A commitment to campus diversity has become an integral component of contemporary university policy. Both legal precedent and research have lent validity to this premise. As far back as Regents…v. Bakke (1978), the United States Supreme Court affirmed that racial and ethnic diversity within an institution of higher learning has important educational benefits. In Grutter v. Bollinger (2003), the Court reconfirmed that “student body diversity in higher education was a compelling state interest.” Research has suggested that the benefits of diversity encompass far more than simple adherence to ideals of inclusiveness, equality and social justice. Astin (1993) in a study involving 25,000 undergraduate students at 217 colleges and universities concluded that diversity is “associated with widespread beneficial effects on a student’s cognitive and affective development.” (Astin, 1993, p. 45) Students educated in a culturally diverse environment also tend to be more satisfied with their university or college experience, and are better able to cope in a pluralistic society (Astin, 1993).

Gurin et al. (2002) conducted a study looking at 187 black and 1,134 white students at the University of Michigan and found that students in a more diverse environment showed the greatest engagement in active thinking processes, growth in intellectual engagement and motivation, and growth in intellectual and academic skills.

In the 2003 Statistical Abstract of the US, out of a total population of 8,407,000, North Carolina’s ethnic makeup was approximately 69% White (non-Hispanic), 21.9% African-American, 5.6% Hispanic origin, 1.8% Asian/Pacific Islander, 1.3% Native American, and less than 1% Mixed Race or Other. With a student body composed of 69% White (Non-Hispanic), 20% African-American, 2.6% Asian/Pacific Islander, 2% Hispanic origin, less than 1% Native American, and 6.7% International and Unknown Origin, UNCG in many respects, reflects the overall ethnic/racial diversity present in its home state.
Diversity: The Changing Face of National Enrollment

Despite the mandates of policy, and the apparent benefits of diversity, university campuses have had mixed success in their ability to attract and retain minorities in both student and faculty capacities. Below, we will present information comparing UNCG with selected UNC system peers and our national peers in relation to factors having a direct impact on campus diversity.

Chart 1 illustrates UNCG’s position relative to both UNC system and nationwide peer institutions with regard to minority presence in the total student body. In compiling these data, we combined minority students from the four major ethnic/racial categories used by the majority of institutions (African American, Asian/Pacific Islander, Native American/Indigent of Alaska, and Hispanic). Non-resident aliens and those listed as “other” or “unknown” were not included, as we had no way of determining their actual ethnic status. Chart 1 indicates that UNCG is well above the majority of our national peers in the percentage of minority students to total student population, and above all our UNC system peers. In fact, with 24% minority enrollment, UNCG leads all University of North Carolina institutions, excepting those historically grounded as minority institutions.

It is generally accepted that minority students will feel more comfortable in an environment where there are advisors and role models who share their perspective as members of historically under-represented groups. Chart 2 provides an overview of minority student to minority faculty ratios for UNCG and those UNC and national peers who had minority enrollments of at least 15% or greater in 2003/2004. Data from 2003 and 2004 are included. Our ratio of 1 minority faculty to 23.3 minority students puts us above our two UNC peers that supplied such data. We are behind seven of our 11 nationwide peers in this category, although three of those seven had considerably lower minority student populations than UNCG. The University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee maintains the highest ratio with roughly one minority faculty for every ten minority students, a result of a large minority faculty in its many technical programs. The College of William and Mary and SUNY-Binghamton follow closely with ratios of 1 to 15.4 and 1 to 15.5, respectively.

Facilitating diversity through enrollment is important,
but institutional success is generally defined in terms of retention and graduation. Chart 3 illustrates minority one-year retention rates for UNCG and those peer institutions with 15% minority enrollment or greater who made this information available to us either through their institutional websites or through direct contact with the institution’s Institutional Research office. Once again, it can be seen that UNCG, with an 82.7% minority one-year retention rate, places above its two UNC system peers, ECU and UNCC. This rate is also above the aggregate UNC system average of 79.8%. Stacked against our nationwide peers, UNCG minority retention rate is greater than four institutions, below five institutions. However, it is important to put retention rates into perspective with the selectivity of each institution.

Chart 3 shows that three of the five nationwide peers that rank above UNCG, SUNY-Binghamton, the College of William and Mary, and The University of Alabama are listed as “selective” or “highly selective” institutions by the ACT College Planning/Search Book. This book describes UNCG as a “traditional” admissions institution. UNCG surpasses all traditional enrollment peers shown, except Georgia State University and George Mason, as well as posting higher rates of minority retention than three institutions which practice selective admissions: ECU, the University of Missouri-Kansas City and the University of Southern Mississippi.

