

## Berkeleyan

### 'We had the vision, but not the opportunity'

Ten grassroots plans for fostering diversity at Berkeley get the fiscal go-ahead to realize their goals

By Jonathan King, Public Affairs | 24 October 2007

The 10 programs approved for funding by BILD - the Berkeley Initiative for Leadership on Diversity - during the 2007-08 fiscal year represent the best diversity-promoting thinking of staff and administrators all across campus. They incorporate strategies as up-to-date as Web design and as traditional as face-to-face conversation. And they all focus on one or more of the four priorities identified by the initiative's steering committee for this initial round of funding: partnership, access, inclusion, and staff development.

The call to campus staff for funding proposals came this spring, not quite a year after Chancellor Birgeneau launched BILD with an announcement at an all-day "Diversity in Action" forum on May 9, 2006. The steering committee that was formed to guide the proposal process wanted to encourage the campus community "to imagine how our individual and collective ideas can make a positive difference on the Berkeley campus by expanding diversity at all levels and creating an atmosphere of inclusion."

As conversations with team leaders of several funded projects show, that message reached an audience that in many cases was already thinking along those lines but unsure of how to secure the funding needed to proceed.

In this initial round, the BILD steering committee received 36 preliminary applications, of which 26 were, at the committee's invitation, resubmitted in full. From that number, 18 proposals made it into the final review round. Finally, 10 were approved for funding of up to \$50,000 (out of a total of \$200,000 available for the year).

The departments and units receiving the grants include Physical Plant-Campus Services, the schools of Optometry and Public Health, UC Printing Services, the Department of Theater, Dance, and Performance Studies, the Library Bindery, Information Services and Technology, the Disabled Students Program, Student Life Advising Services, the Residential and Student Services Program, the Graduate Division, the Library, and the College of Letters and Science.

James Dudek, a senior policy analyst in L&S who served on the steering committee, says that doing so "was one of the most rewarding experiences I've had at Cal. Having the opportunity to read the proposals gave me insight into the depth and breadth of creativity and dedication among staff and faculty here. What was most inspiring was the synergy I've been seeing on campus, with so many people devoted to making Cal a more diverse and inclusive place."

The selected proposals will enable participants to undertake programs as simple-seeming as a job fair and as plainly audacious as incorporating college-level drama and stagecraft into diversity workshops. In almost every case, even when the elements in a given program are intended for realization by employees within a single unit or department, their potential influence on the campus at large is both recognized and embraced.

#### **Public Health: Hierarchically diverse**

For example, what could have a more transforming influence on the campus climate than a program that allows senior staff in one area of activity to sit with junior staff in another for two hours, learning all about the work they do and the way it helps an entire unit function more smoothly? That's the primary feature of the BILD-funded Staff Talent and Role Sharing (STARS) Program in the School of Public Health.

The STARS initiative, which has at its core the pairing of SPH staffers who will share information about their jobs, is being called an "exchange program, created by SPH staff for SPH staff." It will be open to all staff: career and limited, represented and non-represented. An employee who registers with STARS will be matched with someone in a pairing that is diverse both hierarchically and across units. In addition, if an employee expresses an interest in being paired with someone in a particular area of interest or emphasis, that preference will be honored.

Pairs then trade off visits to one another's workplaces; during those visits, each host educates her guest in the workings of that unit and her own role in its operations. Keeping the focus personal, the host will also tell a bit about her career path to date and future career goals. The process is then reversed sometime within a two-week cycle, with the previous visitor becoming a host. The first of two cycles gets underway in late January, with the second to follow in May and June.

Traditional notions of diversity are pointedly not the point here, says Seana Kelly, a member of the project's management team: "We're really getting at the campus hierarchy of staff classifications, mixing junior- and senior-level staff, having it be a program where people have direct access to one another."

Public Health is a large school with 35 research centers and multiple administrative units, she notes, so this new program (which she laughingly styles "Take your co-worker to work day") will help all participants get to know new people and advance their own understanding of the school's work.

### **PP-CS: A festival of opportunities**

In Physical Plant-Campus Services, the funded program is intended not only to educate the workforce but to celebrate it. Several weeks ago, as part of National Diversity Month, the first Annual Cultural Festival for PP-CS employees was held at International House. A staff whose members represent more than 20 countries of origin brought cultural art and artifacts, photos, clothing, and heirlooms to display at booths located around the auditorium. A Latin jazz/dance ensemble performed, as did a group of Chinese Lion Dancers celebrating the Chinese Mid-Autumn Festival. Little surprise, then, that staff praised the event as one of the best in PP-CS history.

"The festival is seen as a great step toward advancing our commitment to diversity," says PP-CS communications specialist Trevor Bryant. "It's a critical component in our recently adopted strategic plan, and as such has the full support and commitment of PP-CS management and leadership."

Plans for the event, long in the making, were nearly final when word reached the unit that next year's festival would be funded by BILD. A partnership with the campus Center for Workforce Development will enable PP-CS to offer resources and opportunities for staff who face language and cultural barriers on the job. Says Bryant: "A major theme will be connecting staff with resources for career advancement, English- language acquisition, and other continuing-education opportunities."

