

# Promoting Diversity through Multilevel Activism: An Organizational Approach

**Patricia Alvarez McHatton,  
Barbara J. Shircliffe, and  
Deirdre Cobb-Roberts<sup>1</sup>**

The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) was founded in 1954 to serve as an independent body in promoting high quality teacher preparation programs (NCATE 2008). Its mission is to ensure accredited institutions produce high quality educators, administrators, and specialists able to meet the needs of all learners. Institutions seeking NCATE accreditation must address six standards NCATE identified as essential to producing quality educators: (1) Candidate knowledge, skills and professional dispositions; (2) Assessment system and unit evaluation; (3) Field experiences and clinical practice; (4) Diversity; (5) Faculty qualifications, performance, and development; and (6) Unit governance and resources. This article focuses on the fourth standard and chronicles the goals, efforts, and accomplishments of the University of South Florida (USF) College of Education in meeting it. These efforts demonstrate the value of multilevel activism in fostering a campus culture where teacher educators and students can develop competencies necessary for

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**Patricia Alvarez McHatton is Associate Professor in the Department of Special Education at the University of South Florida. Her research interests include teacher preparation, cultural competency, and school experiences of diverse youth. Her work centers on school/university/community partnerships and youth-led participatory action research.**

**Barbara J. Shircliffe is Associate Professor of social foundations in the Department of Psychological and Social Foundations in the College of Education at the University of South Florida. Her research in educational history focuses on Southern school segregation and desegregation; oral history; and school policy. She is currently writing a book on the desegregation of Southern school teachers.**

**Deirdre Cobb-Roberts is Associate Professor of social foundations in Department of Psychological and Social Foundations in the College of Education at the University of South Florida. Her research has focused on issues of access, equity, and social justice from historical and contemporary lenses. She is author and coauthor of articles and book chapters on the history of higher education, student resistance to diversity, and multicultural education.**

teaching and working with children and families from a broad range of backgrounds.

We begin by providing a historical overview of the College's diversity initiatives and the subsequent inception of the Diversity Committee and its work. We end with a reflection on its accomplishments, challenges, and opportunities.<sup>2</sup> It is also critical to note that the College, guided by its conceptual framework, requires specific course work, experiences, and assessments across and within programs at various stages of candidacy in keeping with the goals of Standard 4; therefore, the activities of the Diversity Committee by no means encompass the totality of how we prepare teachers and other educational professionals to work with diverse populations. However, this article does not address these specific curricular issues or performance-based assessments. Rather, it highlights how a college-wide committee can engage faculty and students across programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels in critical reflection and action on how systems of power and inequality shape knowledge and educational practice and the preparation of culturally competent education professionals. Before describing this organizational approach, it is important to consider USF's regional context and why it was critical that we build a faculty and student body reflective of its larger service area.

## **Background**

The USF College of Education is the ninth largest public college of education in the nation and is ranked 66th among graduate schools of education according to the 2010 *U.S. News and World Report* (2010). The College is ranked 15th by this report in generating external research funding, averaging over \$22 million annually during the past five years. The College's primary service areas are the public school systems of Tampa's metropolitan area including Hillsborough County, the eighth largest school district in the nation, and the counties of Pasco and Hernando. These school districts incorporate urban, suburban, and rural areas. Recent demographic shifts have brought increasing racial and ethnic diversity to all communities surrounding Tampa, and these changes have been reflected in the public school population. In 2003, Hillsborough County became "majority minority";<sup>3</sup> and, as of fall 2008, 59% of the district's students were classified as racial or ethnic minority under the state's accountability system (Florida Department of Education 2009). In addition, over half of the district's population received free or reduced-price (Dolinski 2009).

