Students Talking to Students:
A forum on diversity and retention

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A report on the findings of Ohio University Student Senate

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With Special Thanks for the Editing Recommendations from the Office of the Ombuds

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I.   Objective:

The creation and implementation of the forum was due to several factors: (1) an annual decline in retention for the last five years; (2) relatively and significantly lower retention rates for diverse groups, such as multicultural students; (3) the interest in retention and diversity found in the First Year Experience committees, Vision Ohio, and the Enrollment Management Committee; (4) the need for a broadened and more complex discussion of diversity at Ohio University; and (5) the responsibility shared by student, faculty and administrator alike to honor our commitment to fostering a sense of belongingness. By bringing together students from all across campus, representing a variety of student organizations and niches, and by thus instituting a momentous gathering of minds and student perspectives, it was our intent to identify how we might improve the quality and inclusiveness of the OU experience. By including a wider range of groups of students in a discussion on retention, such as the LGBT community, out of state students and high achieving students, we set out to facilitate an unprecedented and comprehensive discussion.

One of our concerns, for instance, was the fact that though multicultural enrollment has increased significantly, multicultural retention has not, thus maintaining and even exacerbating a significant disparity between enrollment and retention. By accepting students, we are making a commitment to those students. We all must do more to honor that commitment… to all of our students.

Though the forum was opened by Dr. Kent Smith, Vice President of Student Affairs, it was entirely a student affair so as to allow for full disclosure and complete anonymity. Moderators took notes during the subgroup discussions, from which we have gleaned themes, priorities and recommendations to be shared with the administration. In this way, we strove to give the students a coherent voice in policy decisions concerning the improvement of retention and diversity.   Since this is, however, a reciprocal relationship involving mutual responsibility, Student Senate has also examined how students might contribute to these efforts on our end.

The hope is that, from this discussion, we will be able to identify needs of various population sub-groups, whether they are based in race or ethnicity or gender or sexual orientation or region or academic performance or any number of other groups, while also cultivating a larger, more comprehensive community and outlook defined by our common participation in the culture of Ohio University.

II. Forum Structure

The forum opened with an introduction from Patrick Heery, Ohio University Student Senate Academic Affairs Commissioner, and then proceeded into an introduction from Vice President Kent Smith. Patrick Heery then presented and explained the current retention and diversity situation at Ohio University. A report was distributed to all student participants, a report which was compiled from information presented in Institutional Research documents. The discussion focused on statistics, results of student surveys, and current initiatives underway within the University and Student Senate to improve the situation.

The remainder of the forum consisted of two sections. First, students broke into a series of subgroups based on demographics. Those subgroups were as follows: international (1 group), African American (2 groups), Hispanic/Latino (1 group), women (1 group), high achieving (3 groups), out of state (1 group), transfer (1 group), LGBT (1 group), and Appalachian (1 group). Following these subgroups, students broke into a series of subgroups based on diverse mixtures where members from each of the previous demographic subgroups were mixed. So in one subgroup, for instance, there may have been a representative of the African American, female, high achieving, transfer, Latino and LGBT communities.

The intent behind the two types of subgroups was to provide two different analyses: the first, examining the unique perspective and experience of a specific subgroup of students, and the second, examining the perspective of students when placed in a context of different experiences and ideas.

The first subgroups were asked the following questions, in addition to a statistical questionnaire which can be located in Appendix A.

> Why do you think _____ (e.g. African American) students might leave Ohio University, either transferring to another university or leaving college altogether?

> What else could you have done to improve your experience here?

> What sorts of services do you think are the most beneficial for giving you a positive academic and social experience (e.g. student organizations; academic services such as a tutoring, the writing center and career services; UC 115 and other orientation efforts; cultural/artistic/intellectual events; academic advising)?

> What could the University have done to improve your experience here? Prioritize your recommendation for changes: If you could identify one to three changes as the most important and the most likely to have an impact on retention and the OU experience, what would those changes be?

The second subgroups were asked the following questions:

What is diversity?

Some people say that diverse sections of the OU population (African American, Hispanic, Asian, international, etc.) tend to be somewhat isolated from other diverse sections and from the campus as a whole. Is this true? If so, is this true diversity? Does it affect retention? What are the positive and negative results of having groups stick to themselves? How can we get sections to diversify and collaborate more?

What can we as students do to improve the academic and personal experience at OU? What can we do to improve diversity?

What can the administration do? Now, as a diverse group of students, create some overarching priorities for improvement and change, priorities which might affect several groups at once and comprehensively improve the University.

These questions were submitted to eighty students by a collection of thirteen moderators. The entire forum exceeded three hours in length.

III. Participants

Subgroup Moderators:

1. International: Alex Nickley
2. African American: Michael Adeyanju
3. African American: Chauncey Jackson and Brandon Floyd
4. Women: Lee Robbins
5. High Achieving: Patrick Heery
6. High Achieving: Gretchen Cataline
7. High Achieving: Paul Crites
8. Out of State: Jayme Feldman
9. LGBT: Will Wemer
10. Hispanic/Latino: Tristan Walker
11. Appalachian: Tim Vonville
12. Transfer: Chris Diehl

Student Participants Drawn from:

1. Chinese Student Association
2. The Community
3. OURS
4. NAACP
5. Unify
6. Young, Black and Talented
7. Student African American Brotherhood
8. Student Leadership Advisors
9. Delta Sigma Theta
10. Women's Panhellenic Association
11. Order of Omega
12. Student Athlete Advisory Committee
13. Mortar Board
14. Kappa Delta Pi
15. Honors College Advisory Council
16. Sigma Alpha Lambda
17. the Residence Action Council (tRAC)
18. Open Doors
19. Latino Student Union

Many participants did not identify themselves with a student organization.

Overall, approximately 80 students participated in the forum, excluding the subgroup moderators.

IV. Executive Summary

Diversity is more than statistics. Statistics are a serious component of diversity, but without a mentality and philosophy of diversity, it has all been in vain. We must cultivate a mind that values and respects differences, that even revels in those differences, that grows and becomes stronger as a result of those differences. We must remember that *all* students have a role in diversity. That is a role we seek to elevate today with this forum and report.

Let us put Ohio University at the forefront of critical thinking on diversity.   There are many avenues for pursuing diversity: the residence life experience, the faculty-student relationship, student organizations, funding procedures, and inclusive policies (just to name a few).

Student Senate and other organizations like Unify will be seeking to forge new organizations and new collaborative endeavors. The administration must likewise seek to improve the residence life experience, the advising relationship, its fiscal management, and its policies, so as to have them more fully reflect the diverse mindset. Many projects are already underway and many units have been working very hard to improve the student experience, but we still have far to go. In order to accomplish these tasks and in order to move Ohio University into a coherent and visionary direction, we will have to identify certain leaders. Student Senate is willing to be one of these leaders. We are also looking to the Office of Diversity whose role in the University may need to be expanded and re-evaluated. We are looking to student groups such as Unify and institutional units such as the Office of Residence Life. But whoever is identified as a leader in this movement must give further thought to their own goals and vision for their department or unit. The University likewise will have to examine its relationship with those units.

