

2016-2017 Diversity Plan Narrative for the School of Environmental and Forest Sciences

Outreach

In the School of Environmental and Forest Sciences (SEFS), we employ a variety of methods to build diversity in our applicant pool and actively promote diversity recruitment by all members in SEFS. We encourage you to visit our diversity website (<http://www.sefs.washington.edu/aboutTheSchool/diversity.shtml>) which provides links to resources as well as direct contact information to our Diversity Team, which always includes a current graduate student. We also state our commitment to diversity in our recruiting materials, and encourage prospective students to visit our site for further information.

Diversity is core to the ethos of our school, and we have made a continuous effort to recruit and retain diverse faculty, staff and students. We are extremely pleased to report that our school continues to make steady progress in diversifying our overall student body, with significant increases in diverse student percentages, from 6.5% in 1992 to 28% or more for the last three years. In addition, our female enrollment has increased from 34% to over half of our student body at 52%. We have led the College of the Environment in our diversity efforts and recruitment results, but to assess our efforts accurately over time, we compare our unit to the UW as whole, which reports 33.5% diverse students. It is important to note as a forestry and natural resource programs around the US average only about 8% diverse students, making our school one of the most diverse natural resource programs in the nation.

One pipeline effort that we have found to be quite successful is through our undergraduate program, which has become more diverse, especially over the last few years. We actively encourage our diverse undergraduates to apply to our graduate program, and help them navigate the process. This strategy is especially good for students who are place bound, non-traditional, or have economic hardships. We also partner with community colleges to encourage students to apply to our undergraduate programs, and we monitor our curricula to make sure they are transfer friendly. We have recently collaborated with the Washington Opportunity Scholarship, which targets low income students in Washington State and provides professional development support. We believe this makes our academic program stronger and will be a great future pipeline for our graduate program.

We actively use direct outreach efforts to encourage diverse students to apply to our program. We contact students on the National Name Exchange and California Diversity Forum provided by the GO-MAP office, and met with Mellon Mays and McNair Scholars over the past year (one of whom applied and is accepted for Autumn 2016!). We spend school resources to send students and staff to meetings and conferences that target underrepresented students, including the National Indian Timber Symposium, the Future Forestry Leaders Symposium, the Society for the Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science, Muckleshoot Community Forest Day, and Native Pathways to UW. We also encourage recruitment activities when students or faculty attend professional meetings or visit other schools.

One area where we are especially strong in outreach to underserved populations is with Native American populations. This partly stems from the importance of natural resource management to tribal governments in the PNW, but is also a result of our active outreach program. We have strengthened our ties with several northwest Native American tribes by visiting their lands for regular class field trips led by tribal members; placing students in their work force; working closely with their Natural Resources departments on research projects involving tribal graduate students; and staying in contact with our Native American alumni. A SEFS alum is head of the Natural Resource Department for the Yakama Nation, member of the School's Visiting Committee, President of the Intertribal Timber Council, and has been an invited speaker at the school. We also have a unique Cooperative Financial Aid Agreement between the Intertribal Timber Council (ITC) and the School, which augments the ITC scholarship with over \$8,500 in School funds to cover tuition for any Native American student. This agreement is unique; no other university in the country offers this type of financial aid to tribal students, and allows us to nationally recruit Native American students through the ITC. In addition, one of the school's centers, The Center for International Trade in Forest Products, (CINTRAFOR) maintains an active research program on marketing topics relevant to Native American tribes. For example, CINTRAFOR is working with the ITC on the development of a branding strategy for Native American forest products including non-timber forest products and ecotourism. This project involves a partnership with the forestry program at the Salish Kootenai College (SKC), resulting in recruitment of new Native American graduate students. We hope to give the students the requisite technical skills in forest products marketing and international trade to expand the capability of tribes to sustainably manage their forest resources while maximizing their capacity to support economic development within tribal communities. We also have graduate students working with various local tribes on natural resource research projects, which provides great networking opportunities to recruit tribal members. Lastly, we advertise and reach out to tribal colleges about these opportunities to recruit Native American graduate students to our program.

