

SUGGESTED STRATEGY TO ENHANCE STUDENT DIVERSITY

OBJECTIVE – To recruit and retain to graduation a larger number of underrepresented students, particularly African American and Latino students.

PURPOSE – It is important to seek to serve a diverse student body at Cal Poly because: (a) California's population is increasingly diverse and the California State University is dedicated to serving the state's entire community; and (b) it benefits all Cal Poly students to learn in a diverse student body so they will be better prepared for the multicultural work place after they graduate.

Enrollment and retention of underrepresented students, particularly African Americans and Latinos, has been a challenge at Cal Poly for a variety of reasons. Recently, the situation was made more difficult with Proposition 209, which prohibits consideration of ethnicity or color when selecting students for admission. Since dropping ethnicity from our mix of admissions criteria there has been a decided drop in new underrepresented students; the drop among African Americans has been especially alarming.

STRATEGY – The following four steps could be taken simultaneously and all could be started during the current academic year:

I – SUSTAINED RETENTION EFFORTS—The University currently offers a number of programs and services to help students succeed. For example, a number of colleges provide academic skills assistance as does the Learning Resource Center. Student Affairs offers other services to help students succeed, including the Student Academic Services projects that target students with disadvantages. Our retention effort must be maintained or expanded. Ongoing funding needs to be found for the Learning Resource Center, which was launched with partial funding from the Associated Students, Inc.

It might be wise to review everything being done in the way of student skills training, tutoring, and retention programming. Perhaps we can do more with the resources already directed to this enterprise, but we need at least this level of funding.

New funds proposed: none

II – TARGETED RECRUITMENT—The University's Admissions and Recruitment office is a strong unit with solid management, but it lacks the resources to expand recruitment of underrepresented students. The Director of Admissions and Recruitment, James Maraviglia, is anxious to engage in targeted recruitment to bring in more well-qualified underrepresented students; he is knowledgeable and enthusiastic about the challenge but he would need new resources to get the job done. Specifically, I suggest his unit be allocated one or two positions and some modest operating funds that would be dedicated exclusively to serving 10 to 20 targeted high schools or community colleges throughout California with which Cal Poly would work out "partnerships." These "partnership" schools would be selected to ensure that they had high percentages of African American and Latino graduates capable to success at Cal Poly. This could be accomplished without reference to race or ethnicity; the determining basis for selecting partners would be the fact that the schools are among those with low transfer-to-college rates.

Partnership schools could be engaged in various ways with Cal Poly, e.g. faculty visits to the schools, student visits to Cal Poly, Cal Poly classes offered on the partner schools' campuses (possibly by distance learning), student advisement and guidance, etc. These could become "feeder" institutions—like farm clubs in professional baseball—that provide us with more underrepresented students.

New funds proposed: \$100,000 - \$150,000 for recruiters and operations funds

III – TARGETED MERIT SCHOLARSHIPS – The pool of talented underrepresented students who meet Cal Poly’s high entrance standards is small and competition for them is keen. We do not do as much as other highly-selective universities (e.g. UCLA, UCB, UCSD, Stanford, and USC) in offering scholarship assistance to students we are trying to recruit. We need to provide more merit scholarships to entice the best and brightest undergraduates to Cal Poly; our competitors are offering significant scholarships to some of the same students that we admit while offering no scholarships.

Warren, your plan to make merit scholarships a priority in University fund raising will go a long way toward solving this problem in time. We need to start immediately to work vigorously to raise merit scholarships. Then we could target some of those monies for the partnership schools identified above so as to entice more talented underrepresented students to enroll at Cal Poly. Currently we are being out-bid for some of the best students. Targeted merit scholarships would make us more competitive, particularly when they are matched with a broader effort to serve partnership schools.

New funds proposed: No new State funds would be expected, but University Advancement would be expected to bring in good deal more in funds earmarked for student scholarships. I believe this is a winner for University Advancement as well inasmuch as many donors are supportive of helping students succeed.

IV – ADMISSIONS CREDIT FOR APPLICANTS FROM PARTNERSHIP SCHOOLS – The current multiple-criteria admissions standards employed by the colleges might be adjusted to give some “bonus credit” to students coming from our partnership schools. Our Director of Financial Aid considered this concept and thought it allowable under current State guidelines. Our Director of Admissions and Recruitment considered this concept and found it most appealing. He thinks this could bring in new, able students from underrepresented groups who have the potential to succeed and he thinks the members of the Admissions Council could be persuaded to accept this concept by showing them how their colleges would attract more underrepresented students who would graduate.

This is not to suggest lowering entrance standards in such a way as to bring in students who will likely fail to graduate. It is a way to ensure we get more high-quality underrepresented students.

New funds proposed: none