This was a forum on retention as much as it was on diversity. The two are in fact intricately linked, for without diversity, retention is limited. Diversity enriches the academic and cultural life of Ohio University. Without that enrichment, students are less likely to be content with their time here and are thus less likely to be retained.

Retention, though, is just the measurement. When we speak about improving retention, what we are really discussing is the improvement of the academic and social life of Ohio University. It certainly is not the case that students lead completely deficient or otherwise inadequate lives at Ohio University. Almost 90% of the student participants felt that Ohio University was their "home away from home." Indeed, the reason these students came together to discuss improvement was because they do love Ohio University so much. They convened generally not in disillusionment but in a desire to see their university grow. And yet the majority had known students who had left, students who had gotten caught up in a change which we have begun to witness not only here but throughout all of academia, a change which we must reverse. It has brought us to a place where many students feel unnecessarily isolated, anonymous, unheard. They feel like numbers lost in one massive calculation, one intricate machine. We can change that. Many students came to Ohio University, after all, explicitly because they felt this was a place that would treat them as an

individual, giving them a small college experience with all the resources and diversity of a large college.

This is a change for which we are all responsible, students included. One of the greatest complaints the participants had was in fact with fellow students. Students come here to be educated. We cannot expect all students to come here prepared to appreciate the nuances of diversity. We cannot expect all students to be able to find a niche on their own. Each student needs to feel valued by other students and by the University, while also learning to value his or her fellow students. This will occur, not automatically or spontaneously, but through a concerted and systematic effort on the part of the entire University community.

In order to accomplish such a change, we are recommending the following initiatives. Please keep in mind that additional recommendations and discussion topics can be found throughout this report. Each demographic's recommendations can be located in the following section, Section V. These are simply our priority recommendations. In order for these to be successful, the senior administration must provide financial and institutional support. Some of these recommendations will cost very little money or no money at all, while others may require a relatively significant amount of funding. Under Section VII, you will find further elaboration of these recommendations along with an identification of units which might be responsible for these changes. There are obviously some things which we cannot change. For instance, many students report dissatisfaction with the rural setting of Ohio University. Some might even, as a result, perceive the effort too daunting due to its magnitude and complexity. But we must strive to resist such thinking. Though we may not be able, for instance, to relocate Ohio University, we might be able to bring to Athens and the University new elements of an urban life, or to reveal the unique qualities of the surrounding community which might appeal to students but have gone unnoticed. It is in this spirit that we make the following recommendations:

TOP 11 PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS
(Note: these are listed in no particular order)

1. Improve academic advising and create academically-oriented peer mentoring.

2. Provide special funding to research, art, programs and events that emphasize diversity.

3. Provide more emphasis on study abroad with increased scholarships and promotion.

4. Create a second honors track and more honors residence halls to go along with it.

5. Create and implement a compatibility survey for roommates in the residence halls (for first year students).

6.   Create a Diversity Week and amplify the role of the student organization Unify.

7.   Further incorporate diversity into the academic mission of Ohio University by providing a diversity class or workshop (for the latter, consider utilizing the residence halls), a Queer Studies major, minor or certificate, and a UC class for all international students.

8.   Include groups (currently overlooked) in diversity initiatives by adding the LGBT community to the OU Office of Diversity, requiring SafeZone training for RAs, and making a recommendation to the SAC Commissioner that the Latino Student Union be added to the SAC General Assembly.

9.   Create relevant student organizations and initiatives: out of state student organization, Out of State Student Learning Community, Gender and Sexuality Learning Community, a links program that incorporates social, regional and economic differences, and a systematic welcoming process for international, transfer, and out of state students.

10.   Increase scholarships for upperclassmen.

11.   Create a safe, affordable (preferably free) and timely system of shuttle transportation to and from the Columbus airport.

V.   First Subgroup Responses and Conclusions

INTERNATIONAL:

Summary of Responses:

We must begin by noting a few limiting factors: a small turn-out of international students and the fact that all international participants were Asian in nationality. This may have limited the diversity of responses, but it did not prevent the students from engaging in a meaningful and insightful discussion. These students had become very pleased with their experience at Ohio University. For some, their initial time here was shaky, particularly since OU and the surrounding region of Athens were not always what they had expected. But with time, their satisfaction levels increased. They particularly appreciated the programs developed for international students, such as OPIE and the International Student Union. And yet, they still saw great room for improvement. On one point in particular they were emphatic: *Ohio University is weak in its initial welcome to international students*. All of the participants stated that the transition was harsh and shocking. This initial shock is probably one of the principal reasons for the clustering of international students; they seek each other out in order to ease the sense of confusion and isolation. But without being able to mix with the native students, they are not able to share their wealth of experiences with native students or vice versa, nor are they able to feel a sense of identity with the university population as a whole. The shock is also due to the rural location of Ohio University. Many international students expect New York City and are disappointed not only when they find that Athens is not New York, but also when they discover the lack of cultural connections within the area. For instance, some of the participants indicated that they would like to see more of their native foods available. All people need a connection to home, and amenities such as food are critical to that process.

Recommendations:

(1)   Create a strong program that allows new International students to congregate with native students, so that they may discuss and learn from each other, creating a more cohesive experience. ISU is the start of such a program, but it is lacking in a sufficient number of native students.   Incorporate Student Senate and other key domestic student groups into the International Student Union Fall Picnic.

(2)   Examine the possibility of creating more connections to home for international students, such as by bringing more international food or markets to OU or Athens, or by allowing students to bring their own cultural food into Baker Center for cultural events.

(3)   Create a safe, free and timely system of shuttle transportation to and from the Columbus airport.

(4)   Create a UC class required for undergraduate and graduate international students (the graduate class lasting for only five weeks due to time constraints).

(5)   Further refine the Precollege experience of international students.

(6)   Require undergraduate international students to live on-campus for the first two years of their education at Ohio University, just as the University requires domestic students to live on campus for their first two years.

<u>AFRICAN AMERICAN</u>:

Summary of Responses:

The students in this subgroup indicated a low level of satisfaction with their academic advising, in which their faculty advisors made them feel more like a burden than a student. In many ways, the faculty member is forced into this mentality, as an increasingly high number of advisees are piled onto his or her plate due to rising enrollment and decreasing faculty numbers. The current enrollment and profile of students was indeed another concern. First of all, it is clear that greater diversity is needed on campus to make people feel at home here. The experience, for instance, of being the only minority student in a classroom or a program can be quite daunting and unnerving. It is also clear that the current students of Ohio University want tougher admission standards for all students. Merit must be a central concern. Participants indicated that the rising cost of higher education at Ohio University is increasingly a serious source of burden to students, causing many to leave or consider leaving. The students also commented on the lack of communication throughout the university, which has led to ignorance about all the resources and opportunities that are available. For instance, students articulated that the Office of Diversity could benefit from better communicating scholarships and resources that are available, while also providing more thorough planning of meeting

Recommendations:

(1)   Reduce the number of academic advisees assigned to each faculty member or displace other workload demands, while instituting a device for evaluation of the advisor at the end of the quarter or year.

