AHEAD’s Diversity Initiative (2006-2009)

The Diversity Initiative was an AHEAD member workgroup that grew out of the work of the Race, Ethnicity, and Disability Diversity (REDD) Special Interest Group in 2006. The work of these members moved AHEAD forward in its work in the areas of diversity, representation, and inclusion.

# Highlights:

Highlights of the impact and progress directly related to the work of the Diversity Initiative include:

## 1. The Board of Directors

* participated in a dedicated, day-long cultural competency training and facilitated diversity planning;
* established a formal working group to focus on issues of diversity, representation, and inclusion, the “Diversity Initiative;”
* formally broadened its definition of diversity to include issues of race and ethnicity, nationality, disability, sexual orientation, gender, age, religion and other aspects of difference represented by AHEAD’s membership and the students it serves;
* offered an on-line course entitled: “Recognizing the Connections: Disability as an Aspect of Diversity (Critical Concepts in DS”) in February and October;
* Actively recruited diverse members to serve on the Board of Directors to increase the diversity of voices informing AHEAD’s work; and
* funded and sponsored an international exchange program for professionals from different countries to visit and work at each other’s campuses to increase exposure to international perspectives of disability and higher education.

## 2. AHEAD

* Targeted personalized membership outreach to all Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic-Serving Institutions, and Tribal Colleges;
* realized equal market penetration in HBCUs, Hispanic Serving Institutions, and Tribal Colleges as among all higher education institutions; and
* developed and distributed a member survey to create an accurate picture of the make-up of AHEAD members’ gender, age, racial/ethnic, and institutional diversity to guide future efforts to increase diversity;

## 3. The Diversity Initiative

* had significant impact on the selection of concurrent and keynote presentations during AHEAD annual conferences: sponsoring a strand of diversity-focused concurrent sessions and selecting keynote presenters to advance discussions of diversity within the Association;
* held an open forum during the 2010 annual conference to listen to input from members;
* created the AHEAD Diversity Recognition Award and made the first award in 2009;
* developed a tri-fold brochure focused on the importance of diversity to higher education/disability professionals and how to promote it in their work on campus;
* Held an open forum at the 2010 annual conference to invite member feedback and guidance in the area of diversity;
* established an AHEAD listserv on diversity, where members can engage in discussions around scenarios on disability and diversity;
* developed a Web page focused on diversity issues and the work of the Initiative;
* regularly contributed articles to AHEAD’s online newsletter, the ALERT;
* completed a preliminary review of literature related to the concept of cultural competency to promote diversity and recognize culture as "integrated patterns of human behavior that include the language, thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions of racial, ethnic, religious and social groups;" and
* developed intentional strategies for recruiting diverse members, including collaboration with NASPA on its Undergraduate Fellow Program (NUFP).

# The Next Chapter

In 2010, the Diversity Initiative’s work was further prioritized through the establishment of an ongoing Standing Committee on Diversity. We thank the original members of the Diversity Initiative for their leadership and commitment to changing the culture within AHEAD.