 to Diversity Strategic Thinking. The goal of this first stage of the process was to consider how UIC interprets, accomplishes, assesses and utilizes our diversity through the lenses of six subject areas: Climate and Environment, Staff, Students, Faculty, Teaching and Learning, and Research. Subcommittees were assigned to each of these areas and their memberships were enhanced by the addition of UIC community members with important experiences and viewpoints about each of these subjects.

As the subcommittees went about their work, the colleges and vice chancellor units were charged with initiating their own diversity strategic thinking and planning process. In addition, a Student Advisory Committee was formed so that student perspectives might be solicited and incorporated into all aspects of the process.

Each subcommittee met regularly over the year to examine data and published documents provided by UIC administrators and materials gathered from other internal and external sources. Subcommittees also conducted SWOT analyses, and interview teams talked with numerous offices, committees and constituency groups to hear a range of perspectives on diversity issues and catalogue the activities, concerns, goals and priorities of our campus communities. Information gathered by the subcommittees and their preliminary conclusions were shared with and discussed by the larger committee. Then in the fall of 2009 each subcommittee prepared final reports with its findings and recommendations. This Diversity Strategic Thinking document summarizes the most relevant information from these discussions and reports.

The DSTP Committee acknowledges that the word *diversity* elicits a range of responses, particularly about its meaning and ramifications. In approaching our charge, the Committee thought of diversity in terms of imagining a different kind of university, a reverberation of the ideals stated in the UIC 2010 Strategic Plan. We recognize that these discussions come at a time of severe budget crisis, and concern that public education may become increasingly unaffordable. The DSTP Committee discussed this problem and does not have easy answers.

Nevertheless, we remain enthusiastic about this process. Some of us have come to the conclusion that any Strategic Plan regarding diversity must also be, in part, a critique of the language of diversity and what it hides, of diversity as practiced in the American academy and even of the idealized liberalism that continues to root the term. Our enthusiasm, then, is about the opportunity to start conversations about and implement an experiment that has the potential of becoming a model for other universities.

And yes we should also examine the funding priorities of UIC, particularly if we can argue for strong interpretations of diversity. Our hope is that we can start to think of diversity as a set of opportunities,

ideas and tools by which we consider and learn from our interactions with each other and as an intellectual inquiry into how we make knowledge across all disciplines.

This document paves the way for the Diversity Strategic Planning process of 2010, which will order priorities, develop actions, and make recommendations. This planning will also be part of updating the university-wide strategic plan. As diversity includes differences in perspective, we welcome any and all reactions.

We submit this document to you as a first step in rethinking the current conceptions of UIC. How to move our campus from where we are now to one that is more vitally engaged is the challenge. With your support we hope to further clarify our goals.

It is in this spirit that we offer the following as a first iteration.

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## INTRODUCTION

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The term *diversity* has many competing definitions, none of them perfect. As a committee, we offer a working definition that encompasses UIC's firm commitment to the principles of inclusion, access, and equity with an emphasis on groups that have been historically underrepresented, excluded, marginalized, or discriminated against. We borrow from the College of Education in defining diversity as the totality of the many ways that people are similar and different – including by race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation and identity, disability, national origin and citizenship status, age, language, culture, religion, and economic status – where the similarities and differences unfairly determine a basis for advantage or inequity. Since all forms of difference are not the same and diversity alone may not always achieve justice and equity, we must give special attention to rectifying institutional and individual forms of bias, overt and embedded, which are based on these social markers.

Why is diversity so important? First, the principle of advocating greater diversity and equity comes out of a historical context in which many institutions in our society, for far too long, actively excluded, discriminated against, or minimized and devalued the contributions of many groups. This is why diversity is important as a corrective to make us stronger and better as an institution. If discrimination and injustice had not existed or did not persist, active diversity initiatives like ours would not be necessary. Second, individuals are multifaceted. Throughout this process UIC students have emphasized that many people define themselves as and take pride in having multiple identities. Diversity acknowledges this reality and recognizes the depth and breadth of cultures and microcultures that make up our communities.

At the same time we understand the extent of the problems we are addressing, UIC wants to build on its strengths. We are recognized as one of the most diverse research-intensive universities in the United States.

**“UIC boasts a level of diversity that many institutions in the nation can only dream about.”  
(NCA Accreditation Team, 2007)**

Among our student population, no racial or ethnic majority exists. We take pride in the racial and ethnic diversity of our campus but recognize that there remain areas where our demographics do not match our ideals. Our faculty diversity is much lower than we wish to achieve, with some departments still lacking any racial or gender diversity whatsoever. We also recognize that broad diversity includes addressing issues beyond race and ethnicity. UIC values broad diversity in all activities and at all levels, and seeks to achieve a campus culture that encourages the contributions and success of each individual. As we should laud our diversity gains and accomplishments, we must not lose focus of those areas where our deficiency poses the greatest threat to UIC becoming a truly diverse university.

Over the past year we have engaged in a campus-wide strategic thinking exercise to consider the wide variety of philosophies and attitudes about diversity that exist within the UIC community and to explore possibilities for the future. This process, spearheaded by a campus Diversity Strategic Thinking and Planning Committee, has provided specific information that will help us better understand the challenges to, and the opportunities presented by, our desire to make diversity more integral to all aspects of our core mission. The collective thinking process sets the stage for our upcoming strategic planning process, which will set concrete priorities and benchmarks for moving forward.

The diversity thinking process included campus-wide discussions that have raised many broad issues: How do we define diversity? What are the benefits of being a diverse university? What are the benefits of becoming more diverse? Once established, how do we reach our ultimate goals? What commitments and actions are needed and whose responsibility are they? Among the participants in the thinking process, there is consensus that an enhanced commitment to fairness and awareness of differences will require constant effort and continuity of leadership, communication and dialogue, and assessment. While we have not been able to definitively answer all of the questions raised by this initiative, one indisputable principle has emerged: **making diversity fundamental to our core mission is everyone's responsibility.**

Of course, the implications of what it means to make diversity fundamental are controversial. For instance, we should be wary of essentializing diversity. No one is absolute in his or her difference. In a university setting, in particular, most of us may have more sameness than difference. So privileging diversity or claiming that diversity is fundamental should not ignore how each of us lives in the world with both sameness and difference. These and many other issues regarding diversity have been part of our conversations. One way to read this thinking document, then, is as an experiment where we consider some of the standard conceptions surrounding diversity but where we also try to move beyond some of its conventional thinking.

## The Challenge in Defining Diversity

**“The diversity that furthers a compelling state interest encompasses a far broader array of qualifications and characteristics of which racial or ethnic origin is but a single though important element.” (Justice Lewis Powell, Regents of the University of California v. Bakke, 1978)**

UIC students, faculty, staff and the external community frequently cite diversity as one of our distinguishing attributes. However, diversity does not have the same meaning for everyone. There is no universally accepted definition and the term is fraught with emotion, involving complex historical and social issues. Our ranking as one of the most diverse research-intensive universities is based on the number of underrepresented minority students attending UIC (primarily African-American and Latino/a students, as we have few Native American students). Yet our faculty diversity continues to lag in comparison to our laudable student diversity. UIC must strive to achieve broad diversity in all sectors of our campus community and activities. We hold to the fundamental principle that we will continue to make efforts to ensure and increase participation of individuals from groups who have historically been denied access to institutions such as universities. However, these commitments like many others stated throughout this text will ring hollow without setting goals, permanently committing resources (both human and financial), and instituting assessment and accountability mechanisms.

