

Review of Formally Organized Units

Each year the Illinois Board of Higher Education requests that institutions provide reviews of formally organized support units serving underrepresented groups. Institutions were asked this year for reviews on units seeking to improve the retention of students from underrepresented groups. UIS has three major units in this category: the Office of Disability Services, the Women's Center, and the Office of Minority Student Affairs. Also included are reviews of the Minority Leadership in Public Service Program and Project Minority Student Support, which provide both mentoring and financial assistance to students.

Note: Because UIS has only a few organized units dedicated to serving members of underrepresented groups, these units serve multiple purposes (e.g., support for both undergraduate and graduate students) and, therefore, meet the criteria for review nearly every year. Because yearly reviews do not appear to be the IBHE's intent, some of the reviews provided this year have been reprinted from recent reports.

Office of Disability Services

Since the Office of Disability Services (ODS) was formally organized three years ago, staff have been occupied with developing policies, establishing agreements with other institutions, identifying the clientele, setting up an adaptive technology lab, meeting staffing needs, and creating initial awareness of the office's services. These tasks were well underway by the fall of 1999, so the office staff designated AY99-00 as a "year of building."

As part of these efforts, ODS has been working to further increase campus awareness of its services. With the support of the provost/vice chancellor for academic affairs, the director asked that all faculty members include a statement in their syllabi asking students with disabilities to request services through ODS during the first week of classes. The office has also been offering tours of its new adaptive technology lab. Among those touring the facility were 14 faculty members, 3 new admissions counselors, and 12 administrators. About half (20) of the campus' academic programs were represented by either students or faculty. Tours were also offered to external agencies, including Springfield College in Illinois, Hope School (a facility for students with multiple disabilities), Migrant Head Start, NAACP, and Springfield School District #186.

In addition to increasing awareness of its services, UIS' office has been developing a strong relationship with the state Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS). All students requesting services are directed to ORS to determine how the state can support them in their efforts to attend college (e.g., financial assistance with tuition and books, personal maintenance). ORS also pays for half of the high maintenance accommodations, such as interpreters and CART reporters that UIS is required to provide, reducing campus expenses by about \$6000 last year. UIS' director works with ORS counselors each semester to review and, if necessary, revise student academic plans to improve the chances of academic success for students with disabilities. The possibility of placing a full-time ORS counselor on campus is being investigated by both the UIS and ORS administrations. In the meanwhile, ORS continues to be a primary recruiting resource for students with disabilities for the campus.

The number of students requesting service in FY00 increased to 117, up 43% from 82 in FY99 and 95% from 60 in FY97. Students with learning disabilities represented the majority of the new clients. ODS attributes these increases to improved awareness of the unit and its services, the additional services offered through the new adaptive technology lab, and better involvement with the Illinois Department of Rehabilitation Services. ODS has responded to the increase by extending its lab hours to include four evenings a week and by expanding the scope of the unit's website to include resource information and downloadable documents that free staff time for other duties. The office is also using new e-text capability to eliminate the time-consuming need to prepare audio versions of textbooks.

Since the Office of Disability Services opened just three years ago, development of methods to evaluate the unit's services is in the preliminary stages. Until a formal plan can be developed, staff are gaining valuable information from end-of-semester client evaluations.

The unit is staffed by a director, who was promoted from coordinator this year, and several student workers. FTE staff increased from 1.85 in FY99 to 2.8 in FY00. The budget rose 19.5% from \$49,200 to \$58,800. The Office of Disability Services is part of the Student Life Office in the Division of Student Affairs.

Women's Center [Reprinted from UIS' 1999 *Underrepresented Groups Report*]

The Women's Center at UIS promotes women collectively and individually while providing a catalyst for growth. Seeking to be a resource for support, the center serves to increase the spirit of community by promoting acceptance and diversity. Activities that reflect this belief are shared with groups of similar interest. The center provides a forum in which any woman – student, faculty, staff, or concerned citizen – may address her issues of interest through advocacy and education.

During its four years of operation, the Women's Center has become one of the most visible service units on campus. It uses fliers, a newsletter, graphic and metaphorical displays, and word-of-mouth to encourage women to use its facilities and to increase overall awareness of women's issues. In addition, the center and Computing Services sponsor the Central Illinois Women's Action (CIWA) listserv, which now has about 200 readers, with informative messages being posted from dozens of organizations in six Illinois cities. Besides building community, CIWA helps publicize news and information for and about women to the area. Organizations using the listserv to publicize events have included Planned Parenthood, the Seventh Judicial Circuit's Family Violence Prevention Coordinating Council, the Junior League, and the Springfield AIDS Resource Center. Feedback from subscribers is enthusiastic.

Administratively, the center is part of the Chancellor's Office with oversight from the Women's Center Coordinating Council. It is staffed by a director, a graduate assistant during the academic year, and 500 student worker hours a year. Center staff recruit a corps of volunteers who make additional initiatives possible.

