



Diversity Statement

Robert J. Zimmer President

The University of Chicago is distinctive in many respects, but perhaps in none more so than our singular commitment to rigorous inquiry that demands multiple and often competing perspectives. The nature of questions being asked and the perspectives being engaged are often a function of the diversity of experiences and outlooks of those participating. Diversity for the University is therefore particularly germane to our core perspective. We must ensure that our scholarly community is composed of a rich mix of individuals who, through their own distinctive viewpoints, contribute to the intellectually challenging culture of the University.

For over one hundred years, our commitment to diversity has shaped the course of research and education at the University and has contributed to groundbreaking work in a variety of disciplines. The University has always been open to women as well as men. The first doctorate earned by a black woman in the United States was awarded in 1921 at the University of Chicago. We were among the first major non-historically black universities to tenure a black faculty member. Contributions by Asian American scholars in 1920s were essential to the University's landmark research in sociology. At a time when other elite institutions discriminated against Jews, the University refused to set quotas. The University has long been a magnet for students from Mexico and South America. Since the founding of the Center for Gender Studies in 1996, the University has become a major center for research and graduate training in fields that examine issues of gender and sexuality. Throughout its history, the University has benefited when there has been a wide range of views represented on campus.

Our commitment to diversity affects our relationship to the community as well. As a large educational institution and employer, we have commitments and opportunities due to our location on the South Side of Chicago. Our students and members of the community forge ties through programs supported by the University Community Service Center. Community residents contribute their knowledge and skills to the University as members of the faculty and staff. The University of Chicago Medical Center is working in partnership with other health care providers to build a strong health care network for South Side residents. The Center for Urban School Improvement and its charter schools have worked with the community to develop schools that have improved the education of children in the neighborhood. Both the University and the community are made stronger by a mutual exchange of ideas and resources.

A commitment to diversity is central to our mission of discovery. The way the University has been organized and has evolved over the years, the intensity of our intellectual culture, the resulting education that is so engaging and powerful, and the nature of the contributions the University has made to scholarship and to society are all derived from our focus on inquiry. We have an obligation to see that the greatest variety of perspectives is brought to bear on the issues before us as scholars and citizens. We therefore celebrate our tradition of inclusion and recognize that our success as an institution depends on its ongoing renewal.

Kenneth W. Warren
Deputy Provost for Research and Minority Issues

In 2003 the University of Chicago's Provost's Initiative on Minority Issues (PIMI) asserted, "A commitment to diversity is not merely or even primarily a matter of public relations. The production and testing of knowledge for the benefit of all demands intellectual and social restlessness. We must be willing to ask whether or not those things that appear true and good to us, and to those we deem like us, appear likewise to those who seem different from us. We must be willing to hear from a variety of sources to determine if our research agendas and priorities suffer from unintended biases rather than reflect a proper estimation of the state of knowledge in our respective fields. We must understand that we do not exist outside of the society we study but that we act within it and upon it, and that part of our responsibility as an institution for reflection and research is to be aware of and to assess how what we do affects the world around us."

To help ensure that our commitment to diversity remains among our highest priorities, and to sustain the focused effort needed to attract and retain the best faculty, students, and staff, the University has established the Office of Deputy Provost for Research and Minority Issues. Working with the President and the Provost, the Deputy Provost for Research and Minority Issues directs, supports, and monitors the University's progress in diversifying our faculty, our student body, and our staff, and in creating a climate that is welcoming of all individuals regardless of race, sex, gender, sexual orientation, religion, nationality, or disability. The Deputy Provost will support efforts to make the University a better neighbor to its surrounding neighborhoods and to the City of Chicago as a whole.

The paragraphs below outline some of the achievements we hope to build on, the resources we intend to commit, and the goals we have set in each of the major areas crucial to our mission of creating a diverse campus.

Faculty. The most difficult challenge facing a premier research institution is to attract and retain scholars at the forefront of their respective fields. Increasingly, meeting this challenge means being able to persuade scholars from underrepresented groups that Chicago provides the best environment for their research and teaching. Our efforts to appoint these scholars will succeed in today's competitive environment only if the President, Provost, Deans, and Department Chairs, together with departmental faculty, embrace a serious commitment to recruitment and retention, and to preparing younger scholars to enter a life of research. We must find and hire the best scholars currently available, and we must build the ranks of prospective faculty. By hiring faculty whose success—both in their own work and in their willingness to mentor students—demonstrates that people from all backgrounds can achieve at the highest levels, we encourage undergraduates to become scholars themselves. Whether the field in question be Economics, Chemistry, Anthropology, English, Math or Law, we expect to see women and men from a variety of backgrounds represented among our faculty. To make this happen we must ensure that our hiring practices do not unintentionally overlook promising scholars, and we must continue to encourage research efforts that increase our knowledge of the human diversity that makes up the world in which we live. We will continue to provide the resources to recruit top scholars, and if we do our job right, by hiring the best faculty we will have also hired a diverse faculty.