Yet UIC recognizes a much broader definition of diversity than simply underrepresented minorities, indicated by our support systems, cultural and religious centers, and Chancellor's Status Committees. The UIC Diversity Portfolio, prepared by the Office for Access and Equity and the Office of Diversity, provides an inventory of offices, programs and services that impact diversity at UIC (see [http://www.uic.edu/depts/oa/diversity\\_planning/resources.html](http://www.uic.edu/depts/oa/diversity_planning/resources.html)). The listings, rich in their acknowledgment of self-identified groups, include facets of diversity beyond race, ethnicity and gender.

We also acknowledge diversity in scholarship and thinking, as evidenced by the richness of basic, translational and engaged scholarship that is supported on campus. We recognize that diversity is a constantly evolving concept that touches every student, faculty, staff, alumni and community member in the UIC family.

These are the values that have emerged as essential to a truly diverse university:

### **Human Dignity**

- UIC has a responsibility to help all our students, faculty, staff, alumni and communities achieve excellence.
- UIC has a responsibility to value the excellence within each student, faculty, staff member, alumnus/a and community.

### **Affirmative Action**

- UIC has a responsibility to provide opportunities to those from groups who have historically been denied access to universities due to discrimination.
- UIC has a responsibility to encourage meaningful participation from all who come to study, teach, create knowledge or work.

### **Creating Knowledge**

- UIC has a responsibility to use every available approach to create knowledge.
- UIC has a responsibility to create knowledge that serves our diverse communities.

### **Social Action**

- UIC has a responsibility to provide education, health care and leadership to our diverse communities.
- UIC has a responsibility to learn from our diverse communities.

### **Social Justice**

- UIC has a responsibility to aim for an egalitarian society through education, knowledge making and employment practices.
- UIC has a responsibility to constantly monitor and know who our students, faculty, staff, alumni and communities are and to make educated decisions about who they should be.

### **Accountable Leadership**

- UIC has a responsibility to create mechanisms that provide greater access to power and decision making to all groups within the university.
- UIC has a responsibility to assure that those in positions of power and decision making further positive institutional transformation.

## **Commitment to Diversity**

UIC's mission, described in the 2006 UIC Strategic Plan, is to **“provide the broadest access to the highest levels of intellectual excellence.”** This means that UIC must seek to provide a quality education to the widest range of individuals, including underrepresented minorities, vulnerable groups, and the economically disadvantaged; opportunities for knowledge making by a diverse faculty and staff; and advancement and educational engagement for a diverse staff.

UIC's history of providing access and support for a diverse student population is significant. A sizable fraction of UIC's total budget is committed to providing access to those less able to afford college and to support programs for a range of student populations. UIC presently dedicates more than \$20 million of its own resources to direct financial aid to undergraduate students, and distributes an additional \$350 million in state and federal aid. This is our attempt to ensure we maintain class and economic diversity and that access to students from working-class and lower-middle-class families remains a reality. UIC's racial,

ethnic, gender, cultural, and socioeconomic group support units have received steady support from the university over the years.

Our good efforts notwithstanding, access and success for some groups at UIC are much less than we find acceptable. For example the low rate of success of African-American students at UIC leads many within Chicago's African-American community to view UIC as a "revolving door" where their students are admitted for purposes of enhancing our image as a diverse campus but not expected to succeed academically.

By way of examples of positive approaches we have taken, our Urban Health Program extends back 30 years and an additional 10 years through its legacy organization, the Medical Opportunities Program, and has resulted in UIC becoming one of the nation's leaders in graduating minority health care providers. UHP was recently named the best program of its kind by the consortium of Urban Serving Universities. The efforts of the Latin American Recruitment and Educational Services and other groups serving Latino/a students help UIC graduate more Latino/a math majors than all of the other Chicago-area colleges and universities combined. The Summer Research Opportunity Program targets students from underrepresented minority groups and provides them with a faculty mentor to encourage their retention and to help create a pathway to graduate school.

Another example of the positive steps we have taken are our efforts to recruit and retain female faculty, and the support of programs and offices that focus on the professional, educational and career development of women at UIC. UIC has hired female faculty and administrators at every level of the university. However, we must not lose sight of the fact that women are still underrepresented in most of our departments and overrepresented in the ranks of temporary and part-time adjuncts.

UIC's commitment to diversity extends beyond support for traditionally underrepresented minorities and the economically disadvantaged. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer students are served by the Gender and Sexuality Center. The GSC also provides education, outreach, research and support services for the entire campus. The Disability Resource Center works to insure that students with disabilities have full access to UIC, and educates the campus on accessibility issues and disability culture. LGBTQ students, faculty and staff and UIC community members with disabilities bring important and diverse experiences and sensibilities to the campus. We also have a roster of distinguished faculty engaged in scholarship and teaching related to LGBTQ and disability issues.

***In 2006, UIC was named as one of the queer-friendliest campuses in the United States by *The Advocate College Guide for LGBT Students.****

The Asian American Resource and Cultural Center was established in 2005 to provide leadership, mentoring, and education on Asian American issues, and a sense of identity for the group of students who represent approximately 20% of the student body. An Asian American Studies Program and Minor have been approved at UIC for Fall 2010. Still, Asian American students report feeling invisible and underserved.

Our commitment to diversity must extend beyond policies and statements to ensure our campus climate makes all our community members feel welcome and valued.

## Leadership

In recognition of the need to coordinate and provide leadership for diversity, the Provost created the position of Special Assistant to the Provost for Diversity. The campus recognizes the need for a permanent campus diversity leader. In making this commitment to diversity leadership, UIC must carefully consider the appropriate stature, title and placement of such a position, and whether the office would report directly to the Chancellor and/or the Provost. It is equally important that the administrative structure adopted for this office supports the goal of driving diversity to the core of campus activities. It is expected that each college and vice chancellor unit will create a similar position at the associate dean or associate vice chancellor level, respectively.

The campus diversity leader will be expected to convene a council of UIC diversity leaders in order to aid in the development and implementation of campus policy and practices. Additionally, the campus diversity leader will be expected to work with a committee comprised of associate deans and associate vice chancellors to communicate, coordinate and realize policies and activities within the colleges and units. It is envisioned that the central diversity office, in collaboration with other units on campus will play a significant role in promoting and coordinating campus activities related to research, teaching and learning, and service.

The campus diversity leader will be expected to challenge the campus to explore new ways of conducting our activities. Given the immediate importance of communication to the role of the central diversity office, it is important that the office have a strong relationship with the Office of Public Affairs.

Defining appropriate benchmarks that measure our success will be a priority. And it is important to note that there are many opinions about what these benchmarks should be and how they are decided upon. It is incumbent upon UIC to set benchmarks for each of our sectors and establish appropriate programs to achieve goals. The campus also has the responsibility to establish assessment programs and lines of accountability for achieving diversity goals. Oversight for setting such benchmarks and assessment programs must be housed in a permanently centralized diversity office. UIC must use these resources not only for the benefit of our diverse communities, but also to educate the campus and our external communities about diversity's benefits and challenges. A goal for the centralized diversity office would be to coordinate the activities aimed at such educational initiatives and related scholarship.

While it is not the sole or primary responsibility of the central diversity office, the advisory council or the committee of associate deans and associate vice chancellors, they will – in collaboration with the Office for Access and Equity – perform regular assessment of campus activities and alert campus should a newly developed policy and/or change to an existing policy negatively impact diversity or any populations represented on campus.

In addition to its focus on campus policy and activities, the office also needs to project on a national scale. As UIC assumes a leadership role in the field of diversity in higher education, the central office will need to report on the impact of diversity on our campus, assume a role of leadership at a national level, and influence public policy as it relates to educational systems.