(2)   Introduce stiffer requirements for scholarships, including mandatory interviews and perhaps a mandatory essay.

(3)   Create a mechanism for consistent and thorough communication throughout the University, counteracting the perception that populations are self-segregated by bringing people closer. Advertise UC classes more consistently and thoroughly.

(4)   Create more contexts in which upper-class students speak to incoming and current freshmen students, including Precollege, peer mentoring, and a possible regular forum on improving GPA and academic standing.

(5)   Facilitate better organization and communication in the Office of Diversity, while providing improved feedback or evaluation systems for programs such as LINKS.

(6)   More advertising and recruiting of people of color for higher track programs such as HTC.

WOMEN:

Summary of Responses:

The students generally considered retention a problem that could be solved if women were made to feel a part of something early on. Many of the women felt that the party culture of OU inhibited their own sense of belongingness. Several had even at one point considered transferring due to feelings of isolation. Most of the problems they identified were not particular to women but were instead more systemic. They all emphasized the need for improvement and/or development of academic advising, the UC classes, pre-college orientation, and organizations or councils which could facilitate communication and collaboration. The participants also emphasized the importance of the residence life experience: it is, after all, one's most immediate and pressing influence. If it is not conducive to academic and productive social pursuits, students are likely to feel isolated and/or perform poorly. There is a lot happening with regards to women: the new women's center, the Year of the Woman, female speakers being invited to OU, the creation of a class on women in leadership which will be taught by the Provost, and so on. But that emphasis must continue and even grow.

Recommendations:

(1)   Improve academic advising and create a system of peer mentoring: advisors and peer mentors should be familiar with student organizations and other resources available.
(2)   Evaluate the compatibility of residence hall roommates, perhaps through a survey, before a freshman is assigned a roommate.
(3)   Provide more opportunities for women to be leaders on campus, whether in student organizations or class or another function; provide more examples of women in leadership roles.

HIGH ACHIEVING:

Summary of Responses:

High achieving students often do not feel valued at Ohio University. Many feel that their professors are more interested in doing research than teaching them. When attention is given to students in the classroom or elsewhere, the high achieving students tend to be overlooked on the premise that they do not need additional support. However, this makes the students feel unvalued, while ignoring the fact that even these students require encouragement. Many of the participants wanted to see an honors program added to every school and department on campus, an honors track that would challenge students more than the current non-honors program but not to the point of the Honors Tutorial College. Dean Fidler of HTC developed a proposal along these very lines; the Undergraduate Priorities Implementation Team of Vision Ohio recommended its initiation, but we have not seen any action at the moment. The minimal amount of merit scholarships was also said to contribute to making these students feel unvalued. There was a resounding call for more scholarships. The party culture was also a concern. Many indicated that it made them feel like outcasts.

Recommendations:

(1)   Create a second honors program/track which would fall somewhere in between the current non-honors status and the Honors Tutorial College.
(2)   Offer more merit scholarships.
(3)   Create a residence life more conducive to high achieving students, perhaps by providing more honors or scholars residence halls.

OUT OF STATE:

Summary of Responses:

The prevalent topic of discussion for these students was the lack of out-of-state student camaraderie, the very networking which could partially alleviate the transportation problems faced by these students and the need for socialization with students facing the same sorts of challenges they are. Out of state students simply need to know other out of state students. They need to know they are not alone. Transportation, particularly to and from the Columbus airport, was one of the most serious concerns expressed by these students. No effective system of such transportation currently exists. This problem cannot be overemphasized.

Recommendations:

(1)   Create an out of state student Learning Community along with peer mentoring for out of state freshmen by out of state upperclassmen.
(2)   Create an out of state student organization.
(3)   Provide more serious recruiting efforts on the part of the administration to enroll out of state students.
(4)   Create a safe, free and timely system of shuttle transportation to and from the Columbus airport.

LGBT:

Summary of Responses:

While these students recognized that the administration explicitly groups LGBT people into the definition of diversity, they felt that there is a lack of effort to actually include them. The rural setting of Athens has also led to some frustration. Students talked about the nature of Court Street after 2 a.m., where many of the students said that homophobic slurs have been yelled at them. The students also voiced concern about the informational packet given at this very forum, wondering why so little of the statistical information concerned LGBT students but instead focused primarily on race. This is a valid concern and since the packet was a synthesis of what was to be found in Institutional Research, perhaps there is a need for more inclusive and comprehensive research on the part of the University, research which takes into account gender identity and sexual orientation. The students felt that the LGBT community was still regarded in many ways by the administration as somehow "taboo" or unnerving. This has created a feeling of not being valued by Ohio University. Though the students felt that Residence Life has

been sincerely trying to improve its inclusive environment, they felt that there was still room for improvement.

Recommendations:

(1)   Devise a more proactive plan to include LGBT students in the diversity discussion, particularly through the implementation of the recommendations in Sen. Res. 0607-10 (please contact LGBT Commissioner Will Wemer).

(2)   Institute residence life reforms, such as through the creation of a gender and sexuality Learning Community or Residential Learning Community, and through the establishment of SafeZone training as mandatory for all RAs.

(3)   Mandate SafeZone training for administrators and faculty.

(4)   Establish a Queer Studies major, minor or certificate.

HISPANIC/LATINO:

Summary of Responses:

The members of the Latino subgroup did not feel like they were considered valued members of the OU community and/or the University diversity initiatives. They felt that they were consistently lumped into the anonymous category "minority," without much attention to their own unique cultures, personalities, and identities. They were deeply troubled by the minimal funding allocated to the Latino Student Union (LSU) and other Latino programming. They were also troubled by the fact that LSU is not represented on the SAC General Assembly which determines student programming allocations.

Recommendations:

(1)   Examine why the Latino Student Union was denied a place on the Student Activities Commission (SAC) General Assembly. Unless an explanation adequate to all involved parties is presented, LSU should be added by Student Senate.

(2)   Allocate more programming funds for Latino events and ensure more coordination between LSU and other student organizations.

(3)   Involve Latino and Hispanic students more thoroughly in the Office of Diversity.

APPALACHIAN:

Summary of Responses:

We should begin by noting that there was some concern in this group with the label of "Appalachian" along with some uncertainty about their role in diversity. The group felt that students did not necessarily understand the Appalachian students or the nature of the scholarships they were receiving, but they did feel that the administration was making efforts to support Appalachian students. Though the rural region may be a negative factor for many

students, this group indicated that it was in fact a positive for Appalachian students as it aligns more closely with their own backgrounds and eases the transition to a large university. This is not an easy transition. Indeed, one of their largest concerns was the possible disparity between their own level of preparedness for college and the level of students who come from wealthier and more cosmopolitan areas.

Recommendations:

(1)   Provide a "links" program or organization where people can come together to search out similar peers, concentrating not just on race or ethnicity but also on economic and social background.

(2)   Increase the number of scholarships available to Appalachian students.