The center has developed a valuable network of ties to other units committed to women's issues. Included are the Office of Minority Student Affairs, the Diversity Task Force, the Women's Studies Program, and the Campus Police. Events and presentations sponsored or co-sponsored by the center during FY99 include the following:

- The WhistleSTOP campus safety program was inaugurated during the Week Without Violence. A Women's Safety Resource Fair, the Clothesline Project, and the Illinois Silent Witness figures were also displayed in the cafeteria during the week.
- Brown-bag lunch forums were held throughout the year on topics such as women world leaders, working globally to support international feminism, and writing about women's health and medicine.
- An art exhibit, God the Mother, and reception took place in November 1998.
- UIS was a viewing site for the UNIFEM global videoconference, A World Free of Violence Against Women.
- For sexual assault awareness month in April the center created and distributed 200 table tents on date rape drugs.
- The center created publicity and networks for the Campus Police's presentation of Rape Aggression Defense (RAD) training.

The center received \$55,036 in funding during FY99, up \$6,627 from \$48,409 in FY98. The majority of this increase was to upgrade the director's position to full time. Appropriated funding is augmented by contributions of usable items to the center and by fund-raising activities.

Office of Minority Student Affairs [Reprinted from UIS' 1999 *Underrepresented Groups Report*]

The Office of Minority Student Affairs was created in response to the needs of minority students for advocacy and

support on campus. Viewed as the most viable way to assist minority students in all facets of campus life, the center is an integral part of the Division of Student Affairs. Center staff (consisting of one FTE staff, one graduate assistant, and one student worker) provide services to various campus units and seek services requested by students. Any minority student enrolled is an eligible candidate for the support, advising, and other types of assistance available at the Office of Minority Student Affairs. Staff report that office contacts increased during AY98-99, a change that can be attributed to the use of email to keep students informed of events and opportunities of interest. The center also sends out a newsletter, welcome letters and information, and personal letters of congratulation to students who achieve recognition.

One of the important functions of the Office of Minority Student Affairs is to monitor the progress students are making toward their goals. Center staff accomplish this through personal mentorship.

Center staff also sponsor and participate in activities that help establish and support a more favorable climate on campus for minority students. For example, UIS hosted UIUC's Multicultural Student Leaders Institute this year. The institute is designed to bring together potential and current student leaders from campuses in the Midwest to share their leadership expertise and experiences. One of the ultimate goals of the conference is to improve student leadership. Other examples of activities included:

- a welcome-back reception, which provided an opportunity for returning students to meet with faculty, staff, and administrators in a social setting;
- support services for the Tenth Annual Unity Day March; and
- a Kwanzaa celebration.

In addition to their regular duties, center staff are committed to the types of campus and community activities that result in a solid, supportive network for minority students at UIS. For example, the center director serves on the Diversity Task Force and the Black Caucus.

The center received \$52,449 in funding for FY99, up \$3,255 from \$49,194 in FY98. The increase in funds provided for raises in salary and additional student help.

Minority Leadership in Public Service [Reprinted from UIS' 1999 *Underrepresented Groups Report*, with update]

The Minority Leadership in Public Service Program (MLPS) provides access to higher education for minority students who wish to pursue a program of study leading to a career in public service. In support of UIS' special emphasis on public affairs, one of the criteria for acceptance into the program is "demonstrated interest in public service through leadership experience with extracurricular activities and/or contributions to volunteer service in nonprofit and civic organizations." The award package combines federal and state grants with institutional funds to pay the cost of attendance (i.e., tuition, fees, housing, insurance). In addition, participants receive a \$3,000 stipend each academic year. A thorough review of the MLPS program was conducted for last year's report. Significant findings from that review are provided below. Data provided are as of the spring semester of 1998.

- The program has had 87 participants since its inception in 1985. Data collected from transcripts indicate that 48 of the 87 students had graduated from UIS as of Spring 1998 and 12 were still enrolled.
- Analysis suggests that MLPS students graduate at a higher rate than their peers (66% five-year aggregated data for MLPS students as opposed to the 43% to 51% five-year graduation rate for all UIS students). The methods of this analysis are described in greater detail in last year's

report.

- Graduates of the MLPS program most often choose programs of study related to public affairs, thereby fulfilling an important goal of the program.
- MLPS students are making a valuable contribution to the campus through their involvement in student governance. Nine program participants had been elected during at-large elections to the following positions in the Student Governance Association: student body president (3), vice president (2), treasurer (2), and secretary (2). In addition, eight others were elected as student senators. (These are unduplicated counts; MLPS students tend to serve in more than one position during their time at UIS.) In addition, one participant was elected as the student representative to the Board of Regents, and one was serving as the student representative to the Board of Trustees. (Note: The student trustee for AY99-00 is also an MLPS participant.)