## Constructive Engagement between the Community and UIC

UIC and its surrounding communities have had tensions over population displacement, both by the original placement of the campus within an established neighborhood and by subsequent expansions, notably the South Campus development. Honest communication with the community about such issues,

even when we disagree, would help to improve the relationships that UIC has with its neighbors. There are also negative perceptions and skepticism of UIC by some members of the African-American and Latino communities who feel students of color have not been treated well by the university or that the university is insular and inward-looking and not accountable to, or interested in, the surrounding community. It is in our interest as an institution to dispel such perceptions and to work to earn the trust and support of all the citizens of Chicago and Illinois.

UIC is already engaged in many exchanges, partnerships and collaborations that serve and forge ties with local communities. This work needs to be encouraged, rewarded, expanded and publicized. Some individuals in underrepresented groups feel that the nature of their academic work often separates and distances them from communities like the ones they grew up in or claim as their own. The communities we refer to here can be cultural, socioeconomic, racial or ethnic. Fostering more community–university collaborations can make faculty and students feel more at home on campus and less torn between competing realities. The recent efforts in African American Studies and Latin American and Latino Studies to sponsor “talks in the community” programs are excellent examples of the kind of exchanges and partnerships between UIC and our communities that should be encouraged. UIC must also encourage other disciplines to explore ways in which such community partnerships might be developed.

### Benefits of Diversity: The Relationship of Diversity and Excellence

**“The atmosphere of ‘speculation, experiment and creation’ -- so essential to the quality of higher education -- is widely believed to be promoted by a diverse student body.” (Bakke, 1978)**

Although we have focused thus far on diversity’s relationship to social justice, diversity also has concrete advantages as we face a future filled with complex environmental, social, economic, religious, sociological and political challenges. Many of society’s most pressing problems are of a global nature. Different perspectives and ideas will be needed to solve these problems, and actions based in wisdom that exceeds the sum of its parts, what is often called *synergy*, will be needed. Research has shown that diverse teams of people imagine and consider a wider range of solutions to problems than homogenous groups, and more often come up with better, more resilient solutions. We often think of diversity in terms of visible characteristics associated with particular groups, but the unique life experiences that are a product of everyone’s identity and personal history are equally important.

**“These benefits are not theoretical but real, as major American businesses have made clear that the skills needed in today’s increasingly global marketplace can only be developed through exposure to widely diverse people, cultures, ideas, and viewpoints.” (Justice Sandra Day O’Connor, Grutter v. Bollinger, 2003)**

There are those who would critique Justice O’Connor’s position as indicative of how the original, political impetus of diversity has now been thoroughly commodified. On the other hand, the marketability of diversity is a good thing enabling many to acquire incomes and positions that were denied just a few decades ago. We argue, then, that we cannot afford to marginalize any student, faculty or staff member but must make certain that everyone is enabled to make the greatest possible contribution in every sphere of life. Individuals come to UIC to learn and to work, and their daily encounters and interactions with each other teach valuable lessons about diversity. **UIC’s mission emphasizes excellence. We believe that excellence is enhanced by diversity of identity, history, experience and perspective – all of the ways that people differ from one another.** In addition to what diversity can do for us, we also have an ethical obligation to ensure that our campus reflects the larger society and world in which we live.

## Diversity 360

The sections that follow are based on the work and reflections of the six subcommittees of the DSTP Committee. The topics are ordered to illustrate connections among different aspects of the UIC experience: Climate and Environment; People (Staff, Students, Faculty), and Academic Activities (Teaching and Learning; Research and Creating Knowledge). There is obvious overlap among these topics – it is impossible to separate students from learning or faculty from research – and to avoid repetition, topics are generally discussed in one section only. Therefore, individual subareas are not meant to stand alone and must be considered within the context of the full document to grasp the depth of the discussion.

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## PART I: CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENT

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### Diversity through the Lens of Climate and Environment

UIC does not exist in a vacuum; it is framed by historical, economic, social, political and demographic forces. As the one public research university in Chicago, we have a special role in the city and beyond. Our history is not simple, but is one of neighborhood displacements, whose legacies linger, and of educating and providing health care to the families of Chicago. Like the relationships within the UIC community itself, the ones between the campus and the physical communities around us requires a level of honesty and directness that helps us build trust and cooperation.

We cannot separate ourselves from the city, but it is easy for individuals, departments, colleges and units to operate as if they were separate from their environment. This may be because faculty and staff do not connect their research to the city or because they have little experience with community engagement. Yet, whether they define their work as engaged scholarship or not, all members of the university community need to understand the relations between the campus and the larger community, between internal climate and external environment.

### Diversity and Culture of the City

Located on 300 acres on the near west side of Chicago, UIC provides a positive economic, cultural, health and educational impact on the city. Easily accessible by foot, bus, train and car, UIC provides higher education for students from neighborhoods across Chicago and the suburbs. The new residence halls on the south side of campus provide housing for students from throughout the state. In reality, the physical structure and location of UIC make it accessible to any student from around the world, creating a truly global university. Importantly, the presence of a public research institution within a convenient urban environment assures students from every economic strata access to a college education.

Our campus is a porous environment in which multiple constituencies mingle and which itself interacts with the cultures of Chicago. UIC has a significant impact on the Chicago area through the people we educate, physicians we train and service we provide the community. One in ten Chicagoans with a college degree is an alumnus/a, and UIC is the highest producer of teachers for the Chicago Public Schools among Illinois universities. UIC ranks as one of the top universities in the nation in graduating minority healthcare providers. As an academic force the university is well positioned to address the broad range of challenges facing Chicago and the larger world, and this kind of involvement can be an advantage for both the city and UIC.

### Diversity in Action: Building a Positive Campus Climate

On April 26, 2007 the UIC Faculty Senate endorsed diversity ideals in a Statement of Support that reads:

**“The people of UIC embrace the diversity of our campus community, believing that it contributes vitally to the fulfillment of our mission. In promoting equal opportunity, mutual respect, fair treatment and the elimination of barriers to the achievement of excellence, we**

**seek to create a supportive academic, social and physical environment for all. In planning our programs and developing our policies, we remain mindful of the need to consider their impact upon all members of the UIC community.”**

Yet, individual groups have voiced their desire to be understood as populations with needs that are not always met. At times tension emerges between members of the traditional trio of underrepresented minorities (i.e., African-Americans, Latinos/as, and Native Americans) and other constituencies such as women; people with disabilities; members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer community; Asian Americans; and members of our international community. These constituencies often feel that their particular needs, experiences of discrimination and the barriers they face are misunderstood or ignored. This tension must be directly addressed to promote better understanding and clearer articulations of diversity goals and benefits, and to strengthen the coalitions needed to support significant diversity measures. Each of these groups has specific histories and experiences within the U.S. and at UIC, and understanding the different populations that comprise our campus and the intersections between them will foster increase communication and collaboration. This will help UIC balance fundamental issues of access and create alliances that bring together groups whose needs are often perceived as competing.

Diversity within the campus community does not in itself create a positive and welcoming environment. UIC faces several significant challenges, such as the inclination to emphasize where we fail when it comes to diversity and ignoring areas where we succeed. And some members of the UIC community see diversity issues as tangential rather than fundamental to our core mission. If diversity is to be driven into our core mission in a meaningful way, then campus climate must be a crucial component of successful teaching, learning, research and work. If students, faculty or staff feel unsupported and/or marginalized, then the buy-in to a success-for-all model cannot be achieved. UIC must continue to strive to provide a welcoming and supportive environment for everyone on campus, and must assess our climate on a regular basis, addressing problems aggressively and effectively.