At the same time, the majority of teacher education majors enrolled in in the College are white and female. For the spring 2010 term, 75% of College undergraduates were white and 78% female while 73% of College graduate students were white and 76% female (University of South Florida 2010a).<sup>4</sup> The cultural mismatch between our student population and that of the service area makes it essential for graduates to be knowledgeable and skilled in working with a wide range of students and families. College efforts among faculty and students to prepare teachers and other professionals for a changing school environment date back to the late 1960s and early 1970s when Hillsborough County School District, under court order, desegregated schools to achieve racial balance among public school teachers and students. For example, in 1971 the College hosted a Teacher of Teachers Training program that created a series of workshops and seminars designed to raise cultural awareness of teachers, many of whom would be teaching racially mixed classrooms for the first time (Pride 1999).

In 1995, USF embarked on a five year planning process in which all colleges and units developed strategic plans with respect to diversity. At the time, the USF Office of Diversity had initiatives that provided resources to foster cross-cultural understanding, e.g., workshops, seminars, and curriculum materials. USF was interested in establishing centers at each college that could serve as a repository for research on diversity-related issues and provide resources to students, staff, and faculty. There were several initiatives related to diversity in place within the College of Education. For example, in 1995, Project PILOT (Preparing Innovative Leaders for Tomorrow) was established, a personnel preparation program funded by the U.S. Office of Special Education Programs which focused on preparing African American males for teaching careers in special education. This project succeeded in increasing the number of African American males in the College's classrooms and created dialogue among faculty and staff members about the importance of diverse learning environments and the need to for the College to create a welcoming climate for all students.

As part of the planning process, a College diversity committee was formed with representatives from all departments. The College Director of Undergraduate Programs and Internships was appointed as Coordinator of Diversity Initiatives. This position had the following responsibilities: (1) Communicate the College's diversity achievements and progress; (2) build a College community within a shared responsibility paradigm that supported and welcomed diversity; (3) coordinate diversity and urban education initiatives/research within and linked to the College; and (4) promote scholarly activities related to diversity and urban education issues within the University, College, and public school communities, e.g., workshops, seminars, dialogues, symposia. To accomplish these goals, the Diversity Committee proposed establishment of a College of Education diversity center, with an associate dean or director at the helm, that could serve as a resource center for research; grant writing; curriculum development; and recruitment and retention of faculty and students. The center never materialized largely due to financial reasons and concerns regarding how to structure the center so that diversity initiatives would not be viewed as solely the purview of the department in which the center was to be housed. However, the activism and planning process created among faculty and staff involved with the committee carried on into the next decade.

### **The College of Education Diversity Committee**

The most recent coordinated effort to assess the College's status and progress toward diversity dates back to November 2002 when then the interim dean appointed a task force on diversity, comprised of College faculty, administrators, staff, and graduate students. It was chaired by two faculty members and two graduate students. The task force was charged with assessing our status as a college with respect to infusing diversity throughout the curriculum; recruiting and retaining faculty and students; and developing multicultural competence among students. Assessment results would inform the development of action plans by the task force for continual improvements.

In October 2003, following a series of planning meetings, the task force recommended that the Dean establish a permanent committee on diversity to work with the Office of the Dean, Faculty Council, Associate Dean, Director of Development, NCATE coordinator, and university Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity. This recommendation resulted from the task force's recognition of the need for an

ongoing and sustainable medium for faculty and students to discuss ideas and propose activities that would enhance the College's diversity efforts. A permanent committee would provide such a forum and could serve as a springboard for workshops; teaching seminars; discussions; research projects; and faculty- and student-led presentations. In addition, it would support our goal to produce graduates who possess the necessary knowledge, skills, and dispositions to meet the needs of all learners. A decision was made that this permanent committee would have multiple chairs, and the majority of its initial work – assessing and developing actions plans – would be carried out by subcommittee. The chairs of the various subcommittees were encouraged to recruit members from students, faculty, and staff throughout the College. Members could participate in the subcommittee without having to invest in the work of the larger committee.