As one of two programs providing major financial assistance to minority students, the Minority Leadership in Public Service Program is a vital component of the campus' efforts to attract these students. Recruiting for the program for AY98-99, however, was largely unsuccessful. The campus is assessing its approach to the administration of the program and, although participation is expected to be low again for AY99-00, it is expected to improve thereafter.

FY00 Update. The leadership of the program was transferred to the coordinator of the Office of Minority Student Affairs in November 1999. All recruitment and application materials have been revised and updated, and planning is currently being completed on sessions and activities for the upcoming academic year. A goal is to increase participation from five students to the maximum participation level of 20 over a two-year period. Thirteen students have been selected for AY00-01. The focus will be on participant-designed projects to enhance campus/community life.

Project Minority Student Support [Summarized from the UIS' 1998 *Underrepresented Groups Report*]

Project Minority Student Support for Teaching (MSS) is designed to increase the pool of minorities who teach in the Springfield and Decatur school systems. It provides a teacher incentive program for local students beginning at the junior year and continuing through certification. Students receive support to enroll in college preparatory courses and to complete high school. Upon graduation, these students enter the community college phase of the program and receive tuition waivers from Lincoln Land Community College or Richland Community College. They then enroll in the teacher education sequence at UIS to prepare for certification. UIS also provides tuition waivers. This is the seventh year of the program, which is supported in part by a Higher Education Cooperation Agreement (HECA) grant. Project MSS was recently singled out for "best practices" by the Illinois Board of Higher Education.

Effectiveness in Identifying and Serving Its Clientele. With the help of its high school partners and their guidance counselors, Project MSS identifies potential African-American teachers during their junior or senior years of high school. To include all potential African-American teachers, MSS also allows students to enter the project at the community college and certification phases. African American males, who are especially underrepresented in the teaching profession, comprise more than half of the high school participants in the program.

Success in Improving Student Participation and Achievement. Providing a support system to increase the number of African-American students finishing high school must be a major priority for the project since achievement of all other goals is contingent on success here. Although students entering the program must have a minimum grade-point average of C+, project staff note major gaps in students' academic preparedness. This is particularly evident during the ACT preparation workshop when students are given a mock exam. This assessment suggests that tutoring in areas such as mathematics, English, and science is warranted. Referrals are made to appropriate resources for assistance.

Various checkpoints have been established at UIS to monitor student progress. For instance, all students complete baccalaureate skills assessment upon entry. Project staff analyze the results and identify resources to address any areas of weakness. Another checkpoint is the review period for the Preprofessional Skills Test and the Basic Skills Test of the Teacher Certification System. All students participate in three sessions designed to review skills in mathematics, reading, and writing. The final checkpoint occurs when students submit required midterm reports documenting successful performance.

Students receive exposure to the teaching profession through completion of an increasingly sophisticated internship at each phase of the project. Students at the high school level participate as volunteers for small group tutoring at community agencies. Students at the community college phase participate as volunteer tutors at local educational agencies, providing 1) small group instruction in content areas and 2) assistance in designing and developing instructional materials and implementing a lesson planned by the master teacher. Community college students also participate in the first level of Project MSS Seminar – Teaching Skills. Students in the certification phase at UIS participate in an internship funded by the participating school districts and community colleges.

One student has completed certification as a result of Project MSS; 10 additional students will be entering the certification phase of the project in the fall of 1997. Three students are expected to complete certification during the 1997-98 academic year. Although students were originally expected to graduate after four semesters in the certification phase, project staff have determined that a more realistic expectation is six semesters. This difference is primarily related to the certification process at UIS, which requires students to complete requirements for graduation from a discipline area in addition to the requirements for teacher education certification.

The high school graduation record for participating seniors is 95%. Participant satisfaction has been very positive.

Effectiveness in the Use of Resources. During its six years of operation the project has provided services for approximately 600 students in the Springfield and Decatur school systems. Seventy percent of those students are pursuing (or have pursued) degrees from higher education institutions. Approximately 30% are pursuing degrees in teacher education at UIS and other institutions of higher education.

Project MSS is governed by an advisory board that has developed instruments to evaluate each of the five components of the high school phase (participation measures, attendance reports from each scheduled event, correlation of student achievement on pretest/post-test instruments, and student selection of and retention in advanced courses). In addition, three focus groups will be held for high school students and facilitated by members of the project staff, advisory board committee, and staff from UIS' Institute for Public Affairs.

Changes in the Policies and Operations Resulting from Evaluations. In addition to the focus groups discussed above, a new component will be added to the program as a result of input from community college participants – students will be assigned a peer tutor to help them adjust to college life. This component will be developed, monitored, and evaluated by the community college liaison in conjunction with the project director.