TRANSFER:

Summary of Responses:

The participants described the process of transitioning to Ohio University as particularly challenging. Many came here without any sense of what to expect and were immediately overwhelmed by the significant increase in academic workload relative to their previous community college. They were also, in many ways, unprepared for the increase in freedom and independence. All of the transfer students wished they had gotten involved on campus through student organizations and alternative avenues. They felt this would have radically altered their initial experiences at OU. The two services or resources they ranked as most important were indeed student organizations and academic advising, both of which could have provided relationships (first, with students, and second, with faculty) integral to their transition. They also indicated that there was need for a better orientation, perhaps a separate one for those transferring from community college, providing a clearer explanation of DARS and general education. Though no one mentioned the transfer student learning community, this might be contribute to an optimal solution.

Recommendations:

(1)   Have academic advisors who are specifically able to advise transfer students with an understanding of the radical shift from community college to OU, and who are able to make the scheduling process for transfer students smoother.

(2)   Design a pre-college orientation session specifically geared towards transfer students. It is here that one might try to inform them of the various student organizations that are available and encourage them to get involved.

VI. Second Subgroup Responses and Conclusions

Summary of Responses:

Our first topic of discussion was diversity itself. This is a word riddled with ambiguity and even sometimes significant tension. There are in fact many different definitions out there, and until we approach the concept of diversity through this multi-sided lens, all diversity endeavors will be held back. Students came together and discussed the complex, and sometimes controversial, notion of diversity, providing many varied definitions themselves. One major conclusion does emerge, however, from their discussions: diversity is more than statistics, more than numbers, more than what can be touched or seen. That is indeed a crucial part of diversity, for exposure to differences cannot occur without it, but it is only a part. Diversity is, more importantly, a mentality, a way of viewing the world and one's place in that world. It is a mentality of respect and acceptance. The diverse mind embraces people who are different from itself, even takes joy in those differences. Diversity includes all differences with diversity of thought being the "most important kind of diversity" (if I may quote one of the student participants). If we move along this line of thought, all individuals are a part of diversity, for each of us possesses an identity radically our own, unique and essential. This broadening of the definition of diversity should not in any way limit the traditional concepts of diversity, for they are as valid as they ever were, if not more so. On the contrary, it expands even those traditional definitions, rejuvenating them with new life – which was indeed part of the intention of this forum. One student said, "I see the diverse student body but I don't get a chance to interact with them" and then concluded from this that "diversity isn't just having different people," it's bringing them together; it's the sharing of ideas and perspectives and experiences.

After this discussion, student participants were asked to respond to the following statement: "Some people say that diverse sections of the OU population (African American, Hispanic, Asian, international, etc.) tend to be somewhat isolated from other diverse sections and from the campus as a whole." First, they were asked to comment on the validity of this statement. Almost all students agreed that this isolation was indeed the case at Ohio University, though it should be noted that agreement with the statement varied in degree from person to person. Students found both positive and negative factors in this state of affairs but did see it as having an impact upon retention and the quality of experience at Ohio University. This is positive in that it provides the individual with a community of similar people, thus endowing that person with a sense of acceptance and belongingness, while also giving the individual a stable and strong support network. This is negative in that is hinders actual diversity, meaning the intermingling of different types of people. Many of the participants did indeed identify this as a serious problem faced by the University and the students as a whole. One student said that she "felt backed into a corner, classified as a stereotype," and went on to say "I felt stuck."

The participants also noted that it is a natural tendency for people to segregate themselves. It is a comfort-level issue: people will seek out those with whom they feel most comfortable, and those people are often the ones who are most similar to them. That in itself, as already stated, is not a bad thing. It is necessary and it can have very positive results, but it must not prevent subsequent mixing of peoples.

The first step must be to find a group of students like yourself – without that comfort zone, you will feel isolated and are likely to leave; the second step is to branch out. We must bond across similarities and then bridge our differences. Both steps are integral. They may not

need to be incremental or even in that specific order for some students, but it seems that most students should follow a similar pattern.

When asked how the University or we as students could get population sections to diversify and collaborate more, the general consensus was to create or expand a networking, partnership system between student organizations. One suggestion was to expand the Council of Student Leaders, while another was to create a diversity organization hub. Such a hub actually already exists. It's a student organization called Unify and its intent is to bring together students from all across campus and from all the different student organizations, particularly those committed to diversity itself. Perhaps, the University should provide some funds or direction to allow Unify to grow. Students also recommended an increase in learning communities and greater reliance on Precollege and the academic advisors as vehicles for communicating to students all the numerous opportunities and organizations that are available to them. A final suggestion pertained to residence life. The residence hall is the student's primary experience, so perhaps the University should use residence halls as a space for diversity and discussion of diversity.

They were then asked what they as students could do to improve the academic and personal experience at OU, with a special focus on diversity. They decided that they could become peer mentors to freshmen, get involved with the Multicultural Visitation Program, visit student organizations with different types of students while encouraging further collaboration, participate in more forums like this one, and engage in community service.

Finally, they were asked what they thought the administration could do to improve the OU experience. Funding was of course a big topic of discussion: more money to multicultural student events, performances, arts, exhibitions, or other endeavors that represent diversity or embody the mentality of diversity; more upperclassmen scholarships for all people; special funding to programs and events that emphasize diversity by involving several distinct groups of students in the creation and implementation process. Several groups reiterated the need for a compatibility survey that would match first year roommates based on certain characteristics. Communication was another big topic. Many of the students confessed ignorance about resources offered by the University. Focus needs to be turned to learning communities, academic advising, peer mentoring, and other vehicles for productive and mature relationships. Focus should also be applied to study abroad: increasing participation and promotion. Some suggested that we bring students together by creating an annual Diversity Week, in which participation from all organizations would be requested. Another way in which this synthesis might occur could be through a class or workshop where students discuss diversity. People need to be comfortable talking about diversity. They could examine demographics, cultural implications, possible solutions, controversies, and so on. More specifically, the Administration needs to be more comfortable with the LGBT student population and LGBT issues, for there is a common feeling that the administration is not comfortable. The LGBT Center needs to be an equal component of the OU diversity office.

VII. Final Recommendations and Summary

(Note: these are listed in no particular order)

1. Improve academic advising and create academically-oriented peer mentoring.

2. Provide special funding to research, art, programs and events that emphasize diversity.

3. Provide more emphasis on study abroad with increased scholarships and promotion.

4. Create a second honors track and more honors residence halls to go along with it.

5. Create and implement a compatibility survey for roommates in the residence halls (for first year students).

6. Create a Diversity Week and amplify the role of the student organization Unify.

7. Further incorporate diversity into the academic mission of Ohio University by providing a diversity class or workshop (for the latter, consider utilizing the residence halls), a Queer Studies major, minor or certificate, and a UC class for all international students.

8. Include groups (currently overlooked) in diversity initiatives by adding the LGBT community to the OU Office of Diversity, requiring SafeZone training for RAs, and making a recommendation to the SAC Commissioner that the Latino Student Union be added to the SAC General Assembly.

9. Create relevant student organizations and initiatives: out of state student organization, Out of State Student Learning Community, Gender and Sexuality Learning Community, a links program that incorporates social, regional and economic differences, and a systematic welcoming process for international, transfer, and out of state students.

