

Address to the SPH Minority Alumni Reception
January 2011

When Barbara Rimer asked me to serve as Co-Chair of the School's Diversity and Inclusion Task Force, I did not hesitate to say yes. When we finally got a chance to meet a few weeks later, we discovered that we not only shared a common commitment to increase diversity in the School, we also shared a common outlook on organizational performance and change. That is this: if we keep on doing the things we have been doing, we will keep on getting the results that we have been getting. If we want different results, we will have to change the way we do business and, importantly, we will have to change the mindset that governs the way we do business.

When we issued the call for volunteers to serve on the Task Force, more than sixty faculty members, staff members, and students immediately signed up. Twenty of these volunteers also agreed to serve on the Change Team, which meets monthly to delve more deeply into the issues we are examining. Over the past six months, we have surveyed the SPH community about climate issues, conducted nearly a dozen focus groups with various constituencies within the School, met individually with the Department Chairs and Program Leaders, and received a history lesson about the School's prior efforts to increase diversity and inclusion. Next month, the Task Force will meet again and transition from assessment and analysis to strategy formation and recommendation.

What has impressed me most, and what I find most gratifying about this experience, is the energy that that we have tapped into and the momentum that we have generated. The process itself has modeled and exemplified the kind of change we want to see in the School. Beyond the inquiry that we have started and the dialogue that we have generated, we have sparked a palpable sense of excitement and, even empowerment. There is a growing sense that we do not need to wait for the Task Force to issue its recommendations and submit its report. There are things we can do now, today, to bring about the change we want to see. Already, in my department, I have seen changes in how we do our business, and how we think about the business we do.

It will take focus, determination, and some resources to accomplish the goals we set out to achieve. But accomplish them we can, and accomplish them we will.

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