SUS Access and Diversity Team
Conference Call
December 15, 2005
Synopsis of Initial Brainstorming Session

Improving Access and Diversity in the State University System

<u>**Potential Barriers and Challenges**</u>

- High school course selection that leads to lack of adequate preparation.
- Lack of preparation for and delaying taking SAT/ACT.
- SAT performance.
- Rising academic standards at universities (maintaining diverse demographics while increasing admission standards).
- Many students from populations that tend to not meet standards often are not challenged to take rigorous coursework in the K-12 schools and are not encouraged in their academic development.
- Often, these students have no resources to participate in test preparation (SAT/ACT) programs.
- Out-of-state recruitment is not just hindered by high tuition; SUS institutions often are competing with schools with more resources.
- There are sub-cultures within the underrepresented populations which have special needs (e.g., learning disabled).
- Many of these students apply late and complete financial aid forms late.
- Many of the students are first-generation college students. Some first generation issues include a lack of understanding and subsequent fear of the systems (admission, financial aid, etc.) and the language of higher education.
- Getting students to apply.
- Retention.
- Perceived (or real) lack of on-campus role models (other students, mentors, advisors, faculty, administrators).
- Without the family support, students often come to the universities disadvantaged informationally and without declared majors.
- Many of these students attend part-time; many work.
- Some campuses are starting from a smaller base. Issue of growth. Recruitment issues.
- Some campuses have higher percentages of students receiving financial assistance.
- Some campuses have higher percentages of underprepared students.
- There is some hesitation to address issues of diversity on campuses due to interpretations regarding the Michigan case (i.e., Gratz v. Bollinger 2003) heard by the Supreme Court.
- Limited family and community support.
- Some of the more traditional residential campuses need more non-traditional academic programs – need to rethink structures to provide more flexibility.
- Language barriers.
- Peer group pressure.
- Community college transfers – Do we really provide the support services for the transfers who come in at the junior level? How about support for students coming from programs other than the Associate in Arts?
- What about support for undocumented students who completed high school in the U.S.?

Potential Solutions

- Increase the pool of college-ready students.
- Reach out to students (and their families and supporters) earlier in their K-12 careers (at least middle school). Get them to think about college, in general, and think about SUS institutions, specifically.
- Educate communities of the value of higher education. Involve community representatives in efforts to encourage more young people from underrepresented populations to prepare for and attend college.
- Introduce young people to the campuses early through outreach, summer enrichment, and summer bridge programs.
- Appoint liaisons to the high schools. Increase the university presence in low-performing schools.
- Provide free SAT and ACT prep to low-performing schools.
- Provide more need-based financial aid.
- Focus on first generation students and students with demonstrated financial need.
- Consider reciprocity agreements with neighboring states.
- Involve university foundations in the discussions. Opportunities for endowment fund raising exist.
- Strive to understand needs of subcultures more completely.
- Develop systemic and systematic approaches to recruit (specific recruitment plans) and support students.
- Get campus representatives (faculty and staff) better informed about working with the underrepresented groups.
- Improve retention efforts.
- Develop/strengthen programs to integrate students into the university –cultural transition.
- Possibly make a commitment to students in the middle schools (promise program).
- Expand or create something like the College Reach Out Program.
- Follow up on the Access Task Force recommendations regarding the Bright Futures scholarships and setting aside some of the funds for need-based aid.
- Lobby for increases in Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants and Florida Student Assistance Grants.
- Increase the diversity of faculty and staff.
- Bring more emphasis to undergraduate education in general.
- Create one central location on campus for support services.
- Conduct an analysis of effectiveness and efficiencies of existing outreach and support services on the campuses to identify opportunities for consolidation, elimination, replication, etc., as appropriate.
- Pay more attention to the campus environment and providing academic, social, and cultural support for students from underrepresented populations.
- Build support both on campus and in the community for enrolled students from underrepresented populations. Involve families and other supporters of the students.