Recruitment

We use several strategies to increase our yield of diverse students from our applicant pool. We have found our most effective is complete and robust funding packages, especially those that include ARCS funding in addition to the regular stipend. We also reach out to our accepted students in multiple modes—email and phone—and from more than one person, and especially from the identified faculty mentor. We also send out various recruiting materials, either by email or phone, including information about GO-MAP and featured student and alumni profiles. We encourage our accepted diverse students to visit campus and partner with GO-MAP on Prospective Student Days and Graduate School Ambassadors. This year, we are also hosting a more formal weekend for prospective students, and our current graduate students are leading the effort. The long weekend will include lab tours, time to meet with faculty, our graduate student research symposium, and a field trip to one of our field sites. Also, we also moved our application deadline to December 1st to be more competitive with offer timing and being able to arrange visits by prospective students. Experience tells us that being ‘first’ can often make our offer the most attractive as well.

We encourage our faculty to review comprehensively the graduate student applications. We require applicants to submit a personal statement, with instructions to discuss their background and experience. These statements help our faculty identify underrepresented students and give applicants an opportunity to explain any hardships they may have encountered during their academic career. During the admissions cycle, we remind our faculty admission reviewers about biases and sent out the link to the GO-MAP toolkit for recruiting and retaining minority students, but we have not required any specific training as of yet. Our school is somewhat unique in that all our faculty (over 40) participate in the admissions review process, which gives every applicant a better chance of being considered for admission. The new online review process has been very helpful in this process, and we use any technological tools possible to create a smoother and easier graduate admissions process.

Our funding packages vary greatly depending on grants and other resources available, but we use our fellowship funding to promote diversity, and diversity is a key criterion for nominating SEFS applicants for our limited number of fellowships. Our fellowships are RA-equivalent awards that are coupled with matching funding to create an attractive recruitment package. These criteria are published to all the faculty every year, which reinforces our commitment to recruiting diverse students.

After an applicant is accepted, our graduate adviser emails them and encourages them to stay in contact. We then follow up by faculty adviser phone calls, and additional emails with current graduate student contacts. We utilize the GO-MAP recruitment scripts and suggest them to the faculty who are actively recruiting diverse students. We also email links to appropriate diversity resources and student groups, depending on the prospective student’s background. If they do accept our offer, we make sure to communicate clearly about the various orientation and social opportunities before the start of classes, including our SEFS retreat and welcome barbeque, which helps make all students feel welcome at SEFS. It is a very active and personal process, but we have found it to be well worth the effort in recruiting our top underrepresented applicants.

Student Success

We work hard to retain our students. A key to retention is creating an atmosphere of inclusiveness, opportunity and support, especially financial support. There are many ways in which we do this, including:

- Providing a funding ‘package’ to any fellowship awardee to continue funding well beyond their first year of graduate study. We find funding to be the key issue affecting retention of minority and underrepresented students.
- Providing a staff graduate adviser who can provide non-evaluative advice and guidance when needed, from admission through graduation, and is knowledgeable about diversity resources. The staff person is also the key contact for student grievances or personal issues, and serves as a confidential resource to help students succeed. This is clearly outlined and emphasized in our graduate orientation.
- Providing Director’s funding for our graduate student groups, which are grass-roots graduate student efforts that provide social as well as academic interactions.
- Creating a ‘cohort’ of graduate students starting with our off-site new-student orientation program with an emphasis on showcasing diversity and by revising our graduate curricula. At orientation, the advising relationship, respect, and diversity are discussed. In addition a faculty panel features diverse members discussing their graduate school experiences, approaches to research, and giving tips for success to new graduate students. This program occurs the week before they start their classes, and has been well received. The new students also take a course together in Winter quarter of their first year, which helps to further foster community and create a supportive environment.
- Funding graduate students to attend conferences with our Director’s office funding. Any student who has an accepted paper or poster at a national conference gets funding to assist them in attending. Diverse students are especially encouraged to apply for this funding.

- Encouraging diverse students to be committee representatives (and supporting them in these roles) to share their perspectives when at all possible. Our school has student representatives on almost all school committees.
- Curricular revisions that allow for flexibility and varied interests. The School's programs are not nearly as prescribed as they once were and now allow much more interdisciplinary research, which we believe helps create an inclusive graduate program and retain our students.
- Work with federal and state agencies on their initiatives to increase diversity in their workforce through internships, and helping their recruiters outreach to our students directly.

