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NOTES ON USEFUL STEPS FOR A UNIVERSITY

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Notes On Useful Steps For A University

In Addition To "Compliance," To Help Make EO Really Work*

"MIT Systems Approach"

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1. Frequent, outspoken, consistent, detailed expressions of EO "commitment" from the top, in public and in private.
2. Multiple Helping Relationships for junior faculty and middle managers ("mentoring"). The mentoring framework should be for everyone but can be especially monitored for minorities and women.
3. Steady-state, one-to-one recruitment of minorities and women as well as white males by the faculty wherever they go on normal, professional travel ("using the traditional Old Boy Network to recruit minorities and women").
4. Steady-state involvement of senior officers in monitoring all faculty and staff appointments and promotions, (in Academic Council, on a weekly basis).
5. A ^{where appropriate} (non-union) "grievance procedure" to channel upward the inquiries, concerns, and complaints of the community.
6. Fostering responsible "networks" especially among minorities and women.

*These notes describe some attempts at MIT to build beyond the EO/AA "compliance" efforts required by the Federal Government. To the extent that any of it works however, much credit is due to the distinguished Vice-President, John Wynne, who is our EO officer. He is largely responsible for an excellent posting system, for salary equity, managerial training programs, job analyses, a day care system, extraordinary personnel officers and dozens of other administrative achievements all of which help create a vital positive "ambiance" for equal opportunity.

1. Commitment: In the case of MIT the senior officers and now many department heads and lab directors talk about EO casually, officially, frequently, ubiquitously, in public and private, hopefully, determinedly, occasionally even fiercely. It makes an enormous difference.

2. The pieces of our "mentoring framework" are:

.the top administration "legitimizes" the idea by talking about it, especially with department heads.

This is critical to overcome the normal white male diffidence and embarrassment in dealing with minorities and women;

.department heads are responsible to be sure all junior faculty have a talk with them at least once a year and that there are other , "multiple helping relationships" supporting junior faculty;

.the women faculty frequently organize lunches for discussion of promotion and tenure processes and other professional questions;

.the Special Assistants work with all visitors, especially junior faculty, to help teach them to take responsibility to seek and form mentee relationships and to help support them in learning how to do it.

"Mentoring" is thus encouraged steadily from top-down and from grass roots up. We believe all these steps are necessary for adequate mentoring to take place.

3. We are working to encourage all our faculty to introduce themselves to all "non-traditional" (minority and female) professionals wherever they "normally" go. This is of

course simply an extension of the Old Boy Network to include minorities and women and is the most successful recruiting device we have, especially when practiced by senior white males.

4. The President, Chancellor and Provost, and other senior officers personally supervise all serious search plans and reports for all appointments, on a weekly basis.

5. Our non-union "grievance procedure" has several unusual features. In our case it is:

.universal: there is one easily-understood procedure available to all pay classifications (and for all students beyond the Deans' Offices) and for all kinds of inquiries, concerns and grievances. The policy begins "anyone (not in a union) who feels unjustly treated for any reason...."

.full of redundancies: the "one procedure" has several different options at each step so everyone has more of a chance to find a hearing they can believe in. At the ^{beginning and occasionally at the} end of the line there is a male Special Assistant to the President and Chancellor (who is black) and a female Special Assistant to the President and Chancellor (who is white). Beyond us are the President and Chancellor (who are white and male). The procedure is, thus, for everyone (like the mentoring framework) but with a special likelihood that minorities and women will not feel (or be) forgotten.

.informal as well as formal: one may bring a formal complaint which then must go up through channels. Or one may seek counsel, advice and mediation informally

at any stage including the last. In practice we have extremely few formal grievances and several thousand "concerns" in our offices each year.

This means also that such an office can work on a mediation basis even in institutions where multiple formal grievance procedures already exist. If an informal mediation service is set up where many formal procedures already exist, it should be a universal procedure anterior to all the formal procedures. It should be very "low-barrier" and expect a high case load, in distinction to formal procedures which typically are rarely used.

.charged with the responsibility to "communicate with line management:" we are specifically charged to do two things: a) to help each visitor individually as well as we can;

b) to help the line managers of the Institute with data and recommendations to support them to keep MIT in an orderly process of change. Our responsibility to communicate and recommend is, in practice, reasonably compatible with the constraints of confidentiality under which we operate. We are not "company spies;" we do not talk (and therefore often cannot directly act to help) if a visitor asks for confidentiality. But frequently we are able to help on a system-wide basis even if we cannot directly investigate the concerns of an individual. (For example, when a number of individual students alleged sexual harassment, but

were afraid to make open complaints, we asked the Faculty Committee on Educational Policy to survey the general topic and give it some publicity. Our policies and procedures and "public education" on this matter will be thereby both improved and better understood. By the same token, when a shy female faculty member asked about her apparently inequitable pension payments to come, we recommended and (are now grateful for) changes in the pension plan. This "upward feedback" process has led to hundreds of changes in policies and procedures and structures (some slow, some swift, some small, some extensive) nearly all of which came about in an orderly, non-polarized way.

6. We have rather extensive informal networks of women and minorities. In the case of women, at any given time 20-30 women's groups bring women together on a functional or geographic basis. The groups are self-formed. Any responsible group may send a representative to the President's Women's Advisory Group. The W.A.G. meets monthly with the Special Assistant; each month different groups set agendas and lead discussions.

Such networks help recruit women to MIT and help women support each other. They serve as "upward feedback channels," giving orderly warning of serious problems, recognition to excellent administrators, timely analysis of difficult issues. They serve as an information channel to the community on budget constraints, safety issues, policy changes. Groups help organize relevant programs, (for example the extraordinary presentations

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at Women's Faculty meetings). The W.A.G. and its constituent groups at MIT have regularly coordinated women's efforts in a non-polarized way, and appear to have contributed very greatly to orderly progress for women the Institute.

It will be noticed that much of the effort described in these notes is designed to help everybody. If mentoring, grievance procedures, recruitment, etc. really work "equally for everyone," then women and minorities are in fact immediately better off than they were. We have therefore attempted to build structures appropriate for everyone, in a context where minorities and women are not so likely to be overlooked. This has the effect that new "EO" measures can also powerfully benefit white males, incite less backlash, and still serve the special needs of non-traditional colleagues.