Academic Program Review

UNL Libraries’ Self-study on Diversity Initiatives (2002-2009)

In the past seven years, UNL Libraries incorporated diversity into its mission and vision statements:

“UNL Libraries values diversity and empowers our staff to take active responsibility in developing a supportive diverse environment. We will use our talents, expertise, collections and services to coordinate with UNL’s effort to embrace diversity” (University of Nebraska-Lincoln University Libraries, 2008).

The focus on diversity and multicultural values developed into five goals as follows:

1. To develop an infrastructure that supports diversity, including a diversity librarian, the Diversity Committee, and a plan of action.
2. To increase the recruitment and retention of individuals from underrepresented groups.
3. To develop library outreach programs and services to underrepresented groups among faculty, staff and students on campus.
4. To support the diversity goals of general education and research through the acquisition of printed and electronic collections and other library services.
5. To create a positive working environment within the Libraries through continuing education and staff development (University of Nebraska-Lincoln Libraries, 2008, 2).

Infrastructure: Building a foundation for diversity initiatives at UNL Libraries

Based on the above goals, UNL Libraries established its diversity initiatives which continued to evolve since 2003 as illustrated in Figure 2 below.

Fig. 2  Timeline of UNL Libraries Diversity Initiatives

The Libraries’ diversity infrastructure had grown over the years, from the development of the position of the Diversity Librarian and the Diversity Committee to the creation of Multicultural Studies Librarian position with liaison responsibilities to the UNL’s Institute for Ethnic Studies and a dual position in Technical Services and Multicultural Services. These positions expanded the responsibility for diversity beyond RIS which strengthened the overall Libraries’ diversity initiatives. Such growth was possible due
to the strategies used in the recruitment and retention of minority librarians as discussed in the following sections.

Scout & Search: Recruitment Strategies.

UNL Libraries employed different strategies in the recruitment effort as follows:

- **Passive recruitment.** The Libraries created entry-level positions and placed job advertisements on LISTSERVS as well as by advertising at graduate schools of library science with increased minority enrollments. The creation of entry-level positions as well as this form of recruitment resulted in a few hires over the years; however, the newly hired faculty did not remain at UNL.
- **Active recruitment.** The Libraries actively solicited applications of diverse individuals by sending job announcements to targeted prospective applicant groups, and/or by attending conferences and personally inviting individuals to apply for a particular position.
- **Library faculty’s affiliation with ethnic caucuses** in the American Library Association also provided the outreach to minority candidates.
- **Dean Joan Giesecke’s teaching and mentoring engagement.** Dean Giesecke’s role as the Professor of Practice in the Doctoral Program at Simmons College’s Graduate School of Library and Information Science and her mentoring role to minority librarians in the Association of Research Libraries’ Leadership and Career Development Program provided the opportunities for recruiting minority librarians.
- **Multicultural Services Team’s assistance in the recruitment of diverse librarians.** By providing friendly faces and the opportunity to ask questions addressing lifestyle, or providing tours of the city, and personal contacts to job candidates, the Team helped ease the transition of the candidates into their new librarian positions in the libraries.

As a result of the above recruitment efforts, UNL Libraries could develop a Multicultural Services Team with the foci on diversity, multicultural and global issues. After the recruitment, the Libraries also provided support to retain the minority library faculty.

Support & Sustain: Retention.

UNL Libraries implemented the following strategies to support the retention of the minority and other diverse faculty:

- **Provided a supportive work environment** including frequent meetings with department heads, annual evaluations, and travel funds for attending professional meetings to support opportunities and assignments on national library committees and library ethnic caucuses.
- **Diversity training** helped foster and create a welcoming environment for the new minority librarians.
- **Diversity Committee and Staff Development Committee** also helped sustain a positive diversity climate in the libraries.
- **Climate assessment for diversity in UNL Libraries** by participating in ClimateQual Assessment with the goal to utilize the results to improve work environment.
To sum it up, UNL Libraries’ diversity initiatives had a positive impact in the Libraries’ ability to recruit and retain minority library faculty as illustrated in the following statistics.

**Diversity in Library Faculty: Statistics 1999-2009.**

The number of minority librarians in UNL Libraries increased from 2.6% of the faculty in 1999 to 12.2% in 2009 (Fig.1). The increase followed the national trend among Association of Research Libraries (ARL) institutions; from 1985-1986 and 2005-2006, the percentage of librarians in US ARL university libraries who are minorities increased from 10% to 13% (Hipps, 2006, p.1).

**Fig. 1 UNL Libraries Faculty Statistics 1999-2009.**

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<th>Year</th>
<th>Libraries Total Faculty</th>
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**References**