The interdisciplinary tradition of research at the University presents a special opportunity with regard to diversity. The Center for the Study of Race, Politics, and Culture (CSRPC) has developed a mission to

move beyond the conventional black/white dichotomy to understand how our diverse society has come to be divided into particular categories and how those categories are related and structured. The Center for Gender Studies (CGS) fosters teaching, research, and discussion on gender and sexuality, and in feminist, gay and lesbian, and queer studies; CGS "seeks to reach out into public areas where gender and sexuality come together with other political, artistic, and intellectual concerns." The University of Chicago Center for Latin American Studies is committed to increasing research-based knowledge and public understanding of Latin America, including Mexico, Central and South America, the Caribbean, Iberian connections, and global Latino communities. Chicago's devotion to interdisciplinary research on issues of race and ethnicity includes the Biological Sciences as well. A major new research venture, the Center for Interdisciplinary Health Disparities Research (CIHDR), is a joint undertaking by the Biological Sciences Division, the Social Sciences Divisions, the School of Social Service Administration, and the CSRPC. Interdisciplinary ventures of this sort not only provide opportunities to train students in new scholarly methods but also open new avenues for the university to engage with the surrounding community.

Students. The composition of our student body, undergraduate and graduate, deeply influences the educational experience they receive at Chicago. As was argued in the amicus brief cosigned by the University and other leading institutions in the cases brought against the University of Michigan: "Students are both recipients and providers of the learning that takes place at universities, and [universities] have a vital interest in what students bring to the task of educating each other.... Diversity helps students confront perspectives other than their own and thus to think more vigorously and imaginatively; it helps students learn to relate better to persons from different backgrounds; it helps students become better citizens. The educational benefits of student diversity include the discovery that there is a broad range of viewpoint and experience within any given minority community—as well as learning that certain imagined differences at times turn out to be only skin deep." On the basis of both research and personal experience, we believe that classes of students from diverse backgrounds, taught by faculty of varied backgrounds, will create a richer and better educational experience. Productive intellectual exchange depends not only on the intelligence and talent of individual students, but also on the experiences and values they bring to the table. Homogeneity perpetuates unchallenged assumptions—the very antithesis of what the University stands for.

As a member of a tiny group of elite higher education institutions the University of Chicago has a responsibility to remain accessible to students of modest or limited means. Many current students and potential applicants require significant financial support if they are to avail themselves fully of the opportunities represented by a University of Chicago education. The University has done better than most of its peers in recruiting and supporting students from less well-off families, and the newly established Odyssey Scholarships, made possible by a generous \$100 million gift from an anonymous donor, will allow the University to eliminate or reduce student loans for undergraduate students whose families demonstrate low or moderate income and high financial need. This gift includes a challenge that the University seek additional resources to endow this program beyond its 15-year duration. The University is committed to that effort.

Also as a leading educator of graduate students the University has the responsibility to enlarge the faculty pipeline through the recruitment and training of minority doctoral students. In addition to making resources available to support these students, the University will devote more attention to their recruitment and retention through the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs and through the admissions offices of the various divisions and schools.

Staff. Those who work at the University of Chicago in non-academic occupations and professions play a large role in shaping the University's image and in fulfilling its mission. While in some ways the staff is

already quite diverse, we can and will do better in recruiting new employees from diverse backgrounds, making current employees more aware of opportunities for training and advancement, and involving all of our staff in improving the climate of the University. Although the current population of employees reflects the diversity of the census groups with which we are compared for purposes of Affirmative Action reporting, it is not representative of the population of our community. We will strive to make it more so. In particular, the University will continue to make a concerted effort to locate and recruit strong minority candidates for higher-level, managerial positions.

Campus Climate. It will do little good to recruit, hire or admit students, faculty, staff to our University community if we do not strive to make sure that the University is an environment where all members of our community, regardless of race, sex, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, nationality, religious affiliation, or disability, have a reasonable opportunity to participate in the University's intellectual, scholarly, and public life. Our primary commitment must be to promoting free, open, and robust discussion and inquiry in order to advance knowledge and pursue innovative research. This commitment requires that we make ourselves aware of, and seek appropriately to address, obstacles that may unduly impede some members of our community from benefiting fully from our rich resources or contributing wholeheartedly to our intellectual mission.

Community. As President Zimmer has affirmed, the University must recognize its responsibility as a large institution in a racially and economically diverse community on the Southside of Chicago. We must develop better relationships that treat the community as partners. For example, while research done at the University has demonstrably improved educational outcomes for children in surrounding neighborhoods, the communities around our university have produced knowledge resources that are vital to the university's core mission. Residents have archived information about the history of the Southside of Chicago, about Chicago politics, about many aspects of music and the arts, about religion and theology, and about a wide array of socio-economic experiences. Both University and community will profit from enhanced and mutual intellectual exchange. The history of the University over the last century shows that its fate is directly affected by the prosperity of the surrounding communities. The University will benefit by paying attention to diversity in wielding its enormous economic power in order to improve the prospects of our neighbors. Partnering with community groups, we have created new economic opportunities in the neighborhoods around the University.

The sentiments expressed in this Diversity Statement derive from a longstanding effort by many people at the University of Chicago to enhance and renew the University's educational mission. Some of the recent history of this effort is reflected in the annual reports of the Provost's Initiative on Minority Issues (PIMI) and in Diversity Statement from former President Don Randel and former Provost Richard Saller. For those who are interested in reading more from this history I have included below links to [PIMI's annual reports](#) and to the [2004 Diversity Statement](#).