**Multicultural Faculty and Staff Members at a Predominantly White Institution**

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Last week, issues of diversity were discussed in terms of how it affects students. Now the question of a pluralistic faculty and staff will be explored from their perspectives. Diversity at Longwood is not necessarily something that stands out when you walk down Brock Commons, and is not usually available in large quantities.   
  
Based on a random sample of 36 graduate and undergraduate students of a variety of ethnicities and classifications, students have had an average of 15.39 Caucasian professors and an estimated 1.52 multicultural professors (Black, Asian, Hispanic, etc.). Seven students said they had not had a single multicultural professor in their time at Longwood. Though this sample is a small percentage of the population of over 4,000 undergraduates and about 700 graduate students, it is representative of a trend on Longwood's campus. Most students only have one or two diverse professors in their college career, if that.  
  
"It isn't just Longwood, it isn't just Higher-Ed," said Dean of the College of Education and Human Services Dr. Deneese Jones. "Longwood looks like most predominantly white institutions (PWIs), so it's not unique in that regard."  
  
According to Director of Multicultural Affairs Lonnie Calhoun, this is a common problem at other institutions and they too are working actively to support diversity. While Longwood is working to encourage diversity and pluralism, it is initially important to attract a diverse pool of faculty and staff applicants.  
  
"There's two sides to this coin, one is you have to get people who want to be here, so being here for 16 years is not only because I've had a job, it's because I want to be here," said Calhoun.  
  
According to Calhoun, Longwood loses many young multicultural professionals because of the difficulties that come with being young and single in such a small town. One professor in particular left the English department because she preferred the Richmond city scene. She tried the commute, like many others do, but after a while it began to be too much for her.

"Keeping the interest up in not just the job, but the social aspect is what's important," said Calhoun.   
  
Jones, who is the first African-American Academic Dean, says she was initially attracted to the university because she and President Cormier "hit it off." She was also attracted to the institution's long history of preparing effective teachers as well as the town's historical ties to the Brown v. the Board of Education decision. Several faculty and staff members are also attracted to the small school setting just as students are because it is on smaller campuses that you can truly have an impact.  
  
"Believe it or not I think I'm making a difference," said Calhoun. "The fact that I touch individuals is the most rewarding thing."  
  
Another important aspect is in the hiring process, to have a focused aim towards members of historically-unrepresented groups.  
  
"While we are all for diversity we are also for excellence and therefore when we choose faculty we choose the best, ignoring the fact that we all don't start out on an even playing field," said Professor of Communication Studies and Department Chair of Communication Studies and Theatre Dr. Ramesh Rao.  
  
It is important for students to be exposed to a diverse background and diverse ideas while gaining a higher education and growing into the individuals they will become.  
  
"When students' backgrounds differ very much from my own it is a challenge and an opportunity," said Rao.   
  
Though the hiring of more multicultural faculty and staff members may have been delayed by the recent budget cuts, there may be other options to expose students to diversity.  
  
"I think it poses challenges," said Calhoun. "I think the opportunity here is to be creative. There are a lot of things that institutions have done to be creative."  
  
When Calhoun speaks of being creative, he is referring to visiting professors where multicultural professors would come and occupy the position for a certain amount of time and then move on to another university or return to their own university. For instance, Hampden-Sydney College recently hosted two professors from South Africa. With this sort of faculty exchange program the university would not be required to hire someone for a full-time position, but students would still get the exposure to pluralistic views and ideas.

"That's the opportunity for thinking outside the box," said Calhoun. "I think finances don't necessarily limit that, it just poses challenges."  
  
Diversity is a difficult issue, and it is so difficult mainly because it is so broad. It is so hard to grasp because it's this intangible thing with a growing definition. It's no longer an issue of black and white.  
  
"According to my research, diversity deals with issues of class, gender, race, ethnicity, linguistic differences, learning style differences, and special needs districts," said Jones. "We have those things here, so when you say 'is Longwood diverse?' they are here, but they are here in various percentages."  
  
But the issue is not simply students having diverse faculty members to look to as mentors and role models. It is equally important for faculty to have students of color as it is for students to have diverse or pluralistic professors.  
  
"I want to know about who you are and where you come from," said Jones. "And [know] some of your goals and maybe impart some wisdom."