### **The Library Bindery: Ties that bind**

Helping a multicultural workforce to not only thrive in their current jobs but position themselves for advancement is a goal of several of the funded projects. More than half the 35 employees in the Library Bindery, which binds books for all campus libraries, faculty, and students, have limited proficiency in English, according to supervisor Michael Foley, and many lack computer access. BILD will fund almost 1,000 instructional hours for staff over the next 10 months, says Foley, with a number of outcomes in mind, including on-site ESL instruction; "train the trainer" sessions for experienced staff who perform on-the-job training; and production of an operations manual.

In addition, four dedicated computer stations - and the training to use them - will be provided, allowing employees to manage their benefits online, access campus announcements and information, and learn about online training or career opportunities. Foley says the computers should be ready to use by Nov. 1, when open enrollment begins, with the first instructional courses launching before the Thanksgiving holiday.

It would have been difficult to fund such a program without BILD, says Foley: "We had the vision, but not the opportunity." With cost-containment a Library priority, increased training and computer costs would likely have translated into increased customer expense. Now, though, the hope is that the freshly funded program will build a cadre of "motivated and engaged bindery employees who demonstrate improved workplace performance while taking advantage of career-development opportunities" on campus. "We envision," continues Foley, "that it will become a model for other units, be they small like ours or larger, that want to make a difference for their employees."

### **Interactive Theater: Acting the part**

The BILD-funded Interactive Theater Project involves staff and faculty in the Department of Theater, Dance, and Performance Studies (TDPS), the Graduate Diversity Program, Staff Equity and Diversity Services, the Campus Climate and Compliance Office, and the Center for Workforce Development. The goal: to conduct a series of theater-based workshops in which trained actors will perform scenes illustrating problematic encounters in the workplace. At the close of each scene the audience will question the actors (still in character) about their behavior, feelings, and motivations; audience members' responses, including proposed solutions to the problems represented in the scene, will be guided by facilitators.

The actors in these workshops will include faculty and staff from across campus who audit a spring 2008 course called Interactive Theater: Acting for Social Change, to be taught by Michael Mansfield, undergraduate-student-affairs officer for TDPS. (The course will be given one night a week for three hours.) It's designed, says Mansfield, "as a two-semester exploration of complex issues around race, class, sexuality, disability, and status." In the first semester, he explains, participants "will learn about the discipline of theater and its inherent potential for activism." Research, interviews, and developing relationships will all contribute to the creation of dramatic scripts that "tell the story of Berkeley's campus climate." Then, in the second semester, participants will take the scripted material into rehearsal and performance as part of what Mansfield calls "an interactive theater workshop and training model."

"This is an opportunity for us to share the pedagogy of performance with a wider campus constituency," says TDPS chair Shannon Jackson. "In this department we're committed to developing projects that use the space of performance as an arena for reflection and action about the most important issues facing our campus and the world. Performance offers a safe arena within which to try on new perspectives, to try out new behaviors, and to explore issues of difference intellectually, physically, and emotionally."

Edith Ng, director of staff affirmative action and diversity programs and a project co-leader, says "ITP is a powerful tool to explore the impacts of our actions on others in areas that are difficult or taboo to talk about: race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, class, gender, etc. This kind of theater goes not just to the 'head' but also to the 'heart.'?"

Other BILD-funded programs for this year include:

**Connecting People and Building Community**, a program to influence diversity at all levels in Berkeley's 29 libraries.

**The Disabled Staff Resource Network**, "a cutting-edge, peer-based network for staff with all types of disabilities. Leadership of the project comes from staff at the Disabled Students' Residence Program and Academic Compliance and Disability Standards.

**The First Annual Native American Diversity Conference and Career Job Fair**, with leadership from Student Life Advising Services/Educational Opportunity Program and Residential and Student Service Programs.

**Lavender PAÍS**, a partnership among LavenderCal (representing LGBTQ employees on campus) and other staff groups, campus units, and BILD-funded projects. Lavender PAÍS will also act as a resource to the newly reconstituted Chancellor's Advisory Committee on the LGBT Community at Cal (CAC-LGBT), helping to gather information about community needs and interests.

**The Special Training for Employment Program (STEP)**, while located in the School of Optometry, is a four-month internship open to "everyone," says project leader Myrna Flores. It will provide people interested in working at Berkeley the opportunity to become better prepared for entry-level employment by learning basic skills and obtaining on-the-job experience.

**WebAccess**, a project proposed by Information Technology, is designed to improve campus website accessibility to users with disabilities, help Web developers master techniques in accessible-Web development, and provide education on assistive technology to disabled staff and their supervisors.

Visitors to BILD's home page ([diversity.berkeley.edu/BILD.php](http://diversity.berkeley.edu/BILD.php) (<http://diversity.berkeley.edu/BILD.php>)) can read expanded descriptions of all 10 funded projects for 2007-08. The Office of the Vice Chancellor for Equity and Inclusion anticipates that calls for funding proposals for 2008-09 will be issued during summer 2008.