An even more important measure of an educational institution’s success with any student is providing the support and guidance to motivate that student to persist to graduation. Chart 4 shows the six-year graduation rates for minority students at UNCG and the identical group of peers surveyed for retention data. In this measure, UNCG, with a 50.5% six-year graduation rate is surpassed by East Carolina University, with a rate of 53.4%. UNCG exceeds UNC-Charlotte (45.5%) by a large margin and the aggregate UNC system average of 49.8%.

Among its nationwide peers, UNCG has a higher six-year graduation rate than all but SUNY-Binghamton (77.4%), College of William & Mary (86.2%), and the University of Alabama (54.0%).

Once again, for the purpose of providing perspective, it must be noted that of the four institutions that surpass UNCG in this measure, two are “highly selective,” and two are “selective” in their admissions
policies. UNCG places above all peers in its own “traditional” admissions category and also above two institutions with “selective” admissions practices.

In the words of Dr. Alan Boyette, Senior Associate Provost at UNCG: “We have worked hard to establish an academic environment in which diversity is recognized as a powerful ally in our efforts to prepare students (and all of us, as continual learners) to be responsible members of a multicultural society…. Our commitment to diversity is ongoing, not an item to be checked off a ‘to do’ list.’” UNCG is clearly demonstrating the ability to convert this ongoing commitment into a genuinely diverse academic environment. Our minority student body (already the highest among non-historically minority UNC institutions) has increased from 22.2% of total students in Fall of 2000, to a current level of 24%. Correspondingly, the percentage of full-time ethnic minority faculty has been steadily on the rise since Fall of 2000; from 9.8% of total faculty to 13% at present. Full-time minority staff has also increased significantly, from 23.6% of total staff in Fall 2000 to 26% as recorded in Fall of 2004.

Diversity: A Look at Our Commitment

Attracting and retaining a diverse student population is an institution-wide commitment which involves many offices and departments contributing to the facilitation of an environment which is, at the same time, challenging, relevant, and supportive in response to the unique needs of minority students. In a report published in the NASPA Journal, Taylor and Miller (2002) provide a conceptual component for assessing those factors which contribute to minority student persistence and success at predominantly White institutions. Their Necessary Components Retention Program Assessment Model (NCRPA) identifies six major contributing factors to minority persistence: 1) Ethnic and peer attachment, 2) Social integration, 3) Worth and competence, 4) Reliable alliances, 5) Guidance, and 6) Leadership opportunities. A brief overview of the minority-focused support services offered by UNCG’s Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA) reveals some close parallels between the NCRPA model and our own support programs.

Minority One-Year Retention Rates for UNCG and Peer Institutions with Greater than 15% Minority Enrollment*

![Minority One-Year Retention Rates Chart](chart3)

*Where data was available.

Chart 3

Four
Ethnic and peer attachment is defined by Taylor and Miller as “a sense of security and comfort that can be gained by affiliating with ethnic others. Fellow ethnics serve as a source of consistency and a self-identifier” (Taylor & Miller, 2002, p. 269). Through the Office of Multicultural Affairs, UNCG attempts to address this factor by sponsoring and promoting a comprehensive social and cultural events calendar. Events are geared toward bringing ethnic groups together through programs focused on themes of human rights, Hispanic heritage, African heritage, Native American heritage, social justice, Martin Luther King, Jr., the many faces of spirituality, African-American heritage, unity, and Asian heritage. The OMA also supports ethnic identity and bonding by providing advising support to numerous student organizations on campus focusing on multiculturalism and diversity (i.e., Neo-Black Society, NAACP, Native American Student Association [NASA], Spanish American Latino Student Association [SALSA], and
African Student Union organizations) to assist with their social, leadership, and personal development. The OMA connects these students with other units on campus and to relevant organizations and offices within the greater Greensboro community. Key products of the OMA's association with student organizations include:

- The annual Shades of Color conference, providing a forum where issues of the UNCG minority population can be voiced and the value of diversity celebrated.
- The Latinos Impacting Future Trends (LIFT) annual conference in association with SALSA which focuses on Latino issues around education, health, politics and language.
- In conjunction with the NASA, the Native American Pow Wow, an exciting festival of music, dance, and folk art activities.

Social integration is “an affiliation with other individuals within the college environment who have common interests and attitudes” (Taylor & Miller, 2002, p. 269). The Office of Multicultural Affairs seeks to promote social integration through the sponsorship of events which, while recognizing and celebrating unique ethnic cultures, encourages inclusiveness and plurality in the enjoyment and appreciation of such. The Lunch Series of Cultural Music presented at least once a month during the academic year at Elliott University Center, and the Cultural Movie Series in the Multicultural Resource Center offering movies exploring a variety of cultural topics, facilitate social inclusion while directing the attention of the campus community to diverse cultural themes.