### **Avenues for Communicating Diversity**

Diversity is a difficult topic for social and scholarly conversations. Many people are uncomfortable talking about differences; others deny that diversity is a viable route to a better society. At the very least we must be able to engage in open and honest discussions about diversity to fully realize its challenges and benefits. The campus needs to provide safe places for both structured interactions and informal conversations about diversity in all of its forms.

Important and needed coalitions can be built to strengthen the diverse community at UIC and to educate the campus and our community about our view of diversity without falling prey to the meaningless idea of everyone is different and therefore we are all diverse. Our Centers for Diversity represent some of the diversities on campus and should be among those places that serve to educate about diversity and provide safe spaces for conversation and coalition building. These cultural centers should also serve as conduits between campus and our community partners. Our interdisciplinary academic departments that focus on specific cultures and identities are potential avenues for providing education about diversity to the campus as a whole. Similarly, research institutes like the Institute for Research on Race and Public Policy and the Great Cities Institute are educational resources for diversity. UIC must use these resources not only for the benefit of our diverse communities, but also to educate the campus and our external communities about diversity's benefits and challenges. A goal for the centralized diversity office would be to coordinate the activities aimed at such educational initiatives and scholarship.

## Scholarship and Research on Diversity

**“Asian American Studies is seeking to provide a more inclusive and hence more accurate history of our country and who Americans are. This information would enrich everyone.” (Ronald Takaki)**

There are a number of academic units (e.g., African American Studies, Asian American Studies, Disability and Human Development, Gender and Women’s Studies, Latin American and Latino Studies) and research institutes (e.g., Institute on Disability and Human Development, Center for Research on Women and Gender, IRRPP, Great Cities) where award-winning faculty engage in research and teaching that focuses primarily on some aspect of diversity. Scholarship ranges from a study of health disparities between African-American and white women, to a study of gay Chicago, to ethnographic studies of Latinos in the immigrant rights movement. This collective body of knowledge can aid the university in assessing, mapping and articulating its stance on diversity and the policies and practices necessary to put that commitment more firmly into practice. These scholars also form vital links to the communities where they do their research and often provide service, forge collaborative partnerships and earn community trust. As an academic institution we cannot move forward in framing a policy on diversity without tapping, consulting and utilizing the expertise of our valued colleagues. Regular consultation with campus experts in areas that address issues of diversity, equity, race, gender, sexuality, class, disability, and so on will be essential as UIC moves forward with the crafting of its diversity strategic plan.

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## PART II: PEOPLE

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**“It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences.” (Audre Lorde)**

Like any large university, our campus is essentially a small city. We produce our own steam and much of our own electricity; we are responsible for several hundred buildings and city streets. We have neighbors, our own transportation system and police department. We have stores and eateries. And most of all, we have people. Our campus community has approximately 25,000 students and more than 21,000 employees, including 2,200 faculty, and 18,800 staff. The diversity among our citizens is remarkable but at the same time limited. Regardless of how the ranking is scored or which parts of our community are counted, we are among the top five most diverse U.S. campuses. Yet, we fall short of achieving the broad diversity in all of our activities to which we aspire. We also consistently face the challenge of how much of our diversity should be defined by our surrounding communities.

There are many opinions expressed by different units on campus about how to define appropriate benchmarks for faculty and student recruitment, hiring and all other campus activities. It is incumbent upon UIC to set benchmarks for each of our sectors and establish appropriate programs to achieve goals. The campus also has the responsibility to establish assessment programs and lines of accountability for achieving diversity goals. Oversight for setting such benchmarks and assessment programs must be housed in a permanently centralized diversity office.

**The issue of how to achieve broad diversity throughout campus has proven to be amongst the most challenging, and at times most infuriating, problems we face as a community.**

### Need For Mutual Respect

The 2010 UIC Strategic Thinking document declares that “In 2010, UIC’s academic professionals and staff will be clear partners in the mission of UIC, sustaining a culture of mutual support with students and faculty.” The process we are currently engaged in will help us to recognize and understand the history that set the stage for our most difficult issues related to diversity, and put in place plans to effect positive change in a timely manner.

As a diverse campus we need to always be aware of the issues relating to class and power. These are real and can have a devastating effect on the individuals involved and those we serve. We must also be mindful that an individual rarely works without the support of others, but often the credit is attributed only to the project leader. The graduate assistant, the facilities worker, the non-tenured faculty member – all warrant acknowledgment for their contributions to our success, but this requires mutual respect.

UIC has a responsibility to put in place programs that build understanding of our philosophy of and commitment to diversity for all current UIC personnel and, as much as possible, all UIC students. At the same time UIC needs to open a dialogue about diversity in its orientation programs to assure that new employees and students understand UIC’s commitment to, dependence on and respect for diversity. In order for a culture of diversity to take hold it must be nourished in a climate of professionalism.

Those who lead our students in the classroom must develop the ability to recognize the different backgrounds, perspectives and skill levels that students bring while at the same time helping students to recognize the standards of excellence that each teacher brings. The classroom must always be a safe place of discourse for all points of view: this is the essence of academic freedom, and this freedom is in all ways best exercised in a setting where diverse points of view can be heard, conventional wisdom can be challenged and new knowledge can be made. In such a classroom there may be tension as a teacher struggles to avoid censoring strong opinions that border on the hateful while guiding the class toward a productive assessment of potentially explosive material.

What this means in the workplace is that when we act as professionals we treat each other first and foremost with respect and the dignity that should be afforded all human beings, and we understand that each of us is an integral part of the mission of this institution.

We as an institution must recognize that each individual in a diverse community brings their own strengths and biases. As we capitalize on the strengths, we must also find ways to recognize how and where the biases are at cross-purposes to our mission and develop best practices that allow all members of our community to come to terms with their biases.

## STAFF

### Staff through the Lens of Diversity

**“...to maintain our strong commitment to diversity in the student body and pursue this commitment in the composition of our faculty and staff.” (UIC Strategic Plan, 2006)**

Technically, employees of the university fall into two categories: either staff or faculty. We commonly think of staff as Academic Professionals, Civil Service, and union and trades workers. But staff include Graduate Assistants and other student workers. The staff contributes to every activity at UIC in a varied array of jobs extending from maintaining buildings and grounds to upper-level administration. Our staff present us both with opportunities and challenges as we seek to make diversity fundamental to our core mission and to build a campus culture of mutual respect.

UIC's upper administration is perhaps the most diverse among research-intensive universities and the consortium of Urban Serving Institutions. Important both for symbolic reasons and for the operation of the university, the upper administration embraces the responsibility to set the tone for and review policy regarding diversity for the campus.

The far-reaching and complex responsibilities of the staff are integral to the education, research and service functions of the university. As individuals the staff has both an immediate impact on our diversity and how we utilize that diversity in achieving excellence. At the same time staff make up the most vulnerable population on campus. Academic Professionals fill specialized positions in academic, research, healthcare, technical and administrative areas. A minimum of a bachelor's degree, and often an advanced degree is required for employment. Yet they can be fired without cause, given a notice of non-reappointment (i.e., a termination contract known on campus as a T-contract) for reasons ranging from budget cuts to personal issues with supervisors. Civil Service employees work under an agreement that guides advancement and protects employment through a detailed termination process, but these workers

suffer from the stereotype that they lack motivation or high-level skills, undercutting their opportunities for career support and advancement.

These situations can be demoralizing and contribute to a sense of, as a staff member expressed, “working on a plantation” and within a “culture of fear,” creating an atmosphere of mistrust and a lack of mutual respect. UIC must seek to gain value from the talents in all who work here and strive to achieve a campus culture that encourages and supports advancement and promotion based on that talent.