10. Increase scholarships for upperclassmen.

11. Create a safe, affordable (preferably free) and timely system of shuttle transportation to and from the Columbus airport.

<u>Explanation of Priority Recommendations</u>

NOTE: All funding support will ultimately have to come from the President, the Provost, the Vice President for Finance and Administration, and the Budget Planning Council. These units are the bodies ultimately responsible for ensuring action on these recommendations. Under each recommendation, we provide units which might be responsible for action and oversight, on the assumption that they have already been provided funds from the aforementioned bodies. These recommended units are just possibilities. There may be other units which ought to be considered in addition or in place of the ones we are recommending. Student Senate is willing to assist with any of these initiatives.

#1: Academic Advising and Peer Mentoring

Students were adamant about the connection of academic advising and peer mentoring to retention and the quality of experience at Ohio University. Relationships, particularly those which are both social and professional in nature, can serve as one of the most significant factors in determining a person's sense of belonging. They are also essential to the facilitation of accurate and thorough communication. Thus, we ask for a mechanism for evaluating the performance of academic advisors, accountability mechanisms such as awards, greater inclusion in the promotion and tenure dossiers and merit pay, and required training for all new faculty. Certain faculty should be specialized in advising minority students. Peer mentoring will connect upperclassmen with freshmen. Their peer mentors should be from their discipline. Mentors should be held accountable through an evaluation device. If possible, peer mentors should be compensated in order to allow for stricter accountability and more thorough training. The proposal to improve advising can be found in the Vision Ohio Undergraduate Priorities final report as recommendation 2.19.

Units Responsible: The provision of an institutional commitment will have to come from the President and the Provost. Action itself is to be taken by the University Academic Advising Council, the deans and assistant deans of each academic college, and the chairs of each department or school.

#2: Special funding for diversity student initiatives

These events, programs, research and art endeavors could embody diversity in one of two ways: either they could involve distinct student groups in the process of creating and implementing the project (thus incorporating diversity into the process itself), or they could represent the philosophy of diversity by bringing in concepts or the representation of diverse groups in the actual product. Any student project that facilitates a productive discussion of diversity might be deemed eligible. If diversity is indeed a mentality, then Ohio University should encourage the cultivation of that mentality through academic and extra-curricular pursuits. This has the advantage of encouraging and funding advances in both academia and diversity. We recommend that a special fund be created to finance these initiatives; it could even be tied into existing funds such as the Provost's Undergraduate Research Fund. The Office of Diversity might be charged with oversight of the fund.

Units Responsible: Oversight should probably fall to the President's Office of Diversity.

#3: Study Abroad

Many students noted that study abroad is the perfect opportunity to cultivate a diverse mindset in a student, since it exposes students to different cultures, languages, and political and social situations. It also fosters a sense of autonomy in the student, not to mention a certain boldness. The student is now prepared to step outside of his or her comfort zone, to break down the walls of his or her box. Differences no longer seem so insurmountable. Studying abroad tends to be one of the most positive experiences of students. If Ohio University can increase that opportunity by the addition of funds and promotion, we will be directly impacting the quality of the OU experience.

Units Responsible: Oversight should fall to the Office of Education Abroad.

#4: Second honors track

Many students desire the intellectual rigor and prestige of an honors program without taking on the challenge of the Honors Tutorial College. There are also programs which are not represented within HTC, which has very selective admissions. There are students who may simply decide that HTC is not for them. This does not devalue HTC in any way but it does identify a group of students who fall in between HTC and the rest of the university, students who may leave based on their desire for a more academically challenging and stimulating program. If Ohio University is committed to the retention of high achieving students, this proposal is a must. This proposal can be found in the Vision Ohio Undergraduate Priorities final report as recommendation 2.21. Ohio University may also want to consider expanding the opportunities for honors housing, given how imperative it is for a student to have a living environment that is conducive to academic pursuits. If it is not possible to create or devote more halls to a scholastic emphasis, we may want to consider alternative ways in which we might provide students with a context better suited to their academic needs.

Units Responsible: Oversight of the honors track should fall to the Honors Tutorial College and its Dean, Dr. Fidler. Oversight of making the residence life experience more conducive to academic pursuits should fall to Residence Life.

#5: Roommate Compatibility Surveys for Incoming Freshmen

The residence life experience is perhaps the most influential and immediate factor in students' lives at OU. It affects their ability to study, to make friends, to determine the nature of their social life, to join student organizations, to become involved with the university through hall councils, to meet an upperclassman (i.e. their RA), and to become familiar with the policies and goals of Ohio University. If paired with an incompatible roommate, serious difficulties can arise. Many of these students have never shared a bedroom with another person. If unhappy at home (their residence hall), they are unlikely to perform well academically. No system will be perfect, but an effort at increasing the compatibility of roommates might ease the transition to

Ohio University. This is important particularly for those students who find themselves marked out as "different" whether it is because they work harder academically or are of a different race or identify as a member of the LGBT community. Though it is not necessary to pair people who are alike in characteristics, it is important to pair people who can respect each other's differences. This could be a fairly inexpensive mechanism for radically improving the residence life experience. The only current mechanism of which we are aware is the effort to pair students based on their smoking practices. We encourage Housing to work with Student Senate in a development of a more comprehensive analysis, which might benefit from an examination of compatibility surveys in use at other universities.

Units Responsible: Oversight should fall to the Department of Residence Life and the Housing Office.

#6: Diversity Week and Unify

Communication and awareness were highlighted as some of the greatest challenges faced in the effort to improve diversity and retention. Many of the opportunities exist; students simply do not know about them. Inherent in the need for communication is also the need for collaboration. If diversity is about sharing perspectives and working together, then how better to address that than by providing collaborative initiatives like a Diversity Week or a diversity organization hub like Unify? All organizations would be invited to participate in the planning and implementation of Diversity Week. The process itself of creating the week each year would be an exercise in diversity. Organization of the event might fall collaboratively to the Office of Diversity and Unify. Unify has been trying to bring various student organizations together, while also facilitating discussions about diversity and identity. If the University made a point of informing students about Unify, the organization might be able to grow and accomplish even greater things.

Units Responsible: Organization of the Diversity Week should fall collaboratively to the Office of Diversity and Unify. Increased communication about Unify and its endeavors should be the responsibility of the Office of Diversity, Residence Life, Student Senate, and Unify itself.

#7: Diversity in the Academic Mission

As we have already stated, there is a great need for discussion and critical thinking about the concept of diversity, and for the exploration of our differences (while underscoring our similarities). This discussion could take place in a workshop or classroom setting, perhaps geared specifically to freshmen. If a class, it would not need to focus entirely on diversity. Other issues such as academic honesty and the philosophy of a liberal arts education might be included as well, as long as diversity became one of the core elements. It would need to be a small, seminar-like class. Another option would be to offer workshops, perhaps in the residence halls, for the same sort of discussion. RAs could make it a floor event. A Queer Studies major, minor or certificate would go a long way to make the LGBT community feel a part of the academic mission of Ohio University. A UC class designed for international students could alleviate some of the transition problems faced by international students. The current cultural perspectives Tier II item under General Education does allow for discussion of diversity, but such classes do not generally address the concept of diversity itself, discussing its intricacies and

even its controversial elements. Nor do they address the current need for certain students such as LGBT and international students to feel included.

