

CASD Project
Climate for Underrepresented Groups
By Sue Rankin, Consultant

Introduction

The Change Agent States for Diversity (CASD) project represents a catalytic step in leading change within the Land Grant University System. In December 1998 the National Sub-Committee on Extension Diversity (SED) developed this visionary project in which eight states were selected to participate in a pilot effort focusing on diversity. In October 1999, representatives from the eight states and selected members of the SED began working together to develop and implement a plan of action to address diversity in their organizations and institutions. The Assessment Subcommittee of the CASD was charged with developing plans, related tools and an implementation strategy for the eight states individually, and the CASD as a whole, to use in determining the organizations' status and climate as it relates to diversity. The committee determined that the first step in this process was an internal assessment of the current climate at each location.

Beginning in the Fall semester, 2000, CASD contracted with an outside consultant¹ to identify challenges confronting the CASD community with respect to underrepresented groups through an internal assessment. The assessment was a proactive initiative by CASD cooperating members to review the climate in their respective organizations for underrepresented groups. The results of the internal assessment will be used to identify specific strategies for addressing the challenges and supporting positive diversity initiatives.

Methodology for Internal Assessment

For the purposes of this study diversity is defined as the variety created in any society (and within any individual) by the presence of different points of view and ways of making meaning which generally flow from the influence of different cultural, ethnic, and religious heritages, from the differences in how we socialize women and men, and from the differences that emerge from class, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability and other socially constructed characteristics. The assessment tool was developed with the conceptual model developed by Smith (1999) and revised

¹ Rankin & Associates Consulting was contracted as the outside consultant for this project.

by Rankin (2002) as a foundation and further informed by other survey instruments constructed by the consultant. The instrument examines:

- Organizational experiences with diversity,
- Actions relative to diversity issues,
- Background information and
- Participant input into recommendations for improving the organizational climate.

The cooperating members in cooperation with the outside consultant developed the final survey instrument. Each member institution sought and gained approval from their institutional review boards to participate in the investigation. The sampling procedure included purposeful over-sampling of underrepresented populations, random sampling of majority populations, and snowball sampling of invisible populations. Each CASD cooperating member forwarded surveys to their respective employees including administrators, specialists, field faculty, para-professionals and organizational and office support staff accompanied by a cover letter signed by the appropriate organization official. To insure anonymity of the respondents, participants were requested to insert completed surveys into a sealed envelope that was addressed and mailed to the consultant. The contractor counseled the CASD partners on distribution methods/techniques to ensure maximum return rates and monitored the implementation process with in each of the cooperating agencies. The system employed ensured anonymity of the respondents. Following collection of the raw data from each state, the contractor will review and analyze the data and prepare a report for each participating institution based on their individual data as well as an aggregate report for the use of the CASD. Each state's individual report will include:

- An executive summary
- Frequency of response to each individual question
- Cross tabulation and significance testing as appropriate
- Content analysis and findings
- Content analysis of comments
- Recommendations

An aggregate report will be prepared for the CASD, combining the responses from the 8 collaborators and will include:

- An executive summary
- Frequency of response to each individual question
- Cross tabulation and significance testing as appropriate
- Content analysis and findings
- Content analysis of comments