Our staff perform many of the fundamental operations at UIC. For example, recruitment, admission, enrollment and registration of undergraduate students are activities primarily performed by staff. Hence, the diversity of a majority of our student body is the result of conscious decisions by staff. The entire process is supported by the Office of Admissions and Records, a staff-only unit with 70 employees. For the largest college, Liberal Arts and Sciences, Admissions also performs the review of undergraduate applications, and makes recommendations based on guidelines provided by the college. Dozens of units and programs essential to building and supporting our student body are exclusively run by staff. These include the Office of Registration and Records, the Office of Student Financial Aid, Latin American Recruitment and Educational Services, African American Academic Network, Native American Support Program, CHANCE, Disability Resource Center, Urban Health Program; Campus Housing; UIC Orientation Program, Office of International Services and our religious centers. In addition, students receive important services from staff in the colleges, staff in campus bookstores and eateries, and staff driving the commuter bus and providing parking services.

Staff play a central role in other university activities and in several areas staff members are the faces of the university. The College of Medicine, Medical Center and clinics depend heavily on staff serving as nurses, receptionists and lab technicians, to name just a few. Consistently recognized as one of the country’s most diverse medical schools, the College of Medicine serves Chicago at more than 30 sites, and Illinois at four locations: Chicago, Peoria, Rockford, and Urbana. The University of Illinois Medical Center at Chicago, through its hospital, outpatient facility and clinics, provides health care for 635,000 patients annually – most of whom belong to minority groups and almost half of whom receive free health care. UIC provides more than \$30 million in charitable healthcare annually. Our staff are crucial to building strong relationships with our community partners, and the diversity of staff is important to this effort.

The campus has a responsibility to employ, train and engage a diverse staff. UIC on average is at par with or above Chicago labor pool percentages of underrepresented minorities across most Civil Service and Academic Professional work classifications (*Incumbency v. Estimated Availability*, Office for Access and Equity, 2008). However, there are individual units where diversity is lacking. There are many opinions expressed by different units on campus about how benchmarks for various staff populations should be set. As diversity planning moves forward clear and appropriate benchmarks, and the mechanisms to achieve and assess progress towards them, need to be defined.

UIC should identify and alter university policies that hinder staff diversity, taking a more holistic view of how these policies intersect with one another and collectively affect staff and the university. Our staff need clear paths for career advancement and career development, which can have a direct impact on our ability to recruit and retain talented and diverse staff, supervisors and administrators. As with faculty, outreach efforts should be made to attract qualified applicants from underrepresented group, especially for positions where underrepresentation is grounds for affirmative action in hiring. Assessment and the use of accurate and adequately detailed data at the macro- (e.g., institution, college) and micro- (e.g., departments) levels will allow for improved decision making, especially with regard to impact on diversity.

## STUDENTS

### Students through the Lens of Diversity

**“The freedom of a university to make its own judgments as to education includes the selection of its student body.” (Bakke, 1978)**

Who are our students? Who should our students be? What opportunities exist for our current and future student population? What are our responsibilities to them? How should our student populations relate to the demographics of our communities?

At UIC students come from every imaginable background and provide the richness of the UIC experience. UIC has a responsibility to meet and exceed the hopes and aspirations of these students. We will depend upon them to solve the challenges facing the city, the nation and the world. Assuring their excellence is a fundamental goal of diversity at UIC.

Choosing a meaningful set of criteria for admissions is difficult for every university, and especially challenging for a university trying to maintain a diverse student body. At UIC, each college defines its own admissions criteria, rather than conforming to a campus policy. As UIC considers who our students should be, among the considerations are the following: Are we beholden to the city? How do we use traditional measures of academic accomplishment in admission decisions? Do we admit from the top down and what in fact is the “top”? Is our mission to provide access to talented students from varied communities? How do we give value to the whole person for admission decisions? Should UIC try to match the demographics of Chicago, Illinois, or neither? How could the colleges and our support programs coordinate their recruitment activities to give access to disadvantaged (not deficient) students and the appropriate support should they decide to matriculate here?

The goal of UIC’s admissions process is to admit students who have the ability to gain from and contribute to a UIC education and to graduate. Our first obligation is to the students of the State of Illinois because it is our charter and Illinois taxpayers fund part of a UIC education. Because of our location, our students are mainly from Chicago and the collar counties, and we often think of ourselves as being responsible to this urban community.

Most UIC students receive financial aid, with one third receiving full tuition, fees and other educational expenses. Ability to pay plays no role in admission decisions, and theoretically, each student – whether from a Chicago public high school or a suburban private one, from a poor suburban neighborhood or a wealthy city enclave – has an equal chance of gaining admission to UIC.

**True diversity will only be achieved when equity in outcomes for all students is combined with overall excellence.**

All students who enter UIC have been successful at the previous stage of their academic careers, and were selected for admission to UIC based solely on the prediction that they are capable of succeeding here. Students share this confidence. In surveys of incoming students, more than 60% report they have some chance of graduating with honors, and more than 28% say they have a very good chance of graduating with honors. There even may be some correlation between student satisfaction and success: the number of students reporting satisfaction with their UIC experience has risen from approximately 55% to 75% over the past 10 years, coincident with a 20% increase in graduation rate.

Not only has the overall graduation rate increased, but so has the rate for individual racial and ethnic groups as reported to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). However, we have not yet closed the gap in graduation rates among all groups. We must give increased attention to the support of those populations whose graduation rates lag. The recent effort to increase the success of African-American males at UIC, wherein the gap in first-year retention rates was eliminated, is but one example of such an effort.

The laudable increases in the graduation rates of our students, including among African-American and Latino/a students is often attributed to an increase in the proportion of our students who come from select high schools. In reality we have seen an increase in retention and graduation among students who come to UIC needing remediation, which indicates that academic support programs are now more adept at helping all students, as recent changes in transitional math and composition show. UIC must continuously assess and adjust all of our academic support programs so that they continue to effectively provide the opportunity for success to their specific constituencies.

### Arriving on a Diverse Campus

Admitting a diverse population of students does not mean that they will feel comfortable at UIC or that we are serving our communities in the best way possible. In addition, it is difficult or even impossible to know how students self-identify. Yet the campus has the ethical and in specific cases the legal responsibility to accommodate and support all identities.

Students who enroll at UIC do seem to know that specific opportunities are available because of our diversity and some have chosen to come here because of this characteristic. Three quarters of freshmen enrolling at UIC in the fall of 2009 said they expect to “socialize with other racial and ethnic groups,” while almost 80% indicated that UIC’s racial and ethnic diversity was an important reason that influenced their decision to attend UIC.

UIC could take advantage of this interest in diversity by encouraging students to move beyond their own experience to learn about the benefits of engaging in a diverse community as part of their undergraduate experience. Many students take comfort in socializing and interacting with others who share their identities, histories and experiences. And students may choose to participate in activities and use services based upon these affinities. There is great value in these interactions, activities and services, as they provide students with safe spaces where they can be themselves and through which they gain a sense of confidence, explore and develop their own cultural and social identities, and promote their identity development. But at the same time UIC could foster more opportunities for structured intergroup and cross-cultural exchanges. These could be through engagement in valuable extracurricular activities (e.g., freshman orientation, training exercises with Campus Housing staff) or in structured classes, such as Intergroup Dialogue – an innovative approach to diversity and civic engagement education. Safe spaces of support and immersion should be maintained even while intergroup and cross-cultural interactions are fostered.