Units Responsible: The formation of the class might fall to University College, whereas the formation of the workshop might be a joint effort between Residence Life and the Office of Diversity. The creation of any new UC classes would of course fall to University College as well. The Queer Studies major, minor or certificate would probably fall under the College of Arts and Sciences.

#8: Inclusion in Diversity

Too many groups feel like they are excluded from the University's diversity initiatives. Without slighting the ones currently recognized, an effort needs to be made to include, in both policy and practice, these students. Some possible approaches include bringing more international food to Athens, allowing international students to cook their own cultural foods while using Baker facilities, adding the LGBT community to the OU Office of Diversity as an equal component, requiring SafeZone training for RAs, and adding the Latino Student Union to the SAC General Assembly.

Units Responsible: Inclusion of the LGBT Office in the Office of Diversity will have to be a decision on the part of the President. Allowing international students to bring their own native food into Baker for cultural events, or to use Baker to cook their food, will have to fall to the administration of Baker Center. Mandating SafeZone training for RAs would fall to Residence Life. Adding LSU to SAC would fall to Student Senate and SAC.

#9: Student Organizations and Initiatives

Some groups of students arrive at OU without connections to other students and/or with a sense of isolation. More networking efforts need to be made to connect these students with other students. This could be accomplished partly through the creation of an out of state student organization, Out of State Student Learning Community, Gender and Sexuality Learning Community, a links program that incorporates social, regional and economic differences, and a systematic welcoming process for international, transfer, and out of state students. The latter might involve a separate orientation for transfer students and the immediate pairing of international students with native students. The International Student Union might serve as an expandable tool in this process. The one most consistent item which student participants identified as their most important endeavor outside of academics was involvement in student organizations. The single most prevalent recommendation they would give to incoming students was to get involved on campus.

Units Responsible: The creation of new learning communities would fall to Director Wendy Merb-Brown. The creation of new student organizations will fall to students under the leadership of Student Senate. The creation of an economic and regional-based links program will be the responsibility of the President, the Associate Provost for Retention, and the Office of Diversity. The International Student Union will be helpful with improving the welcome received by international students.

#10: Increased Upperclassmen Scholarships

Paying for higher education is becoming more and more of an impossible burden for many students. There are also many students who, because of their high performance at Ohio University, are looking for a financial reward. Students must feel that they are valued by the University. The current message, due to the limited number of upperclassmen scholarships, is that our performance at OU does not matter as long as we maintain a few minimum requirements. This also ignores an opportunity to encourage students to give back to OU. Upperclassmen scholarships could require community service and the act of serving as a peer mentor, for example. We need to reward the hard-working students of OU while also encouraging them to get more involved with the community.

Units Responsible: This will ultimately have to be a decision on the part of the Budget Planning Council and will be administered by the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships.

#11: Transportation to and from Columbus Airport

International and out of state students, in particular, called for the creation of a safe, affordable and timely system of transportation to and from the Columbus airport. These students, being so far away from home, need to ensure that they preserve some connections with home. It is important for them to have as easy access to their home as possible. Ohio University could most certainly create a more thorough ride-board accessible to all University students. Ohio University might also want to consider creating a shuttle service. The current bus service and the Athens Airport Shuttle are considered insufficient.

Units Responsible: This would have to be a financial decision on the part of the University. Once approved, it would fall under Transportation along with the management of the CATS bus service and other modes of transportation.

Summary

Ohio University has made a commitment to diversity. No one questions that. But Ohio University has yet to define diversity with all of its complexity and ambiguity. It has yet to articulate a comprehensive plan for creating a diverse university, though the Vision Ohio Diversity Taskforce began that process, and though the Office of Diversity continues the process to this day. This should be viewed not so much as a failure on the part of the University but rather as an opportunity for new growth and as a promise of new possibility. This is a promise in which we are all a part. We share this commitment, as students, as administrators, as faculty, as staff. It is inherent in our mission as an institution of academia, for we have set out to challenge and open the mind, and that cannot happen until there is diversity at Ohio University. Diversity is more than statistics, however. Statistics are a serious component of diversity, but without a mentality and philosophy of diversity, it has all been in vain. We must cultivate a mind that values and respects differences, that even revels in those differences, that grows and becomes stronger as a result of those differences. We must remember that *all* students have a role in diversity. That is a role we seek to elevate today with this forum and report.

Let's put Ohio University at the forefront of critical thinking on diversity. There are many avenues for pursuing diversity: Residence Life, the faculty-student relationship, student organizations, funding procedures, and inclusive policies. The forum participants indicated that these areas were their greatest concerns. They concluded that participation in student organizations was one of the most valuable experiences for a student. Thus, Student Senate and other organizations like Unify will be seeking to forge new organizations and new collaborative endeavors. The administration must likewise seek to improve the residence life experience, the advising relationship, its fiscal management, and its policies, so as to have them more fully reflect the diverse mindset.

This was a forum on retention as much as it was on diversity. The two are in fact intricately linked, for without diversity, retention is limited. Diversity enriches the academic and cultural life of Ohio University. Without that enrichment, students are less likely to be content with their time here and are thus less likely to be retained. We were also concerned with the retention of diverse groups of students, some of whom find themselves in significantly small minorities on campus. Retention, though, is just the measurement. When we speak about improving retention, what we are really discussing is the improvement of the academic and social life of Ohio University. We are talking about cultivating a sense of identity and belonging in students so that Ohio University is truly their home. Too many students feel unnecessarily isolated, anonymous, unheard. They feel like numbers lost in one massive calculation, one intricate machine. We can change that. Many students came to OU explicitly because they felt this was a place that would treat them as an individual, giving them a small college experience with all the resources and diversity of a large college. The priorities and recommendations stated throughout this report will by no means perfect the experience, but they will, we believe, improve it. They will move us closer to the ideal we all hold for Ohio University.

We are keenly aware of the financial difficulties with which Ohio University is currently struggling, but we are also aware that new money has become available through the Budget Realignment and that this University has a vested interest in diversity and retention. If we improve retention, we improve the financial wellbeing of the University. These will not be funds spent in vain. Many of our recommendations align with recommendations from Vision Ohio and the First Year Experience committees. If they are entirely novel, they still maintain the spirit of those committees and their goals for the University. By this, we do not mean to say that financial concerns should drive this process, but we do realize that that must be an aspect and a concern.

Ultimately, what must drive this process is a commitment to the student and to the principles of higher education. Unless retention and diversity increase, it will be difficult to claim that have been successful in that commitment. Let's take a stand for the student. Let's take a stand for education.

VIII. Appendices

A. First Subgroup Statistical Responses

Some of this data is more representative than others, for the subgroups differed in size and thus those which were larger are more representative. The groups which were so small that their data may be compromised are starred in the first category.

