

# i<sup>3</sup> Developing Faculty Diversity:

## *The iSchool Inclusion Initiative*

Like many academic disciplines, the Information Sciences have a paucity of faculty and students from underrepresented populations, particularly African-Americans and Latino-Americans. While the United States population is becoming increasingly diverse, the student population in the iSchools have not kept pace with this trend. In fact, our graduate student population is significantly less diverse than the student population in graduate programs in general.

In 2007, Hispanics living in the United States accounted for 15% percent of the U.S. population, while African-Americans account for 13.5%. It is estimated that by 2050, more than half of the US population will be from underrepresented groups (US Census). In 2008, African-American students enrolled at iSchools comprised only 7.2% of the whole student population, while Hispanic students comprised only 4.5%. African-American faculty at iSchools made up only 2.7% of the whole faculty population; Hispanic faculty made up only 2.3% (ALISE statistical reports). Clearly, the faculty and students at selected iSchools were significantly less diverse than the US population and the general population of students in graduate programs.

The lack of diversity in the faculty and student populations at iSchools has several deleterious effects:

- our faculty and our schools are not representative of the people we will serve in the information professions;
- people of color don't see role models for themselves within the Information Schools or the information professions;
- students of color don't consider the information professions to be a viable career option because they don't see people of color in the field; and
- the academic vitality and rigor of our institutions are diminished by the lack of diversity in our schools.

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With this concern in mind, a coalition of three Pennsylvania iSchools -- the University of Pittsburgh, Drexel University, and Pennsylvania State University -- proposes to develop a series of annual summer institutes for promising undergraduates (rising juniors and seniors) from under-represented segments of the population who demonstrate the potential for success in graduate study. The primary goal is to attract participants to graduate programs in iSchools throughout the US. A related goal is to encourage the most promising students to continue their graduate studies to earn PhD degrees and, ultimately, join the faculty of an iSchool.

### **Description of Program**

The approach to meeting the goals of the project are to

- Recruit 20 undergraduate sophomores to each cohort (3 cohorts in the pilot project) from throughout the US  
Host a two-week introductory residential Summer Institute at the University of Pittsburgh to provide a comprehensive overview of the information professions, to introduce the nature of graduate study, and to engage in experiential activities to acquaint the participants with the work of an information professional  
Define and facilitate a team project to be undertaken throughout the Junior year, supported by faculty mentors and social networking among the cohort  
Host a two-week concluding residential Summer Institute between the junior and senior year, where the participants will present the results of their team project for critique, will develop a plan of graduate study, will be counseled on strategies for success, and will be recruited by iSchools in attendance.

### **Outcomes**

- Sixty students will participate in the Institutes over the three years (2011, 2012, and 2013).
- At least 80% of the Institute students will complete the two Institutes and the research project.
- At least 60% of the Institute students will apply for graduate study at one of the iSchools. Our proposed goal would match the percentage of Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellows (a highly-regarded diversity program) who enter graduate study, an achievement for those from underrepresented populations. ( <http://www.mmuf.org/our-program>)

### **How can your iSchool participate?**

- The project will need the expertise of faculty and admissions/career/diversity specialists to teach the workshops at the Summer Institutes.
- The project will need mentors for the team projects.
- iSchool representatives can attend portions of the Institutes to meet students and recruit them for graduate study at their home institutions.
- Consider offering incentives such as expedited admissions, scholarships, and other financial support to those who successfully complete the Summer Institutes program.

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