The Dean accepted the co-chairs' recommendation for an open committee and provided the committee with a graduate assistant, who proved to be an extremely valuable resource for coordinating the committee's work. The Diversity Committee was introduced to the faculty during the December 2003 annual college-wide faculty meeting. At that time, the Dean and co-chairs provided an overview of the goals of the committee, extended an invitation for participation to all faculty and staff, and solicited input from participants on how to best move the College forward in the area of diversity. During this meeting, faculty members who were active in the committee led round table discussions, which came to be known as "circles," devoted to eight topics:

- 1) Chronicling diversity activities;
- 2) Climate;
- 3) Student recruitment and retention;
- 4) Community engagement;
- 5) Recruiting and retaining a diverse faculty;
- 6) Development;
- 7) Research;
- 8) Multicultural teaching competence.

Each of these topics is integral to meeting the expectations of NCATE Standard 4 and necessary for producing quality educators able to meet the needs of all learners. Circle leaders provided faculty and staff members at each table guiding questions for discussion and facilitated conversations, scribing comments which were compiled and analyzed at a later date. Faculty members were able to rotate to other tables/topic areas throughout the meeting. At the end of the meeting, faculty members were invited to join a circle to begin the more formal work of assessing our status and proposing action plans to strengthen our program.

### **Diversity Circles at Work**

For each circle, or subcommittee, a faculty member accepted an invitation to serve in the capacity of chair, after which the Dean formalized the appointment. Faculty were selected based on their expertise in a particular area, leadership experience, or their position. For example, the Development Director was selected to chair the Development Circle. Each chair represented his or her committee at the Diversity Committee meetings. College faculty were encouraged to join circles based on their interests and expertise without the demands of a regular appointment to a college-wide committee. In addition, the NCATE coordinator became a member of the Diversity Committee, regularly attended meetings, and worked with the various subcommittees. This allowed the coordinator to remain abreast of

the Committee's work as it related to NCATE's standard on diversity. In turn, the coordinator provided the committee with resources and information. During monthly Diversity Committee meetings, open to all members of the College, circle leaders shared ideas and discussed the progress of their respective subcommittees. Circle leaders represented various departments, and importantly, administration, including the Directors of Student Academic Services and the Director of the Office of Development.

The objectives for the circles were similar to those of the original task force: To review the suggestions from the faculty meeting; assess current status in each of the eight areas; identify future goals; and develop a proposal for achieving those goals. The strengths of this organizational model were twofold: (1) Faculty could target their committee work to areas in which they were most interested; and (2) they could transition to other work once a goal had been accomplished. The dynamic, flexible nature of the circles allowed for maximum participation by faculty, students, and staff. While each of the circles would imply discrete sub-committees, in reality the work conducted by each of the groups occasionally overlapped which only served to enhance our efforts. This will become apparent as we describe the goals, activities and accomplishments of each group.

#### *Chronicling Diversity Activities Circle*

One of the issues emerging from faculty meeting discussions was that they were not fully aware of College diversity initiatives already in place. In addition, while faculty recognized that a vast amount of scholarship by the faculty addressed diversity, there was no formal mechanism to identify or publicize it or the faculty involved. Thus, the goals of this circle were to survey faculty regarding their scholarship in the area of diversity; gather data on existing programs and initiatives; and then determine how this information could best be disseminated to faculty and staff. The circles work also led to the development of the College's Diversity web site (<http://www.coedu.usf.edu/main/Diversity/Diversity-index.html>) which highlights diversity initiatives throughout the College and provides web resources.

#### *Climate and Student Recruitment and Retention Circles*

The College mission to prepare professionals who are culturally responsive and competent relies on our ability to create an environment that supports a diverse student body. The goal of this circle was to identify how best to ensure a positive climate for diversity. Campus climate has been found to have a direct effect on academic success (Edman and Brazil 2007). Yet research indicates that ethnically diverse students perceive campus climate more negatively than their white peers (Gloria, Hird, and Navarro 2001). Thus, an important part of this circle's work was assessing students' perceptions regarding diversity, equity, and inclusivity within the College (Henry 2008, 4). The circle abstracted data from a recent university-wide climate study and joined forces with the Student Recruitment and Retention Circle which had been examining recruitment and retention data to develop and administer a student climate survey. The purpose of this survey was to gather data on student attitudes and beliefs regarding diversity, equity, and inclusivity within the College. All undergraduate and graduate students were invited to participate in the survey. A total of 503 students completed the survey (11.4% response rate).