As part of the Diversity Strategic Thinking process student leaders participated in a Student Diversity Forum and discussed the need to improve the climate of the classroom. They suggested that faculty and staff should receive training in cultural competencies in order to provide a more supportive environment for all students. They believe that faculty members should know how to create and sustain safe spaces in their classrooms to aid students’ general academic and personal growth. Forum participants also noted that this is not the sole responsibility of UIC faculty. They argued that students should receive similar training and education through coursework and workshops, so they might learn to understand and accept

diversity. In considering the implementation of cultural competency training, UIC must be careful to avoid the imposition of a form of political correctness that discourages the airing of diverse opinions essential to a rich intellectual environment that benefits from its diversity.

## Partnering for Diversity

All colleges at UIC acknowledge a need to diversify their student body; however, they are not all clear on how this can be accomplished. There is little or no coordination of recruiting efforts within the colleges, central admissions and the various campus support programs. Many perceive the university to be moving away from commitments to honor its urban mission by recruiting and retaining underrepresented minority students from well-financed Chicago charter schools. A wide-ranging and substantive conversation among all units that recruit and admit students would be a first step in eliminating confusions and improving coordination. We need to show the public that UIC remains committed to serving populations whose historical access to college has been low.

Many people question the value of programs based on specific identities in achieving and sustaining diversity. However, much of the success that UIC has had in building student diversity and graduating underrepresented minority students has depended on the efforts of such programs. There are other keys to the success of these efforts. First and foremost is assessment of impact and outcomes, paired with an ability to adjust. Additionally, it is important for support programs to have active communication with colleges and other units such that emerging or persistent issues are addressed. While the demographics of our diversity are ever changing, it is important that UIC maintain a commitment to efforts that support the success of all of our students, without weakening support for traditionally underrepresented minority students.

While some advocate that specific support for underrepresented and underserved groups is still strongly needed to attain equity of access and outcomes, others advocate for improving overall services and initiatives that benefit all students as a way to achieve equity of outcomes. These approaches cannot be at cross-purposes and should be balanced in a way that works in tandem to serve all students effectively.

Opinions are divided about whether our priority should be improving all student services, and thus helping underrepresented and underserved students achieve equity, or providing specialized support to low-income students and students of color. Both sides of this argument have demanded that the university take a clear position on this issue, but this is a false choice. Different students and groups of students may need different kinds of support, and UIC has the responsibility to enable all to graduate and achieve success in life.

The fact that some support services are aimed specifically at underrepresented students can lead to the impression that these are the only resources such students should use. Reinforcing this view, underrepresented students often feel that the specialized support services are more sensitive to their needs than campus-wide services. However, both specialized support services and campus-wide services, particularly discipline-specific ones, are critical elements of the support network that helps students succeed. UIC must forge effective partnerships between our specifically-targeted support services and the campus-wide and discipline-specific services to gain the full benefit of these services for the students they serve. We must also encourage the transfer of lessons learned between all support services to insure effectiveness and sensitivity to the needs of all students. In order to improve student success, all UIC students must have full access to the best possible academic, social and cultural supports and services.

The student population of UIC's health science programs is extremely diverse, driven to a significant extent by state mandates to increase the number of health professionals working in urban communities. The Urban Health Program, for example, has been successful in recruiting, supporting and mentoring health professionals from underrepresented racial and ethnic minorities through graduation and in addressing the needs of underserved communities in Illinois. But this diversity does not extend to all of our professional programs. The other professional programs (e.g., engineering, business, architecture, public policy and administration, and social work) have not been directed by mandates, and can benefit from the lessons learned from the directed efforts to address diversity within the health professions.

UIC's graduate programs have been ranked among the top three of the top 50 research universities (based on federal expenditures) for diversity for more than five years. UIC is currently ranked number one with respect to diversity in the Committee on Institutional Cooperation i.e., the Big Ten universities, plus UIC and the University of Chicago. We are positioned to have unique opportunities for diversity in other campus arenas, such as increasing the numbers of underrepresented faculty. The extent to which we recognize and actualize such opportunities will help to define UIC.

Graduate students come to UIC with the ambition of gaining broader and deeper expertise within their disciplines and frequently to prepare for academic careers. Our graduate students represent the future of academia, and we have the opportunity and responsibility to increase faculty diversity by actively preparing them for faculty careers. Many of our graduate students support their education by serving as Teaching Assistants. For undergraduates, who often do not distinguish between TAs and faculty members, the diversity of TAs in specific disciplines can for now serve as a surrogate for the lack of underrepresented minorities among faculty.

In addition to providing this kind of model for undergraduates and greater access to graduate education for underrepresented groups, a diverse graduate student population has other advantages for UIC. For instance, the state's Diversifying Higher Education Faculty in Illinois program provides tuition and stipends in order to increase the diversity of faculty at Illinois universities. UIC has been a leading recipient of this external support. In the biomedical sciences, greater diversity among graduate students makes UIC more competitive for training grants and large program projects that have as one mission increasing the diversity of the scientific workforce.

While these and many other opportunities to garner resources based on our graduate student diversity are extremely important, we must move beyond mere representation towards realizing the full transformational potential that this distinct characteristic affords.

In most disciplines our graduate student population is far more diverse than that of our faculty. Graduate student diversity could therefore be a model for how to create a more diverse faculty, but for that to happen we need to understand how graduate programs are or could be connected to larger institutional objectives.

It is clear that student diversity and the multiplicity of academic programs related to diversity enrich UIC and are appreciated, but more intentional and transparent articulations of UIC's diversity definition, vision, mission and goals must guide the potential that is here.

## FACULTY

### Faculty through the Lens of Diversity

For the purposes of this document we will consider the faculty to include both tenure-track/tenured faculty (the so-called professoriate) and non-tenurable faculty (e.g., lecturers, instructors, adjuncts, clinical and research faculty).

UIC is required to follow affirmative action laws designed to correct historical inequities regarding African-Americans, Latinos/as, and Native Americans. Other more local programs also address these issues, such as the Underrepresented Faculty Recruitment Program, which provides \$20,000 to \$30,000 in permanent salary support to colleges that hire underrepresented faculty and \$30,000 in research funds to the faculty members themselves. While this program has been in place for more than 20 years, its effectiveness in providing an incentive to departments and colleges to hire underrepresented faculty needs to be assessed more rigorously.

The tenure-track/tenured faculty defines and delivers curricula, conducts research, provides the scholarly engine that drives the university and brings continuity to the campus. In these roles they are able to bring diversity into all academic aspects of learning. Non-tenurable faculty, postdoctoral fellows and teaching assistants, have day-to-day interaction with students and thus are important vehicles for dispersing the excellence of diversity.

### Representation

While representation is not the sole reflection of diversity on campus, UIC does have a higher percentage of tenured/tenure-track faculty of color (10.5%), Black (4.7%) and Hispanic faculty (5.8%) than other CIC institutions with health science centers, as well as the highest percentage of faculty of color of all 11 Illinois research universities. While these numbers are encouraging on a relative scale, they are shameful on an absolute scale; underrepresented faculty continue to be left behind. Equally disturbing, our African-American and Latino/a faculty are disproportionately centered within two departments in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences: African American Studies and Latin American and Latino Studies. A third of our academic departments lack African-American or Latino/a faculty.

UIC currently has two Native American faculty members. Asian American faculty, though rising in numbers, are largely skewed towards the natural and health sciences, engineering and business administration. If we are to be a diverse campus then we must have significant levels of diversity reflected throughout the faculty, both by rank and by discipline.

A major challenge facing the campus, especially in light of chronic budget cuts and a shrinking professoriate, will be how to best diversify our faculty. Should we seek to achieve broad diversity, targeting new or transferring current resources to recruitment efforts in departments or units of low diversity such as so-called zero representation departments? It could be equally argued that the greatest value would be gained through growing diversity in areas where we have an opportunity to build competitive strength consistent with our urban research mission, such as an urban social science institute, which would include subareas currently unrepresented, such as Urban Anthropology. An effective way to approach this is through cluster hiring, which could have immediate impact on diversity and our strength in key areas. UIC must consider such approaches in developing strategies to increase faculty diversity.

