



AUBURN UNIVERSITY
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

February 8, 2007

SUBJECT: Diversity

Participation in a dynamic and culturally rich university community is an important part of Auburn University's commitment to preparing our students to be productive, successful members of the global community. Our commitment to diversity is reflected in the Board of Trustees' endorsement at their November Meeting of the President's implementation of the University Strategic Diversity Plan and to the development and implementation of a similar plan for AUM.

The University's development of the Strategic Diversity Plan was also important in bringing to a conclusion the longstanding litigation concerning discrimination in higher education. It was a cornerstone of the settlement agreements leading to resolution of the litigation, not only for Auburn but for all other historically white institutions in Alabama. That Plan, as well as the Auburn University Settlement Agreement and the Trustee Resolution endorsing the Plan, are available on the website of the Office of Diversity and Multicultural Affairs at www.auburn.edu/academic/provost/odma/. Some of the key points in that Agreement include:

- 1) The commitment that the University will include African-American representation on search committees for Presidents and all senior-level administrative positions and to the extent practical, on all search committees for faculty.
- 2) The Diversity Plan is a living document and subject to revision to respond to an ever-changing environment. To facilitate further refinement of the plan and our practices, the University has agreed to promote attendance at annual conferences to be held to review and critique the development, terms, and implementation of Strategic Diversity Plans.

In that regard, the Multicultural Diversity Commission has proposed that the University's non-discrimination and harassment policies be revised to prohibit discrimination and/or harassment based on sexual orientation. Current University policy, as set forth in Chapter 3 of the *Faculty Handbook* already prohibits denial of promotion or tenure based on sexual orientation. In order to provide similar protection to all employees and students, effective immediately, harassment of students or employees, based on sexual orientation, is prohibited. In addition, employment

decisions regarding hiring, promotion, and termination, or decisions concerning a student's acceptance, academic performance, or dismissal at the University, based on sexual orientation, are prohibited. Procedures currently in place to address claims of harassment or discrimination, based on race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, or veteran status, shall be used to address claims of sexual orientation, discrimination, or harassment.

This initial revision reflects the institution's continual evaluation of its diversity efforts and its commitment to make changes as appropriate.

- 3) Dr. Overtoun Jenda, Associate Provost for Diversity and Multicultural Affairs and a member of my Cabinet, has been assigned to oversee implementation of the Plan.
- 4) By February 1 of each of the next 5 years, we will post on our website statistical information concerning our efforts to enhance diversity.

Auburn's primary mission is education. Education comes in many forms, including meaningful exposure to diverse people and cultures. Working together, we can ensure that our students are well prepared for the challenges of a global economy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Ed Richardson", written in a cursive style.

Ed Richardson
President