The survey results indicated that most student respondents found the College to be a welcoming environment that values diversity, and the curriculum provided them with the tools to teach a diverse population. Over 90% of respondents indicated that the College was

in general, accepting of who they are while over 88% would recommend the College as an environment welcoming of diversity. An overwhelming majority of the respondents (80%) perceived the College as emphasizing the value diversity. In addition, 86% reported they felt the College was preparing them to foster safe and open learning environments in their classroom, and 89% believed the College challenged students to reflect on their own biases. However, only 39% of respondents believes that the College provided opportunities for understanding lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning (LGBTQ) students. For LGBTQ respondents, 44% felt uncomfortable disclosing their sexual orientation. Focus groups conducted with faculty indicated that LGBTQ issues were an area faculty members felt least comfortable including in class materials or discussions.

The survey revealed that students recognized our commitment; however, only 51% of respondents believed integrating multiculturalism and diversity into course content was important (Henry 2008). Further, a minority, but not insignificant number of respondents, shared that they felt the College was too focused on diversity. The results of the survey suggested that more efforts could be made to help students see the links between the College's focus on diversity and the importance that content would have for their future as professionals.

The Student Recruitment and Retention Circle also examined recruitment and retention data on the College student population at the graduate and undergraduate levels. Results suggested that the College needed to do more to recruit and retain students from under-represented groups. There have been initiatives within the College that have enhanced the diversity of the student body such as Project PILOT and Project Thrust. Furthermore, each year College programs and departments can apply for and receive graduate student recruitment funds targeted toward increasing the numbers of students from under-represented groups. According to IPEDS data, as of 2008 the College ranked 17th in degrees awarded to Latino/Latina students, 25th in degrees awarded to international students, and 36th in degrees awarded to African American students.<sup>6</sup>

#### *Community Engagement Circle*

The goal for this circle was to enhance the College mission to build partnerships with local communities and school districts. Recognizing the need to make the university welcoming and attentive to diverse community members, this circle examined how responsive the College was to the needs of the metropolitan community in which it resides. Key stakeholders from the community were invited to participate in this group, and together they sponsored several programs at local schools focused on informing parents about USF resources and helping to foster a sense of belonging. The College website also documents faculty community-engaged research and curricular activities, much of which address diversity issues. Such community-engaged teaching and research is designed to enhance opportunities for development of cultural competence (University of South Florida 2010b).<sup>7</sup>

One of this circle's greatest accomplishments was relaunching the annual children's festival. Established in 1979, the festival attracted families throughout the USF service area to campus for a fun day of activities. In 2005, this circle brought back the festival as part of a series of events celebrating USF's 50th anniversary. Members of the circle believed it would be a great way for the College to demonstrate its commitment to diversity to local families and to highlight the

College as a community resource. Since 2005, over 4,000 individuals have attended the festival. The College Office of Development garnered sponsorship for the event from individuals and families, local businesses, and organizations to ensure its sustainability. At the festival, faculty, students, and staff create booths with games and activities so children and their parents can participate in and learn about enjoyable educational activities, such as: Photo booth software to create unusual images; learning games related to geography, typing, and music; exergaming (interactive gaming technologies); and family play therapy. Students also get a close up at a large African Sulcata Tortoise named Spike.