**There is an immediate need for the campus to arrive at a consensus on how to proceed with zero-representation departments, to commit to the implementation of hiring practices that correct for the historical exclusion of African-American, Latino/a, Native American, and women, and how to assess and constantly improve our efforts.**

## Challenges to Diversifying Faculty

Faculty in some disciplines who have been employed at UIC for a long time will soon be considering retirement. These open spots will provide opportunities to consider candidates who will add to our faculty diversity in greater numbers than in the past, particularly since the numbers of PhD applicants are larger and more diverse than ever.

Our non-tenurable faculty provide a ready pool of professional instructors who in the short term can substitute for the tenured professors who retire. The use of non-tenurable faculty, however, cannot represent a long-term strategy to diversify the ranks of assistant, associate and full professors at UIC. Traditional practice embraces the belief that tenure-track faculty should be primarily recruited from other campuses. Individuals drawn from outside certainly bring fresh perspectives that contribute to the diversity of thinking within a department or college. However, is this of more value than the strength provided by familiarity and commitment of the “home-grown”? Ironically while our successful efforts have made us a leading university with respect to the diversity of our graduate and professional populations, our reluctance to hire our own students has made us a provider of diversity to the professoriate of other universities while we struggle to diversify our own.

UIC faculty salaries lagging behind the competition has a negative effect on recruiting and retention of underrepresented faculty. These faculty are highly sought after and often move to situations that are more lucrative in both compensation and research support. The campus needs to maintain its commitment to recruit and retain minority and female faculty even in periods of economic downturn, and to regularly assess the effectiveness of our efforts.

## Access to Power

The nature of universities is that the seat of power, by virtue of the granting of tenure, resides largely with the tenured faculty, the academic structures they populate, and the administrative roles they occupy. Access for underrepresented minorities and women to roles of power on campus is constrained by the lack of diversity among the faculty, especially among full professors.

Given that the processes of changing the diversity of the faculty will even in the best situation take some time and will generally be done through the hiring of junior faculty of color and women who will need to then rise through the ranks to become full professors, UIC needs to be creative in developing processes that ascribe power or consultative rights to those junior faculty if UIC is to gain the immediate transformative benefit of the diverse faculty it seeks to build.

The UIC Faculty Senate has a special role as well. The senate will need to act to diversify its leadership structure and assure meaningful representation from underrepresented minority groups and women both on senate committees and on those university committees that the statutes indicate are to be suggested by or appointed by the senate.

The university needs to end the practice of expecting female and underrepresented faculty to provide excessive service due to the added burden of service based on their identity. The university needs to continually assess the service burden of all junior faculty to assure an even distribution. The university needs to survey junior faculty to assure they have not been placed in a situation in which they perceive a need to take on an extra burden to assure they remain in good standing.

## Postdoctoral Fellows

The postdoctoral fellows represent future faculty. These individuals have effectively declared their intention to become faculty, yet there are no campus-wide efforts to train such individuals as future faculty, and with rare exceptions, no programs within the units to do so. They have no official campus representation and no office charged with assuring the content or quality of their experience while at UIC. Instead, their experience at UIC is almost always limited to doing research for their faculty supervisor.

Because of our experience with junior faculty in general and more specifically the efforts of the Underrepresented Faculty Mentoring Program, we are acutely aware of the training that is needed to help underrepresented postdoctoral fellows make the successful transition to junior faculty.

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## PART III: ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES

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### TEACHING AND LEARNING

#### Diversity through the Lens of Teaching and Learning

What does it mean to learn in a diverse environment? Traditional attitudes about learning claim that students must master existing bodies of knowledge. Key to an excellent education, however, is how this knowledge equips the recipient for the real world and how it fosters critical thinking. Critical thinking is enhanced by diversity and diverse experiences. Diversity exposes students to options that might remain hidden in a non-diverse environment, or one in which diversity is not intentionally included in the teaching and learning process.

What does it mean to teach diversity? Although diversity is a subject area, its contribution extends to instructors' approaches, methodologies, and how content is identified. Both teaching directly about diversity and diversity as a lens through which teaching is understood are critical. Those who lead our students must develop the ability to recognize and foster the different modes of learning that students bring to the classroom while at the same time impressing the students with the excellence the instructor brings to the classroom. The classroom must always be a safe place of discourse for all points of view: this is the essence of academic freedom, which guarantees the airing of different points of view, challenging conventional wisdom and making new knowledge.

UIC holds to the premise that an essential part of an excellent education is gained through learning in a diverse environment versus the learning one obtains in a majority environment. This is regardless of who the majority is since in a majority environment the values of the majority are simply reinforced, and the value inherent in the minority perspective is lost. Learning in a diverse environment allows each student to recognize and value their own diversity, and the unique contribution that they make to everyone's education at UIC.

What are the essential components of a diverse environment? The diversity of the UIC student body ensures that students will experience diversity among their peers in many classroom situations. Achieving faculty diversity would satisfy the representational component of a diverse education at all levels, but representation is itself not enough. The infusion of diversity into the curriculum broadens the scope of learning.

#### The Need for Ongoing (Re)Evaluation

UIC *looks* diverse but we also need to make sure that UIC *acts* on that diversity so that students enjoy the full measure of enrichment available. This requires reliable assessment methods. Coordination of our efforts to perform effective assessment and enhance diversity in teaching and learning will maximize their impact. In fact, the lack of coordinated assessment may exacerbate the belief among some groups that the university is not serious about diversity, either in the sense of increasing access, improving outcomes and optimizing its potential benefits. These efforts should be assessed with follow-up studies and data analysis should include demographic patterns.

While UIC supports and encourages many efforts directed toward enhancing educational outcomes, it is not clear the extent to which these efforts are coordinated regarding diversity or whether data is collected to assess practices and outcomes. A definition of criteria to be used to measure practices and outcomes and an analysis of data on diversity and its effects on teaching and learning is essential.

## Learning in a Diverse Environment

Students would benefit from a course that emphasizes meaningful cross-cultural interactions, and examines how to converse about topics related to diversity, often viewed as sensitive and difficult to discuss.

Besides the variety of programs to recruit, retain and promote positive educational outcomes for undergraduate, graduate and professional students, efforts need to be made in offering topics in courses that explore the challenges facing populations today; for example courses on immigration, housing, crime, child care and marital law. These topics, which affect many students personally, will promote learning interactions among their peers.

In addition students should learn how to assess their own progress in learning, beyond that based on test scores. Much more attention is needed to encourage students to participate in the many and varied opportunities to conduct research at UIC. Without this attention, many opportunities to add diversity to scholarship will be lost.

Access to off-campus learning experiences (e.g., domestic or international internships, study abroad, undergraduate research in an international setting, and international volunteerism) for credit or to fulfill a requirement should be enhanced. These experiences broaden academic and personal opportunities, and combat current attitudes that the responsibility to provide learning experiences outside of the classroom for underrepresented students lies solely with offices and programs aimed specifically at those students.

## Teaching in a Diverse Environment

Faculty – who are experts in an academic discipline, not necessarily in pedagogy – are not adequately informed about teaching classes of diverse students. Often faculty do not know how to accommodate students with disabilities or to utilize varied teaching methods to address differences in how students learn. Seminars or workshops could help faculty learn about the challenges faced by specific groups of students and how to make pedagogical changes to strengthen the educational experience for all.

