

The Second Year

Report to the Oakland University Senate

from the

Senate Committee on Human Relations

Prepared by Wilma Garcia, Chair, 1990-91

As Brian Murphy noted in his report of our first year of operation, and in accordance with its original charge, the Committee on Human Relations formulated a series of "major goals" for itself and the Oakland University community to consider. As listed on page 2 of Mr. Murphy's report, these goals are:

- (A) to increase minority faculty
- (B) to retain more minority students
- (C) to attract more minority students
- (D) to consider curricular recommendations

Much of our attention has been devoted to investigating, discussing, and proposing actions and strategies which we believe would facilitate implementing these and related goals. Some of our proposals were initiated by the committee, but we have just as often responded to situations and events occurring in other areas of the university.

It should therefore be useful in this report to separate issues for which the Committee on Human Relations **Recommends Action**, or has itself **Taken Action**, from issues in which we are **Reporting Reaction** to events brought to the committee's attention.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Minority Faculty Recruitment. The need to recruit more members of under-represented ethnic minority groups to our faculty has been one of the committee's top-priority goals since its inception. We recognize the formidable difficulties in improving ethnic minority representation at Oakland: competing for a relatively small pool of candidates with virtually every other university in the state--and the country--and assuring that the autonomy of academic units in the selection process is protected. But we also recognize the need for the university to implement its public commitment to increasing the minority presence on our faculty.

We therefore urge vigorous implementation of genuine affirmative action procedures in attracting and hiring faculty members. We further urge adoption of innovative

methods, such as those proposed in the memorandum which is Appendix B of the committee's first-year report ("Recruiting from Nontraditional Populations"; "Early Personal Contact with Potential Minority Faculty"; "Dissertation Fellowships and Early Contracts"), and such other nontraditional approaches as a modification of the "Eastern Michigan University Plan," which would make funds available specifically for minority faculty positions.

Multi-Cultural Awareness Training for Faculty. The Oakland University community is in the curious position of having conducted formal training programs for multi-cultural awareness for every employee group on campus--clerical workers, custodians, skilled trades, food service workers, groundskeepers, student housing staff, administrators at all levels--except one. Only those charged with direct contact with Oakland's students in the academic classroom--only the faculty--have not participated as a group in any program aimed at increasing sensitivity to the specific needs and concerns of minority populations.

The Committee on Human Relations strongly recommends that a program, or programs, to provide both awareness and strategies for facilitating multi-cultural harmony be implemented with Oakland's faculty without delay.

ACTION TAKEN

Videoconference Sponsored as Part of Black History Month. A proposal to sponsor the videoconference "The Rise in Campus Racism: Causes and Solution," one of the series presented by Black Issues in Higher Education, was prepared on behalf of the committee by Indra David. Originally intended as a request to the provost for funding, the proposal was instead submitted to the Association of Black Students for inclusion on the Black History, "Black Consciousness: The Struggle Continues" February Programming.

The Committee on Human Relations' proposal was accepted for funding by the Black History Month Committee. The program will take place on Wednesday, February 20, from 1:00 to 4:00 pm in the Varner Recital Hall. Arrangements are being finalized by Indra David and Frances Jackson. We invite your participation in this live videoconference.

Poll of Oakland Students, in Progress. The two members of the committee appointed by the University Congress for 1990-1991, Esther Martinez and Desiree Deschamps, are currently conducting a poll to determine whether students support the decentralized model adopted by Oakland for dealing with minority issues, or the "Minority Affairs Office" model

recommended by the State Board of Education Office of Minority Equity, among others. (See Decentralized vs. Centralized Models in the **REACTION/REPORT** section of this report, below, for a brief discussion of this disagreement.) Ms. Dechamps' and Ms. Martinez' progress report on the poll is attached.

REACTION/REPORT

Operation Graduation. In the spring of 1990 students from the Association of Black Students and Raices, the newly formed Hispanic student organization, presented a series of proposals, called "Operation Graduation," to Oakland's administration. Results of the negotiations that followed were reported to the Committee on Human Relations by David Herman, Dean of Students, who is a member of the committee. (This year we also have Esther Martinez, an officer of Raices and one of the student negotiators, on the committee to offer another perspective.)

The Committee on Human Relations has not been asked formally by either the students or the administration to monitor the implementation of Operation Graduation; however, because of the committee's charge and its unique position as a group with representatives from faculty, administration, and students, we will continue to observe the implementation process and make recommendations we believe are indicated.

Decentralized vs. Centralized Models. While a number of the students' proposals have been adopted and many issues raised by Operation Graduation have been addressed, there remains a basic difference of opinion about which organizational model is most effective in promoting a harmonious multi-cultural environment at Oakland University. This difference of opinion about methodology has also surfaced in interactions between Oakland and the State Board of Education Office of Minority Equity. Following are summaries of the two positions.

Oakland's administration is reluctant to establish an Office (or an Officer) of Minority Affairs, believing that concerns, of whatever nature, involving members of ethnic minority groups would be referred automatically to such an office, thus "absolving" the rest of the university community from any responsibility to examine their own attitudes and procedures.

The opposite position, promulgated by the State Office of Minority Equity and espoused by student negotiators for Operation Graduation and, presumably, their advisors, is that a centralized Minority Affairs Office/Officer is necessary to provide accountability.

In addition, at a meeting last fall, Frances Jackson, a newly appointed member of the committee, spoke in favor of establishing a Minority Affairs Office/Officer at Oakland. I asked Professor Jackson and Dean Herman to prepare reports on the two models for presentation to the Committee on Human Relations. The reports were delivered at our meeting of December 6, 1990. The contents of this information packet includes Dean Herman's report, distributed to members of the committee at the time of his oral presentation on December 6; and a written version of Professor Jackson's report, evidently edited and amended from her December 6 oral presentation, and submitted on January 10 for use as part of this report to the Senate.