#### *Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Faculty Circle*

One of the main expectations of NCATE Standard 4 is a diverse faculty. The goal of this circle was to review the status of faculty diversity within the College and provide recommendations on how to increase representation and retention of faculty from under-represented groups. In addition to examining faculty demographics, this circle interviewed recently hired faculty to determine what attracted them to USF and to identify bridges and barriers to retention. The circle recommended College faculty become more proactive in producing diverse candidate pools through the use of professional networks and accessing groups and organizations that may be helpful in identifying possible candidates. In addition, the circle recommended that the College provide professional development for search committee chairs; streamline the search process so more time is allotted to the search; use diversity indicators in job descriptions, e.g., evidence of commitment to diversity, research on diversity issues; and implement a revised search plan with proactive steps for ensuring a diverse pool. Each of these recommendations was implemented.

Since the circle's recommendations in 2004, the diversity of College faculty has more than doubled from 10.5% from under-represented groups to its current level of 23%. In addition, a new faculty mentoring program has been implemented to support all new faculty, with each new faculty member being assigned a mentor from within his/her department and one from outside the department but within the College. An associate dean facilitates conversations and formal discussion with faculty mentors and mentees around issues relevant to faculty of color.

#### *Development Circle*

The Development Director chaired this committee whose purpose is to increase efforts to identify scholarships for students from under-represented groups and funding sources for diversity initiatives and programs. As a result of work by the Office of Development, the College has multiple scholarships and awards that support diverse students. For instance, in 2006, the Diversity Committee recommended the College establish an award to honor outstanding undergraduate and graduate Latino students as part of USF's Hispanic Heritage Month. The Outstanding Latino/Latina Educator Award (OLÉ) is now in its fifth year. The Office of Development was crucial in getting sponsorship for this award through a partnership with Verizon's Hispanic Support Organization and other donors for a celebration dinner and financial award to recipients at the bachelor's, master's, and doctoral levels. The Development Office also initiated a diversity fund which helps support activities sponsored by the Diversity Committee.

#### *Research Circle*

The purpose of this circle was to plan, conduct, and disseminate research that impacts College practices and quality of education as it pertains to diversity. Specifically, circle sought to: (1) Assess the extent to which diversity content was infused in preparation programs; (2) explore student and faculty experiences and perceptions related to how diversity is addressed in courses, field experiences, and pedagogy; and (3) examine the extent to which expectations with respect to multicultural competence were communicated to students, faculty, and staff.

Initially, the subcommittee conducted a syllabus audit to determine how diversity was infused through coursework. A scoring guide was developed and piloted in the summer of 2004. Findings from the audit revealed that all syllabi contained topics related to diversity albeit at different levels, e.g., awareness, skills, knowledge. In order to better understand what faculty members were doing to enhance students' development with respect to diversity, faculty focus groups were conducted. Results revealed challenges experienced by faculty in addressing diversity as well as a need for faculty professional development in this area (McHatton et al. 2009).

As a result of the work of this circle, several faculty-initiated activities have been implemented. In 2003, the Diversity Committee, Dean's Office, and Diversity and Equal Opportunity Office sponsored USF's participation in the National Institute for Multicultural Competence tour which included presentations and small group activities centered on building multicultural competence in the practice of educators and counselors. The tour attracted faculty and students as well as professional educators and counselors from school districts throughout the service areas.

In February 2005, the USF Diversity Committee, the College Dean's office, and the University of Tampa cosponsored a two-day teacher institute titled, "Teaching for Understanding in Secondary Classrooms Post-September 11," which was presented by Educators for Social Responsibility and the Outreach Center at the Harvard University Center for Middle Eastern Studies. This teacher institute, funded by a grant by the National Conference for Community and Justice and Chevron/Texaco, was designed to: (1) Foster greater understanding of Muslim, Arab, and South Asian communities in the United States; and (2) raise awareness about increased discrimination these communities face in the aftermath of the attacks on the New York World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. The workshops were designed to equip secondary educators with tools and strategies for interrupting bias and discrimination in their schools and communities. The institute was attended by middle and high school educators; counselors; faculty; and students from both USF and the University of Tampa.