Note: Fill the blank in with the demographic of interest for your group (e.g. African-American, out of state, high achieving, female)

Opinion 1: I chose Ohio University because I felt it was a positive place for
_____ students.

	Agree	Disagree	Neutral
*International:	100%	0	0
African American:	11%	24%	65%
Women:	22%	78%	0
High Achieving:	38%	8%	54%
Out of State:	43%	43%	14%
LGBT:	17%	33%	50%
Hispanic/Latino:	20%	80%	0
*Appalachian:	100%	0	0
*Transfer:	100%	0	0
Total:	32%	33%	35%

Opinion 2: The University has a commitment to the recruitment and retention of a diverse student body.

	Agree	Disagree	Neutral
International:	100%	0	0
African American:	94%	0	6%
Women:	67%	33%	0
High Achieving:	62%	0	38%
Out of State:	0	71%	29%
LGBT:	67%	33%	0
Hispanic/Latino:	40%	60%	0
Appalachian:	0	0	100%
Transfer:	100%	0	0
Total:	65%	21%	14%

Opinion 3: I feel that Athens is my "home away from home."

	Agree	Disagree	Neutral
International:	67%	33%	0

African American:	94%	6%	0
Women:	100%	0	0
High Achieving:	100%	0	0
Out of State:	29%	57%	14%
LGBT:	100%	0	0
Hispanic/Latino:	100%	0	0
Appalachian:	100%	0	0
Transfer:	100%	0	0
Total:	89%	10%	1%

Opinion 4: If I could go back in time, I wouldn't have chosen to come to Ohio University.

	Agree	Disagree	Neutral
International:	0	100%	0
African American:	12%	88%	0
Women:	11%	78%	11%
High Achieving:	8%	92%	0
Out of State:	29%	71%	0
LGBT:	17%	50%	33%
Hispanic/Latino:	80%	0	20%
Appalachian:	0	100%	0
Transfer:	0	100%	0
Total:	17%	76%	13%

Opinion 5: As a _____ student, I have felt some form of discrimination at Ohio University, either by an administrator, faculty member or student.

	Agree	Disagree	Neutral
International:	0	100%	0
African American:	53%	29%	18%
Women:	44%	12%	44%
High Achieving:	31%	69%	0
Out of State:	79%	21%	0
LGBT:	50%	33%	17%
Hispanic/Latino:	80%	20%	0
Appalachian:	0	100%	0
Transfer:	0	100%	0
Total:	46%	41%	13%

Opinion 6: Most of my friends at Ohio University would identify themselves as _____.

	Agree	Disagree	Neutral
International:	67%	33%	0
African American:	53%	6%	41%
Women:	67%	22%	11%

High Achieving:	31%	38%	31%
Out of State:	0	100%	0
LGBT:	33%	67%	0
Hispanic/Latino:	0	100%	0
Appalachian:	0	100%	0
Transfer:	0	100%	0
Total:	37%	44%	19%

Opinion 7: In general, the student body is sympathetic to the adversities/struggles
_____ students face.

	Agree	Disagree	Neutral
International:	0	33%	67%
African American:	0	94%	6%
Women:	56%	33%	11%
High Achieving:	0	46%	54%
Out of State:	14.5%	71%	14.5%
LGBT:	17%	33%	50%
Hispanic/Latino:	0	100%	0
Appalachian:	0	100%	0
Transfer:	100%	0	0
Total:	14%	62%	24%

Opinion 8: In general, faculty members are sympathetic to the adversities/struggles
_____ students face.

	Agree	Disagree	Neutral
International:	67%	0	33%
African American:	6%	18%	76%
Women:	N/A	N/A	N/A
High Achieving:	31%	38%	31%
Out of State:	14%	86%	0
LGBT:	50%	0	50%
Hispanic/Latino:	0	100%	0
Appalachian:	100%	0	0
Transfer:	100%	0	0
Total:	26%	35%	39%

Opinion 9: In general, the administration is sympathetic to the adversities/struggles
_____ students face.

	Agree	Disagree	Neutral
International:	0	0	100%
African American:	47%	0	53%
Women:	22%	56%	22%
High Achieving:	31%	38%	31%

Out of State:	14%	86%	0
LGBT:	0	83%	17%
Hispanic/Latino:	60%	0	40%
Appalachian:	100%	0	0
Transfer:	100%	0	0
Total:	33.3%	33.3%	33.3%

Opinion 10: I know at least one _____ student who left Ohio University before graduating.

	Agree	Disagree	Neutral
International:	100%	0	0
African American:	100%	0	0
Women:	100%	0	0
High Achieving:	23%	46%	31%
Out of State:	57%	43%	0
LGBT:	83%	17%	0
Hispanic/Latino:	0	100%	0
Appalachian:	100%	0	0
Transfer:	50%	50%	0
Total:	68%	25%	7%

Opinion 11: Insufficient financial services, such as scholarships and student loans, decrease the retention of _____ students (these can be funds specific to your group or funds in general).

	Agree	Disagree	Neutral
International:	67%	0	33%
African American:	59%	18%	23%
Women:	78%	0	22%
High Achieving:	85%	0	15%
Out of State:	71%	29%	0
LGBT:	N/A	N/A	N/A
Hispanic/Latino:	N/A	N/A	N/A
Appalachian:	100%	0	0
Transfer:	0	100%	0
Total:	69%	13%	18%

B. First Subgroup Qualitative Responses

Why do you think _____ (e.g. African American) students might leave Ohio University, either transferring to another university or leaving college altogether?

INTERNATIONAL: party school reputation; many students use OU as a stepping stone to get into "better" US schools; rural location; culture shock; homesickness; limited funding for research; burdensome academic workload

AFRICAN AMERICAN: insufficient financial aid; lack of diversity; lack of connection

WOMEN: financial problems; lack of connection – feeling of isolation – need for a support network of other women; party culture; poor residence life experience; no effort on the part of the university to pair freshmen with roommates who are compatible (there should be a compatibility survey) (several participants indicated that they had considered transferring)

HIGH ACHIEVING: party school reputation and lack of cultural support, so much so that they feel like social outcasts in the entrenched party culture; insufficient scholarships; low expectations from professors; poor residence life experience – not academically conducive – incompatible with roommate; do not feel valued by OU

OUT OF STATE: lack of airport transportation; distance from home; out of state tuition

LGBT: lack of inclusion in university diversity and related initiatives; poor residence life experience; rural surroundings; party culture; lack of safety on Court street and elsewhere after dark; (one thing the LGBT members complained about was the lack of LGBT statistics and information in the retention and diversity packet distributed at the forum – this lack was of course due to the institutional lack of statistics and information)

HISPANIC/LATINO: lack of diversity and Latino representation; not viewed as an independent and unique group but anonymously lumped into the general category of minorities; lack of proper funding for the Latino Student Union; LSU not represented on the SAC General Assembly

APPALACHIAN: N/A

TRANSFER: unexpectedly difficult curriculum, particularly relative to the easy regimen of community college; party reputation; mismanagement of time

What else could you have done to improve your experience here?