The Multicultural Resource Center (MRC) in EUC provides a place where members of UNCG’s diverse community can come to socialize, share experiences and build on common ground. The MRC provides an inviting environment with comfortable seating for studying and conversing, as well as computers with Internet connectivity. A growing library of cultural resources including books, videotapes, and a diverse collection of ethnic and multicultural-oriented magazines is available here. The Center is very proud of its ongoing series of cultural programming playing in-house via digital cable during the Center’s operating hours. The MRC hosted a total of 78 events last year celebrating cultural diversity, tolerance, and ethnic art, philosophy, society, and scholarship. The Center can also be reserved for special multicultural events and gatherings sponsored by student and community organizations. In addition to scheduled events, the Center provides daily opportunities to view multicultural art exhibits, share ideas, problems and perspectives with students, faculty, and staff of one’s own or another ethnic group, and to make meaningful cultural connections.

The OMA also publishes a monthly newsletter; Mosaic. Mosaic is designed to provide awareness on issues and topics specific to students of color while, at the same time, providing a gateway for integrating the minority student into the greater campus culture. In addition to socio-cultural content, Mosaic supplies career information, campus resources, graduate study opportunities, upcoming events, important deadlines, and minority student accomplishments.

An important facet of creating a climate which fosters social integration is to facilitate a campus environment which is free from intimidation and fear. The OMA has acted as
The Multicultural Resource Center (MRC) in Elliott Student Center

the UNCG sponsor for the STOP the HATE program created by the Association of College Unions International, Anti-Defamation League, National Center for Hate Crime Prevention, Center for the Prevention of Hate Violence, and the Southern Poverty Law Center. STOP the HATE supports colleges and universities in preventing and combating bias and hate crimes on campus, as well as fostering the development of community. The program allows participants to learn new, innovative tools to take action on hate crimes and bias-motivated violence issues on the campus. This training opportunity allows participants to address ways in which these can be resolved and promoted through an administrative campus team.

**Worth and competence** is defined by “feelings of being academically and socially competent and valued as a member of the campus community. Worth and competence affects students’ level of motivation and provides them with a sense of purpose. Also embedded in this component is the assumption that personal attributes play a role in one’s ability to adjust, cope, and integrate into a college environment” (Taylor & Miller, 2002, p. 269). The Office of Multicultural Affairs seeks to reward excellence, encourage service, and enhance self-esteem among the students that it serves.

The Office of Multicultural Affairs sponsors several formal recognition and awards programs. The Scholars Recognition Program (formerly the Students of Color Academic Awards program) recognizes minority students for academic excellence and significant contributions to the UNCG community. The awards are presented in front of an audience consisting of the honored students, their families, representatives from academic departments, and several senior administrators. The Human Relations Award was established to recognize and reward student organizations or groups from UNCG that have displayed outstanding leadership and demonstrated positive attitudes toward improving human relations in the University community. The Martin Luther King, Jr. Service Award is presented annually to honor a person in the UNCG community whose actions and values best exemplify the ideals of the great civil rights leader. In odd-numbered years, a faculty or staff member is recognized; in even years a UNCG student. The OMA also sponsors an end-of-year appreciation reception to acknowledge students, faculty and staff who have supported multicultural programming throughout the preceding year.

**Reliable alliances** involve “knowing that one’s peers, faculty members, and administrators provide assistance and advocacy. Reliable alliances play an important role in reducing students’ fears pertaining to college and feelings of isolation” (Taylor & Miller, 2002, p. 269). In addition to their aforementioned role as advocates for culturally-defined student organizations, the staff in the Office of Multicultural Affairs serves in advocacy roles for individual minority students by providing a mechanism through which students can address problems or concerns. As needed, the Office refers students to the appropriate grievance channels within the University. The goal is to identify and alleviate problems and concerns that may hinder academic and personal development.

**Guidance** is given to students “from the faculty and administrators in the form of advising, mentoring, challenging, and support. These functions are fundamental components of students’ development and academic success” (Taylor & Miller, 2002, p. 270). A key element in addressing this factor at UNCG is the Peer Mentor (PM) Program sponsored by the Office of Multicultural Affairs. This program is designed to assist first-year minority students with the transition to the university environment by providing a mentoring relationship with a successful upper class student, preferably one of his/her own ethnic group. Faculty and staff mentors also provide a supporting role to the peer mentors. All new students are met with challenges as they adjust to college life, and...
minority students often face a singular set of difficulties trying to fit into an environment essentially created by and for the majority. Mentors in the PM Program try to provide advice and support to help ensure these challenges are met with success.