Responding to the need for further professional development during the last two years, the Diversity Committee has hosted a series of brown bag critical friends discussions with a focus on enhancing cultural competence and responsiveness in students. The purpose of these discussions was to engage in dialogue about best practices; share successes; assist with challenges, e.g., student resistance; and promote teaching and learning as scholarship. Faculty presented educational resources used in classes for the purposes of enhancing cultural competence and responsiveness in students, such as research, assignments, case studies, learning activities, discussion formats, and teachable moments strategies. Materials were peer reviewed, a process which included sharing written comments with

the faculty member submitting materials, with dialogue taking first between presenters and reviewers, and then among all participants. The brown bag discussions led to the idea of hosting a teaching seminar, titled "Difficult Dialogues Seminar," conducted by faculty from the Department of Secondary Education. During the seminar, faculty members discussed and reflected on cases based on classroom experiences. The dialogue allowed faculty to share ideas about effective strategies for building community and defusing conflict.

#### *Multicultural Teaching Competence Circle*

This circle reviewed the literature on skills and dispositions expected of professional preparation candidates; communication of expectations; and methods of assessment of cultural competence. In these discussions, circle members felt it important for faculty to make connections between the diversity content in their courses and the realities of public school classrooms. At the same time, national debates over immigration prompted rallies and marches across the state including the Tampa Bay area. There were public announcements made by some school principals regarding the punishment of Latino students who missed class to participate in immigration protests. One member of the Diversity Committee initiated a nationwide chain of letters protesting such actions. He felt that it was important to find an educational opportunity in reflecting on schools' responses to students participating in the immigration protests as many students would be working with children from immigrant families or were themselves first and second generation Americans.

In discussions about the ongoing debates surrounding immigration and cultural competence, this member proposed that the Diversity Committee sponsor a series of three forums during the upcoming semester. Each forum would provide multiple perspectives on the topic of immigration and the First Amendment and include community representatives; faculty members; school district officials; teachers; and professional personnel. The topic of the forum was also chosen as the focus of a critical student task whereby a 15 page case analysis was assigned to students taking Social Foundations of Education, a required course for College undergraduate majors. Students could use the three forums and related podcasts as resources for the case analysis whose purpose was to help them better understand the connections between course content and events happening in schools.

These forums were so successful that an annual program, "Creating Teachings Opportunities from Critical Issues," is now sponsored by the Diversity Committee and the Dean's Office. Each year, the committee selects a topic and sponsors three forums during one semester. The first hosts of a panel of representatives from the community while the second consists of a panel of school district leaders, teachers and counselors. The third consists of a panel of faculty members. A forum committee organizes the work, which involves the expertise of Florida Center for Instructional Technology housed within the College. At each forum, the panel discusses how best to address the critical issue based upon their expertise and responds to questions from the audience. Some forums involve break-out sessions and activities for students.

Approximately 100 students and faculty have attended each of the forums. Topic selection each year is based on ongoing reflection and discussion of student needs and critical issues confronting schools. For instance, data from the climate survey indicated that students perceived less emphasis placed by the College on issues related

to sexual orientation and religion compared to race and ethnicity. Tensions around the formation of Gay-Straight Alliances in area schools increased the need for dialogue around the topic. Thus, in the fall of 2007, the forum topic, "Challenging Heterosexism in the Classroom," was chosen. The 2008 presidential election sparked discussion about the role of race in American political culture. That year, the Diversity Committee chose the topic, "Racism: Whiteness in the Classroom, Understanding Who We Are." When controversy emerged over the development of state science standards that included evolution, the committee chose "Religion in the Public School" as the topic for fall 2009. Currently, as families and schools are struggling to cope with the current economic downturn, the 2010 fall forum will focus on the "Impact of Poverty on Student Learning."<sup>8</sup>

#### **Reflections on Approaches, Challenges, and Opportunities**

The Diversity Committee continues to be an integral part of College diversity efforts. Each year, new faculty join the committee's work as an outlet for their interests, to connect with faculty conducting research in this area, and to participate in opportunities for their own professional development. Meetings are held monthly to plan ongoing activities, such as the OLE award and the forum series, and to discuss future needs and activities. Two area faculty members hope to pursue two questions that have proven to be the most challenging: (1) How to recognize graduates who have excelled in becoming culturally competent educators; and (2) How to measure the success of graduates in working with diverse children and families?

