

**Minutes of the Workforce Diversity Committee Meeting
November 15-16, 2001
SRRRC, New Orleans, LA**

The reorganized Mid South Area Workforce Diversity Committee held its first meeting in New Orleans, LA(Southern Regional Research Center) on November 15/16, 2001. A logo for the diversity committee was unveiled which is expected to serve as a focal point for the membership. On the first day, emphasis was placed on "Getting to Know Each Other". It set the tone for initializing our differences and similarities. It was recognized that to be an effective committee we must recognize the rapid changes in world around us, and adjust our interpersonal relationships to develop trust and a synergistic level of communication. This could be achieved by recognizing that the differences amongst the members and in the experiences of each one of us are strengths and not faults. And that this diversity should bind us together, and not separate us apart. Through the insight one gains in one's life, people can compliment each other for the benefit of those that they hope to influence. It was also recognized that looking at differences (Diversity) amongst each other is like looking at an iceberg. Judgements are made based on what we see, and ignore what we don't see. Even when we get a glimpse of the larger part underwater, the "parallax error" caused by the image of the iceberg below the water clouds our perception of things. And unless one looks at all these differences in totality, high levels of effective communication amongst each other may never be developed.

So, in addition to modifying the behavior of the members with respect to each other, the objectives of meeting included:

1. convincing ourselves that diversity is important, because indeed we as committee members must serve as examples to live our Diversity Policy;
2. developing methods to encourage the building of a diverse workforce in MSA; and
3. suggesting structural and process changes to foster a feeling of inclusion and appreciation of individuality in each and every one of the MSA staff.

A case for the need of workforce diversity was, therefore, established. It was made very clear that Affirmative Action is the law and Workforce Diversity makes good business sense. Learning sessions included what we can and cannot do as a committee in terms of Recruitment of a diverse workforce, Retention of a diverse workforce, and achievement of Assimilation of the diversity that is established in the workforce. The first day was a mental stimulation day with all sorts of ideas sprinkled around. The second day was reserved day for developing an "Action Plan"- things that can could be done short term and long term to establish a truly workable workforce diversity in MSA. The action plan, which includes measures for assessing achievement, can be outlined as follows:

Goals

Recruitment:

Short term

- a. Create an informative ARS/MSA Web Page and Poster that will support physical Outreach Efforts.
- b. Develop a Brochure in Spanish (to encourage recruitment of Hispanic employees, a recognized deficiency in ARS).
- c. Consolidate and update a physical and electronic mailing list of all university contacts that could provide a diverse pool of qualified candidates.
- d. Provide, Organize and Participate in additional student programs, e.g. school science fairs to promote early recruitment of high school students, "potential" ARS employees.
- e. Develop a survey of newly hired staff that provides effective analysis of the success of existing outreach programs.

Long term

- a. Tracking (Science & Math) students from Elementary to High School.
- b. Develop an Outreach Video for MSA.
- c. Continue Mentoring-type Outreach Activities by encouraging utilization of existing Programs (e. g. Shadowing, etc).
- d. Develop a MSA college student award. In addition, winners of the award could select a worksite for summer employment.

Retention:

Short Term

- a. Insist on attention to detail for items included in IDP - Immediate Action Item; the form is grossly underutilized.
- b. Educate supervisors on effective use of Monetary and Non-monetary Awards, (flextime, day off awards, etc.).
- c. Increase Awareness of Potential for Upward Mobility of outstanding employees.

Long Term

- a. Develop a list of Mentors, other than supervisor, who could provide effective orientation in the workings of ARS.
- b. Improve/Encourage communications between supervisor and employee.

Assimilation:

Long Term

- a. Increase awareness amongst employees of effective communication realizing difference in cultural behavior (Train supervisors on different styles of communications).
- b. Establish a Newsletter / E-mail to highlight objectives and successes.
- c. Create an "Open Door Policy" between supervisors and employees (maybe some informal 360° feedback on supervisor).
- d. Employee Retreat of some sort to create an informal, off-site meeting place for employees.
- e. Establish a Web-site Suggestion Box.