

University Faculty Committee on Diversity
Statement on Diversity Report by Dr. Lewis Shepherd

The Faculty Committee on Diversity expresses gratitude for the administration's recent actions on diversity. These actions include the fifth goal of the University's Strategic Plan: "Promote Intercultural and International Understanding" (Goal 5). This goal includes the objective to "recruit and retain faculty, staff and students from underrepresented groups" (Objective 5.5).

Historically, the light of Samford's Christian witness regarding diversity has been dim. Accordingly, the inclusion of this goal and objective in the Strategic Plan is very significant. The Committee understands this history and is grateful for this development.

In the Spring of 2007, before the Strategic Plan was publicized, the Committee submitted through the faculty senate a request for a third-party assessment of Samford's climate regarding diversity. The request included an on-campus component with interviews of representative groups and an internet-based survey for administration, faculty and staff, both to assess that climate qualitatively. This request complements the stated goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan. It is the Committee's view that the relevant goals and objectives will only be meaningfully accomplished by first assessing and improving the present climate—assess now, reducing greater difficulties later.

After this request was made, the administration invited Dr. Lewis Shepherd, Assistant to the President for Special Programs at Ouachita University, to do an on-campus assessment. Dr. Shepherd visited on October 1-3 and again on November 29. He has presented his findings in a ten-page report. In addition to groups mentioned in his report, Dr. Shepherd met with representative groups of women faculty and African American faculty.

Dr. Shepherd's report provides many important statements, observations and recommendations. His report also includes significant quantitative data, but less qualitative information about the climate. His report demonstrates the need for a more thorough assessment by an individual or group with greater expertise in social psychology or organizational behavior and the application of those disciplines to institutional diversity. This need for expertise is evident because of the issues Dr. Shepherd noted regarding Samford's current climate and because he was not able to assess that climate thoroughly.

The Committee is appreciative of the administration's expeditious and respectful effort to begin to assess the climate for diversity here at Samford. The Committee also thanks Dr. Shepherd for his work during his visits and in the production of his report. The Committee considers Dr. Shepherd's work to be an important initial step in assessing diversity at Samford University.

In light of Dr. Shepherd's report, the Committee has made or will make the following requests through the faculty senate.

1. The Committee agrees with the report's recommendation of an office devoted to the issue of diversity. The Committee will consider formally requesting the creation of such an office.
2. The Committee requests consultation on any job description created to monitor or oversee diversity efforts. The Committee is interested in the academic and professional qualifications identified in such a job description. The Committee requests that due consideration be given to requiring high-level professional experience and/or academic expertise, such as extensive experience in Human Resources and/or academic training in organizational behavior. (Request approved by faculty senate on 25 Feb 08.)
3. The Committee requests representation in any search and/or hiring for such a position. (Request approved by faculty senate on 25 Feb 08.) The Committee is concerned that the person in such a position be highly qualified, comparable to the best peer institutions in this regard, and commanding the respect of administrators, faculty and students. This seems especially important in light of the institutional history noted above.
4. The Committee requests an update on the third-party assessment, specifically on any plans regarding further on-campus, qualitative assessment and an internet-based survey of administration, faculty and staff.