The first question presents an interesting challenge because faculty believe all graduates demonstrate dispositions and skills critical to working with diverse groups. In teacher preparation, undergraduates enter the College as juniors and graduate two to three years after admission. This is a short time period for the type of self-reflection and development required in becoming culturally responsive and proficient. Diversity in life experiences, age, cultural background, and academic preparation reveal differences in development relative to engagement with diversity topics. Some students enter the College ready to engage in difficult discussions about diversity and are willing to engage in deep introspection related to their ideology and worldview. Others are not ready for intense self-assessment and may even resist attempts at engagement. Recognizing this spectrum, faculty want to provide opportunities beyond what is delivered via course work and field experiences for those students seeking to challenge their own level of cultural competency. However, one reservation with establishing such a program is that it might create a separate track and lower the expectations for students outside the program.

The second question involves determining how to accurately assess our efforts in preparing culturally responsive graduates. Exit surveys and retention rates within the profession may serve as part of the story. However, the larger movement to link teacher compensation with student achievement has raised important questions about how to measure teaching effectiveness particularly with diverse groups of teachers and students. Many educators understand the limitation of measuring teacher effectiveness based on student performance on standardized assessments (Goe, Bell, and Little 2008). Yet there is a real desire on the part of USF faculty to ensure that the College is preparing graduates to be successful with diverse groups, and measuring those outcomes can inform our efforts in program revisions.

College efforts to ensure graduates are culturally competent have resulted in a variety of initiatives. The development of the Diversity Committee has provided opportunities for faculty and students to engage in critical dialogue and professional development based on expressed needs. The organizational model is one that has created a faculty-initiated committee with concerted administrative support that allows for participation throughout the College at multiple levels. Further, the use of data to examine current efforts and inform future actions has allowed faculty to identify strengths and challenges in order to work strategically to ensure graduates are fully prepared to meet the needs of all learners as addressed by NCATE Standard 4.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Acknowledgement: The work of the Diversity Committee is possible as a result of the work of many faculty and staff members and administrators in the College of Education. Although we are unable to identify each one individually, we want to make clear that the work detailed in this manuscript would not have been possible without their assistance.

<sup>2</sup> It is important to acknowledge that the three authors were co-chairs of the Diversity Committee from 2003, when it was first established, until recently. The lead author was a doctoral student in 2003 and was still serving as co-chair when she was granted tenure in 2009.

<sup>3</sup> Statistics calculated from Florida Department of Education (2004) Excel spread sheets, "Membership in Florida public schools 2003-04."

<sup>4</sup> Statistic calculated from "Student Head Count," University of South Florida (2010a).

<sup>5</sup> Project Thrust is a university-wide program that provides support to African American students pursuing undergraduate degrees.

<sup>6</sup> Rankings were calculated by the authors using U.S. Department of Education IPEDS (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data Systems) data.

<sup>7</sup> The College defines cultural competence as follows: "Cultural competence refers to the capacity of a person to respond respectfully and effectively to people of all abilities, cultures (languages, races, ethnic backgrounds, religions), genders, sexual orientations, socioeconomic classes, and other diversity factors in a manner that recognizes, affirms, and values the worth of individuals, families, and communities and protects, preserves, and promotes the dignity of each (adapted from Barrera and Kramer, 1997, and NASW Standards for Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice)." See, <http://www.coedu.usf.edu/main/Diversity/Diversity-index.html>.

<sup>8</sup> All forums are videotaped and available online via podcast at <http://www.coedu.usf.edu/zalaquett/forum/forum.html>.

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