Chapter 3
Strategies for Diversity Initiatives:
A Case Study at University of Nebraska–Lincoln Libraries

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ABSTRACT

In the state of Nebraska, where the population is 90% white, recruiting people of color to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln is challenging. Needless to say, intentional efforts are made to recruit and retain librarians and other information professionals. University of Nebraska-Lincoln Libraries has brought together a team of librarians to focus on one of the university's core values--diversity. This team of librarians from public services, technical services and library administration share responsibility in planning and implementing the Libraries' diversity initiatives. This chapter will discuss the recruitment and retention efforts of the Libraries and the evolution of the team that has increased the number of librarians from underrepresented populations at University of Nebraska-Lincoln from 2.6% in 1999 to 12.2% in 2009.

INTRODUCTION

The Cornhusker State is traditionally known for football and agriculture and many would not associate ethnic minorities with the state. Because Nebraska's population is 90% white, according to the American Community Survey 2005-2007, many do not know that Nebraska is a designate site for refugee settlement with agencies helping immigrants and refugees establish their new lives in a new country. As a result, Nebraska's foreign-born population increased from 28,198 in 1990 to 74,638 in 2000, a change of 164.7% between 1990 and 2000 (www.newamericanstaskforce.

Table 1. UNL Libraries Faculty Statistics 1999-2009.

Year	Libraries Total Faculty	Libraries Minority Faculty	% of Total Faculty
1999-00	38	1	2.6%
2000-01	39	2	5.1%
2001-02	42	2	4.8%
2002-03	40	2	5.0%
2003-04	39	2	5.1%
2004-05	44	2	4.5%
2005-06	49	3	6.1%
2006-07	49	3	6.1%
2007-08	49	4	8.2%
2008-09	49	6	12.2%

org/demographic.php). In Lincoln alone, where the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) is located, these new community members come from 57 different countries and speak 48 different languages (Lincoln (Neb). Board of Education, 2008). With this influx of new residents and their wide ranging information literacy needs, UNL Libraries is making a concerted effort to create a diverse and culturally rich staff to help meet the current and future needs of the community and the university.

In response to the demographic trends, UNL added a diversity component to its core values and looks for ways to increase minority student enroll-ment, especially those who are first generation college attendees. UNL's recruitment efforts have increased minority student enrollment from 5.75% in 1996-1997 to 9.42% in 2006-2007. The fall 2008 class was the most diverse class in university history (University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 2008). Efforts to increase the number of minority faculty are also encouraged. Accordingly, the Libraries have developed mission and vision statements to incorporate the UNL 2010 Vision statement on diversifying its faculty and staff: "UNL Libraries values diversity and empowers our staff to take active responsibility in developing a supportive diverse environment. We will use our talents, ex-pertise, collections and services to coordinate with

UNL's effort to embrace diversity" (University of Nebraska-Lincoln University Libraries, 2008). The UNL Libraries has been at the forefront of promoting diversity from within the organization as well as actively recruiting diverse applicants to apply for open positions. The Libraries established Diversity Initiatives consisting of a Diversity Committee and the Multicultural Services Team which had a positive effect. The UNL Libraries have increased the number of minority librarians from 2.6% of the faculty in 1999 to 12.2% in 2009 (Table 1). The increase follows the national trend among Association of Research Libraries (ARL) institutions; from 1985-1986 and 2005-2006, the percentage of librarians in US ARL university libraries who are minorities increased from 10% to 13% (Hipps, 2006, p.1).

The driving force for creating a multicultural workforce is developing an environment that reflects an increasingly diverse society. Diversity brings together different ideas, philosophies, and values that are advantageous to the overall health of the organization. A diverse faculty benefits the library and the campus in a number of ways. Librarians are engaged in a number of activities that benefit campus, including the recruitment and retention of minority students, faculty and staff as well as improving access to multicultural col-lections, services and interdisciplinary research.

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