> INTERNATIONAL: worked harder on academics; gotten more involved (they themselves felt they had gotten involved, but they indicated that this was a great benefit others could utilize)

> AFRICAN AMERICAN: engaged their faculty advisors more; attended more UC classes

> WOMEN: gotten more involved and taken on leadership roles; associated with a more diverse group of people: "I loved that experience of being in the international community…that has kept me here"

> HIGH ACHIEVING: gotten more involved (without over-extending oneself); volunteered more in Athens community; resisted the party culture more; associated with a more diverse group of people; study abroad

> OUT OF STATE: met more out of state students

> LGBT: N/A

> HISPANIC/LATINO: gotten more involved with student organizations

> APPALACHIAN: N/A

> TRANSFER: gotten more involved with student organizations

What sorts of services do you think are the most beneficial for giving you a positive academic and social experience (e.g. student organizations; academic services such as a tutoring, the writing center and career services; UC 115 and other orientation efforts; cultural/artistic/intellectual events; academic advising)?

> INTERNATIONAL: writing center for international students; the library; HTC support and resources (for undergraduates)

> AFRICAN AMERICAN: LINKS; student organizations; SI and tutoring; UC classes, particularly 115; Multicultural Center; academic advising; learning communities; peer mentoring; study abroad; OURS; cultural, artistic and intellectual events

> WOMEN: student organizations; UC 115; writing center; academic advising; peer mentoring; cultural, artistic and intellectual activities

> HIGH ACHIEVING: student organizations; peer mentoring; honors housing; academic advising; career services; intramural sports; cultural events

OUT OF STATE: transportation to Columbus airport (needed); peer mentoring for out of state students (needed); out of state student organization (needed) which could host trips during big "going home" weekends

LGBT: safe zone training (should be mandatory for RAs, administrators and faculty); student and other organizations like Equality Ohio

HISPANIC/LATINO: KCB scholarship; Templeton scholarship; student organizations

APPALACHIAN: student networking

TRANSFER: student organizations (particularly Greek life, hall councils and tRAC); Ping Center; good advising

What could the University have done to improve your experience here?

INTERNATIONAL: insurance needs to cover dental; airport shuttle service; mentoring for first year international students; "hospitality service" for international students

AFRICAN AMERICAN: improve academic advising; emphasizing retention and not just recruitment; scholarships with higher standards and perhaps mandatory essays or interviews; more upperclassmen scholarships; improve communication of services and opportunities; more advertising of study abroad

WOMEN: better academic advising (1st year students should be required to meet with advisor; need accountability); better precollege experience; women in leadership class; highlight the work of female professors; student groups need to mix more

HIGH ACHIEVING: more scholarships; a residence life more conducive to high achieving students, perhaps by having more residence halls devoted to high achieving students; networking to eliminate sense of isolation; more study abroad and research opportunities; improve academic advising; a second honors track; de-stigmatize counseling and have people around to de-brief first-year students every once in awhile to make sure they're learning to manage their schedules, stress, etc.; more affordable study abroad; make OU more environmentally friendly; more money to the arts and cultural events

OUT OF STATE: airport transportation; more out of state students and networking

LGBT: include the LGBT community in University's diversity; increase queer studies (more classes); gender and sexuality LC or RLC; more understanding environment in residence halls

HISPANIC/LATINO: needs to support programming for other minorities; needs to be inter-organization support; more administrators and faculty of Latino descent; need to be viewed as a unique and individual minority

APPALACHIAN: provide a Links-like system that would bring Appalachian students together; greater financial aid

TRANSFER: better Precollege or orientation experience by explaining DARS more thoroughly, providing a clear explanation of the tier system, and providing a separate orientation for community college students; smoother transfer of intro classes from other universities; easier registration and scheduling for classes

C. Second Subgroup Qualitative Responses

What is diversity?

- Being exposed to ideas and people that you aren't familiar with
- Being open-minded, accepting, and willing to step outside of your comfort zone; stepping outside the box
- Anything that makes *you* different
- Inclusion of all people
- All differences, tangible and intangible
- Embracing people's difference, thriving in it and enjoying it
- Looking at the world through another's eyes
- Respect
- Diversity of thought: "most important kind of diversity"
- Defined differently

Some people say that diverse sections of the OU population (African American, Hispanic, Asian, international, etc.) tend to be somewhat isolated from other diverse sections and from the campus as a whole.

Is this true?
- True
- Natural tendency for people to segregate themselves
- This is a comfort-level issue (people will seek out those with whom they feel comfortable)
- Students must first have the desire to integrate
- Hard to combat
- Harder for some minority groups to see the isolation
- True for everyone, whether you're an athlete or in Greek life, etc.

If so, is this true diversity?
- No
- "I see the diverse student body but I don't get a chance to interact with them"
- "diversity isn't just having different people;" it's bringing them together, sharing

Does it affect retention?
- Yes
- Positive in the sense that it provides you with a community of people like yourself (makes you feel a sense of acceptance and belongingness), but negative in that it hinders actual diversity: the intermingling of different types of peoples
- Definitely a problem
- Positive and negative
- "felt backed into a corner, classified as a stereotype" – "I felt stuck"

- the first step must be to find a group of students like yourself – without that comfort zone, you will feel isolated and are likely to leave; the second step is to branch out

How can we get sections to diversify and collaborate more?
- Expand Council of Student Leaders
- Create a diversity organization hub (actually already exists: Unify)
- More partnerships among student organizations
- More learning communities
- Advisors and precollege should inform student of all the opportunities and organizations available
- Use residence halls as a spaces for diversity and discussion of diversity

What can we as students do to improve the academic and personal experience at OU? What can we do to improve diversity?
- Become peer mentors to freshmen
- Become more involved in SI
- Multicultural Visitation Program
- Get involved with student organizations; visit organizations with different types of students; collaborate more
- More forums like this one
- Community service

What can the administration do? Now, as a diverse group of students, create some overarching priorities for improvement and change, priorities which might affect several groups at once and comprehensively improve the University.
- Allocate more money to multicultural student events, performances, arts, exhibitions, or other endeavors that represent diversity or capture the mentality of diversity
- More upperclassmen scholarships (for all groups of people)
- Match first year students with roommates who have been judged "compatible" by a survey or personal statement
- Communicate to students all the resources and opportunities that are available (most people are unaware)
- Increase learning communities
- A class or workshop to discuss diversity: people need to be comfortable talking about diversity; they need to examine demographics, cultural implications, possible solutions, controversies, etc.
- Diversity week (when all organizations would be asked to get involved and collaboratively lead events, etc.) – bring people together
- Give special funding to programs and events that emphasize diversity by involving several groups of students (e.g. out of state, international, African American, engineering majors, and environmental groups).

- Administration needs to be more comfortable with the LGBT student population and LGBT issues (common feeling that the administration is not comfortable); needs to be an equal component of the OU diversity office
- Peer mentoring
- Improve academic advising; need more personal relationships with faculty and administrators (dichotomy in feelings of connection with administration – some felt very connected, others felt entirely disconnected)
- Promote and finance Study Abroad more