New incentives to encourage faculty and teaching assistants to try new teaching approaches and overcoming inertia are needed. Discussing diversity in all of our classes signals to students that diversity is an integral part of their education.

Faculty accessibility can encourage even reticent students to communicate questions and concerns. Programs, structures or facilities that have the purpose of enabling students and faculty to interact in the classroom and on levels apart from the classroom are rare. Though historically this issue has been complicated by UIC's history as a commuter school, this is changing as the number of students living on or around campus has dramatically increased. The Honors College and Campus Housing have developed programs to encourage faculty to participate directly in student life and the Summer Research Opportunities Program provide students with the opportunity to do research outside of the classroom with faculty; such efforts should be strengthened and broadened through all parts of the university.

## Development of Curricula at a Truly Diverse University

Among the more challenging issues facing the DSTP Committee during its deliberations was how to juxtapose diversity with teaching and learning. One solution common at many universities has been to ask their Colleges of Liberal Arts and Sciences to offer a range of courses that might qualify as a diversity requirement. More often than not such a course is taken during students' first year. To the best of our knowledge no analysis has been made regarding the successes or failures of such a requirement. But on the surface one possible consequence is the shunting of diversity into a small corner of students' learning experiences.

This was in fact the case at UIC wherein students were required to take two such courses from a list of over 70 that fulfilled a Cultural Diversity requirement as part of a prior general education program. The current General Education Program eliminated this required course distribution category, along with Humanities, Social Sciences and Natural Science categories, in favor of a program of core courses that are clustered around six themes and sets of required proficiencies. Under this model, diversity has been integrated into courses across the curricula and students have increased opportunities to reflect upon diversity topics and their intersection with multiple disciplines.

The final adaptation of this continuum might be described by metaphor: what would occur if each discipline placed diversity in dialectical relationship to its body of knowledge? Our initial answer remains hypothetical because this document is but a component of the first iteration of a Strategic Plan, and each department or discipline would provide its own answer to the question. Answering such a question would entail a serious review of each department's course offerings and might require significant changes to those offerings. Departments in the humanities and social sciences generally explore diversity and its meanings quite extensively. But other departments understandably do not. Such a review might strike these departments as a peculiar exercise, for their subject matter has little to do with diversity if narrowly conceived as an aspect of social relations. But courses on the anthropology of housing, the economics of immigration, the politics of child care, marital law, the chemistry of gender, the genetics of race, or the teaching of geology (or mathematics or physics) in urban settings are small examples of courses that might be developed were we to make a campus-wide commitment to infusing diversity into all disciplinary subject matters. If all disciplines are heavily invested in the promotion of critical thinking, might they also explore staking an investment in diversity?

An underlying assumption behind these suggestions is that it is worthwhile to think of diversity as more than a social good (that is, courses that use diversity to challenge hate and bias) and more than an enhancement of the learning experience (that is, courses that challenge majoritarian perspectives with diverse, multiple views). These types of courses certainly have their place, but a further educational experiment might consist in putting the very subject matters of the different disciplines in dialectical relationship with diversity. It is not at all clear that such actions would be wholly positive. In the humanities and the social sciences the disciplines have been changed by that relationship and have made new knowledge. The transformations occurred over many decades and were deeply controversial – and remain so to a certain extent. We are hoping that this document will encourage further conversation and experimentation along these lines.

## RESEARCH AND CREATING KNOWLEDGE

### Diversity through the Lens of Research and Creating Knowledge

Diversity's relationship to and impact on research and creating knowledge is the most complex of the areas we have considered. Currently, there is little understanding of how diversity impacts research. Scholarship in this area is almost non-existent. We recognize that it is important who engages in research, which can make a powerful statement about an institution's commitment to diversity. Yet diversity impacts and is impacted by research, and it is important to understand this relationship at UIC.

#### **How does diversity impact the research performed at UIC?**

##### **-Does diversity help us to achieve our research mission?**

As a research university UIC engages in three activities: creation, dissemination and application of knowledge. It is easy to understand how faculty, students, staff, alumni and community are involved in dissemination and application of knowledge. It is equally important that we recognize everyone's role in the creation of knowledge.

A close look at faculty, staff and students engaged in research reveals a lack of underrepresented minorities and a skewing of race and ethnicity among the disciplines. For example, African-Americans and Latinos/as are poorly represented in research in science, technology, engineering and mathematics disciplines. The lack of diversity in research has two effects. The first, as described above, is that it erodes excellence. The second is that it tends to perpetuate the lack of diversity. Race and ethnicity frequently influences choice for junior researchers. Thus the less diversity present among the research faculty, the less diversity there will be among the trainees; the more diversity present among the research faculty; the more diversity there will be among the trainees. There is a multiplier effect.

Ensuring a diverse population of researchers requires that the campus recruit faculty on a holistic basis, valuing personal history, collegiality, scholarship, as well as expertise in a narrowly defined area of research. Tenure must recognize all forms of research – basic, translational, applied and engaged.

It is important to recognize that all research is unavoidably shaped by the researcher's life history. Our unique life histories impact our research topics, insights and innovation. As a diverse university we have a responsibility to impress upon our students the validity of this concept and the role personal passion has in one's research career.

UIC has to commit to increasing and maintaining a diverse research faculty, recruited for the whole person and judged for tenure with the full understanding of the individual. Paying competitive prices for researchers who bring diversity of thought is necessary because they have the power to increase our excellence in research, and to influence and encourage the diversity of future researchers. The tenured research faculty represent the excellence of UIC; they represent the continuity of UIC; and through the students they train and the junior faculty they mentor they represent the future of UIC. And the excellence, continuity and future of UIC depend upon the diversity of the tenured faculty.

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## CLOSING MESSAGE FROM THE DSTP COMMITTEE

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Thinking about diversity as core to UIC's mission has taken many months of participation by representatives from all parts of campus. This document reflects our discussions, observations and passions about the topic and we hope will serve as guidance for the next stage, Diversity Strategic Planning.

Establishing a structure that allows a consideration of diversity to permeate every policy, procedure, program, workshop, discussion and activity at UIC will create an environment in which each member of the UIC community can potentially grow intellectually, culturally and personally. Solutions to the challenges we face will come from every sector of the campus. Creating a culture of sharing, acceptance and trust, in which community members value the contributions everyone makes, is one of the greatest challenges we face. UIC must develop programs, and venues for meaningful interaction and conversation that will promote the concept of diversity as integral to our core mission.

In closing we share the following thoughts about diversity:

1. We have not moved far enough in hiring underrepresented minorities and women for faculty positions.
2. Merely hiring diverse people according to a formula will not make diversity a part of our core mission.
3. Academic Professional and Civil Service staff need to be considered in diversity planning because they make substantial contributions to the life of the campus and have been overlooked previously.
4. As part of their education on a diverse campus, students need to learn subject matter that includes thinking about diversity embedded in traditional courses. Every course can be expanded to include an awareness of UIC's core mission.
5. A permanent Office of Diversity, reporting to the Chancellor and/or Provost, will ensure that the diversity initiative and assessment become an integral, permanent part of UIC culture and the creation of knowledge.
6. UIC should aspire to be a leader – in practice and in scholarly activities – on issues of diversity in higher education. As such we should be actively engaged in scholarship that explores the impact and benefits of diversity on the UIC community and on the nature and quality of our research, teaching and learning, and service.
7. Coordination among the various offices, programs, committees, departments, and units that work to support our diverse populations and to connect diversity to our core activities will have profound effects on the campus climate and in insuring that UIC becomes a truly diverse campus.
8. Leadership on every level is an integral part of this effort, but it is essential that all UIC community members understand our institutional diversity goals, their rationale and their intersection with our core mission.

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