**Leadership opportunities** are provided with “opportunities to serve as peer mentors or student leaders. By mentoring or serving others, students feel needed and thus gain a sense of importance, autonomy, and interdependence” (Taylor & Miller, 2002, p. 270). Successful minority junior and senior students at UNCG are encouraged to become peer mentors in the PM Program outlined above. Previous mentees who have overcome difficulties through the PM Program are especially encouraged to give back to the program through their subsequent participation as mentors. A 3 credit-hour course, HEA 202 (Peer Education: Diversity-Teaching Tolerance), is open to students interested in becoming certified diversity peer educators. Members of the PM Program are strongly encouraged to enroll in this course which, along with the OMA, is coordinated with the Wellness Center and the Department of Housing and Residence Life. UNCG students, as well as faculty and staff, are encouraged to become leaders in diversity advocacy by taking part in the Anti-Defamation League’s **Bridging Differences** program and becoming certified as a Diversity Advocate.

"As a junior living on campus at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, my involvement throughout the university has opened my eyes to a wonderful world of self discovery. When I attended SOAR, the freshman orientation program, I jumped at the opportunity to be a mentee with the Office of Multicultural Affairs because I felt it would be an excellent opportunity for me to transition into college with a phenomenal group of faculty, staff, and colleagues supporting me. I remember hanging out with my mentor and talking on the phone about school, campus activities, and upcoming peer mentor program dinners.

In looking at the many leadership attributes my mentor depicted throughout my first year in the Office of Multicultural Affairs peer mentors program, I was determined to follow in her footsteps and continue the legacy. The Office of Multicultural Affairs opened me up to a world of self discovery, allowing me to see the importance of using my leadership skills to make a positive difference on my campus and also in my community. My sophomore year, I applied to be a peer mentor and was selected to mentor a vivacious group of freshmen, and then, became the peer mentor coordinator my junior year. My mentees and I have attended many campus activities, including speaking and learning center sponsored seminars, talent shows, OMA socials, and Peer Mentor Program dinners, allowing us to commemorate and acknowledge the many things going on in one another’s lives.

As an African American female at a predominantly white institution, I have been introduced to individuals from all walks of life. The diversity shared amongst my peers through programs sponsored by the Office of Multicultural Affairs has allowed me to show, through my actions, my love for this extraordinary institution. The OMA socials opened me to individuals from all walks of life and the various themes sponsored each month in appreciation of specific ethnic groups allowed me to step outside of my box and explore cultures other than my own. The Office of Multicultural Affairs represents hope, love, and the will and drive to promote diversity at a university which once primarily accepted white women. I am able to appreciate my culture, along with the many amongst me, because we are all here to attain a degree in higher education and, in my eyes, that is a beautiful thing. I have grown tremendously through my involvement with the Office of Multicultural Affairs. I have been able to follow extraordinary leaders and take on various positions throughout the campus in organizations such as University Ambassadors, IMPACT Advisory Board, Student Government Association, Sociology Club, and also Students of Action because of the continuous support of OMA*.

Jasmine M. Collins
UNCG Undergraduate

Sponsored by the Division of Student Affairs, the Campus Unity Council, and the Office of Multicultural Affairs, the standard Bridging Differences program is divided into two three-hour workshops: the Basic Foundations workshop, and the Beyond the Basics workshop. These interactive training experiences offer group activities, dramatic video presentations, and insightful commentary which will deepen one’s understanding of such critical topics as diversity, racism, prejudice, and stereotypes. Customized workshops within the Bridging Differences paradigm are available at the specific request of university organizations or departments.
In a study accompanying their article, Taylor and Miller (2002) found that the presence of **Leadership Opportunities** had the greatest positive impact on minority students’ overall college experience. The authors suggest that student affairs practitioners should place priority on the growth of these type of opportunities within their minority retention programs. At UNCG, a measure of success in this area is indicated by the fact that, of the past 13 Presidents of the Student Government Association, 9 have been members of minority groups.

Taylor and Miller also suggest that universities and colleges provide: **a)** peer mentoring opportunities for minority students, **b)** leadership opportunities that require students to apply information learned in the classroom to other campus activities, **c)** incorporate retention programs that provide students with the opportunity to work and dialog with the faculty, and **d)** encourage student leaders in minority organizations to participate in academic activities and organizations associated with their academic major in addition to campus-wide activities (Taylor & Miller, 2002).

It is clear that UNCG has addressed many of these recommendations either in whole, or part. It is also clear that we must extend our efforts even more to provide the type of campus environment which will maximize the benefits of diversity while minimizing cross-cultural misunderstandings. In future issues, we will take **A Closer Look**... at the impact of our student support efforts on the lives and accomplishments of our diverse student population.

### Notes

1 Under the ACT system, “**highly selective**” translates to an admissions policy which results in the majority of accepted students being in the top 10% of their high school graduating classes; “**selective**” admissions results in the majority of accepted applicants comprising the top 25% of their high school classes, while “**traditional**” admissions policy, such as that used by UNCG, places the majority of accepted applicants in the top 50% of their high school graduating classes.

### References