As outlined above, we seek to nurture an atmosphere and climate of inclusiveness in many ways. We offer matching funding to our recruits, provide opportunities for students to attend conferences and have social functions, encourage students to join school committees, provide professional staff advising and support. As a school, we have also voiced our concerns that the ABB system of accounting does a poor job of rewarding units for promoting diversity. We view diversity as key to strengthening our programs and our science, as is evident from the Summer 2011 edition of Wildlife Professional found at:

http://joomla.wildlife.org/documents/twp/workforce_diversity.pdf. The school is very proud of the national leadership roles that our diverse students have taken, and hope to have many more in the future. We plan to build on our strengths, create new strategies, and continue to evaluate our efforts.

Faculty Engagement

Our faculty support underrepresented and minority students by finding various forms of funding support and by helping pursue relevant research interests, especially with Native American students. We have many faculty involved with active tribal research projects and we share the results and benefits of such partnerships widely. Our faculty highly value our tribal relationships and feel that there are many more research projects and opportunities in the future.

In our field of terrestrial natural resources, the faculty, student body and workforce has been traditionally dominated by white males. As a former College, and now a School, our long-term leadership in increasing diversity has been widely recognized. In the last decades, the School has broadened its disciplinary breadth, thus appealing to a more diverse population of students and faculty. We continue to place emphases on diversity recruitment and retention in our strategic planning documents every year, which is collectively developed and endorsed by our faculty, staff and students. One example was during a recent faculty search where we initially only had funds to hire a single individual, but found a way to attain financial and administrative support to hire two positions when the opportunity to recruit two outstanding women faculty in wildlife science. This is a growing area of interest and of particular interest to Native American students. Having women mentors in this role is important for ensuring both racial and gender diversity in our school.

Our faculty discussed, voted and approved the SEFS Diversity Plan on December 15th, 2015.

Innovation

We would like to strengthen our efforts and enhance our plan on all fronts: faculty, staff and students. We shared the "Handbook on Diversity in Faculty Hiring" from the Department of Anthropology that was distributed at the recent Graduate School Departmental Diversity Committee meeting with our current faculty search committee chairs. We are now planning to develop a similar handbook at SEFS with special emphasis on the Interrupting Bias training.

We plan to continue and augment our current diversity efforts in many ways. One recent development is in the College of the Environment, which formed a diversity committee and started some larger efforts, in which we are a key partner. We also plan to target additional professional society meetings, such as the Society of Hispanic Engineers, the Society of Black Engineers, and Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences to expand our recruiting efforts. We encourage our current graduate students to help recruit new students when we send them to meetings and conferences, especially those focused on diversity. We continually seek new sources of funding for diverse graduate students; we see the greatest barrier to enrolling all those we accept is our lack of robust and competitive funding. We will continue our close tribal collaborations, and we hope to expand our efforts to include more tribes.

We as a school thank you for considering our request for a GOP RA Award. We feel strongly that the school embodies the very intent of the GOP and that support for a student in our program will make a lasting and meaningful difference towards the building of a diverse natural resource management workforce. We sincerely appreciate any support you might be able to provide our program.

SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

1. We agree to match the GOP award with at least another year of assistantship funding, and more funding if possible.
2. We have a diversity committee, called the SEFS Diversity Team, and their role and contact information is on our diversity web site at: <http://sefs.washington.edu/abouttheSchool/diversity.shtml>. The role of the team is to: track diversity efforts within the School; find new ways of recruiting diverse, and especially underrepresented minority, faculty, staff and students; seek to find and remove barriers to diversity at the School; create partnerships with and learn best practices from other diversity efforts, both on and off campus; involve diverse members of the School in leadership and mentorship. The team is co-chaired by Professor Ernesto Alvarado (Alvarado@uw.edu) and Student Services Director Michelle Trudeau (michtru@uw.edu). They have both been directly involved developing our SEFS Diversity Plan.
3. GOP recipient information from 2011-2016
Year of award: 2015-2016 (No GOP award)
Year of award: 2014-15
Name of student recipient: LomaJohn Pendergraft
Student's research advisor: John Marzluff
Student's funding for past and future years: GOP RA, followed NSF Fellowship and Research Assistantship
Year of award: 2013-14
Name of student recipient: Clint Robins
Student's research advisor: Aaron Wirsing
Student's funding for past and future years: GOP RA, followed NSF Fellow and and Research Assistantship
Year of award: 2012-13
Name of student recipient: Alicia Marshall
Student's research advisor: Susan Bolton
Student's funding for past and future years: GOP RA, followed by RA and TA awards—graduated Winter 2015
Year of award: 2011-12—No GOP RA award

cc: School Environmental and Forest Sciences Faculty