April 9, 2001

To: All Department Chairs
From: Jim Swartz

All academic departments are invited to submit (or re-submit) proposals for searches to take place in 2001-02 as part of the Grinnell College faculty diversity initiative. These proposals may come from any department, including but not limited to departments whose diversity-initiative search did not result in an appointment this year and departments whose proposals for new or replacement faculty positions were not initially recommended by the Council.

The proposal deadline is **Tuesday, May 1, 2001**. Procedures for proposing and carrying out the searches will be very similar to procedures used this year. As a department chair, you should recently have received an invitation to a meeting with the Dean and members of Executive Council for the purpose of answering questions about this process (Friday, April 13 from 12-1, Science 2021; coffee, lemonade and brownies will be provided). Please see below for more information on the context of the diversity initiative and guidelines for these proposals.

1. **Another round of diversity initiative searches?**

   The Executive Council recently discussed the outcome of the 2000-01 initiative to enhance the diversity of the Grinnell College faculty. Last fall, when the initiative began, I noted that the college’s resolution to increase the number of faculty members who are African American, Asian American, Latino, and Native American can be achieved “only through a combination of multiple aggressive strategies that include:

   - a high priority on diversity when filling open positions,
   - further attention to programs for visiting faculty that bring diverse scholars to the college,
   - departmental nomination of impressive individuals for opportunity appointments, and
   - creation and advertisement of additional tenure-track positions to meet the needs of the college, including the important goal of increasing faculty diversity.” (Memo to department chairs from Dean, 9-15-00)

   I am sure you will be as startled as I was when I realized that this year’s four (out of eleven) tenure-track appointments that further the aims of the diversity initiative can each be traced to one of the four diversity strategies listed above: One appointment resulted from a regular search; one from the conversion of a CSMP visiting position; one from departmental nomination of an impressive individual for an opportunity appointment; and one resulted from the creation and

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1 The September 13, 2000 document from the Executive Council setting forth the faculty diversity initiative states that “there are many ways to define diversity, and Grinnell values many types of diversity. To prioritize commitments of time and energy, we suggest initially narrowing the immediate definition of diversity to reflect our view of pressing current needs. We intend to focus our present efforts on increasing the representation of African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, and Asian Americans. Accordingly, for the remainder of this document, our use of the term ‘diversity’ signifies membership in one of these groups” (p. 1).
advertisement of a special search with emphasis on increasing diversity. With this early outcome, the value of adopting multiple strategies is receiving an unexpectedly literal endorsement.

The fact that we created and advertised nine position descriptions in the diversity-initiative search, yet only one of these resulted in an appointment, could be seen as discouraging and might lead us to question the effectiveness of this strategy. Council, however, has recommended to the President that we should repeat this approach next year. Several departments have a proposal already prepared—either a proposed diversity-initiative search from last fall or a proposal for a new or replacement faculty position submitted earlier but not approved. If approved this spring, the new round of searches could begin promptly, heading off the difficulties that arose this year when the process only got underway in the fall. We also note that while only one appointment was made, a number of very strong candidates were identified, brought to campus, and even presented with offers, suggesting that the strategy can be successful.

2. Guidelines for diversity-initiative proposals

Therefore, I am once again inviting departments to submit proposals of 2-3 pages, accompanied by a position description that could serve as ad copy. Again, departments that have recently submitted position requests may cite or re-use material from the earlier request. **These proposals are due in my office by May 1, 2001.** In the interests of attracting a wide pool, the descriptions should avoid an overly narrow disciplinary focus. Beginning with a summary description of the department’s current curriculum, your proposal should advocate the new position based on convincing curricular needs and a reasonable prospect of building an applicant pool enriched by diversity. The description may focus on a new curricular area that the department desires to offer, consistent with the department’s educational priorities and, if relevant, the need to ease enrollment pressures in the department. As with any proposal for expansion, departments are encouraged to consider how the proposed additive position may help to cover the regular cycle of faculty leaves in the department, and also how it may enable department members to make an additional contribution to programs such as the first-year tutorial, interdisciplinary concentrations, MAP, Humanities 101, and/or statistics courses.

3. Diversity initiative search procedures

Once again, I will ask the Executive Council to review these proposals and select the strongest proposals to recommend initiation of searches in those areas. The following issues are carefully considered by the Council in making its recommendations:

- Need to cover basic curriculum and/or prospect of curricular expansion to strengthen and enrich the academic programs of both the department and the college;
- Average enrollments in the department higher than college’s average course size of 17;
- Addition enables department to offer further support to general education program;
- Addition entails leave-proofing that includes adequate curricular coverage;
- Prospect of building an applicant pool that includes highly qualified candidates who would add diversity to the faculty.

The new positions will be advertised in a context that makes clear the college’s commitment to increase the number of diverse faculty in order to reflect the diversity of the nation. Candidates will be asked to address in their applications how they can contribute to diversity as a core value of the Grinnell College community. Candidates can describe their ability to contribute to diversity at the college in a variety of ways, some of which are scholarly or curricular, or which
involve outstanding service as a mentor for students from underrepresented groups. All Grinnell College searches are conducted pursuant to our affirmative action policies. Persons of any racial or ethnic background are eligible for consideration. It is impermissible to ask candidates about their race, marital status, or citizenship or immigration status, though it is permissible to ask whether a candidate has permission to be employed in the United States.

Departing from our standard procedures for a faculty search, the department makes a recommendation to the Dean and Executive Council regarding specific finalist candidates whom they propose to invite to campus. Elaborating on its original proposal, the department should now provide the Council not only with the candidate’s qualifications, but also with a clear picture of how the new position, occupied by this person, will strengthen the department and the college’s general programs while furthering the aims of the diversity initiative. At this point the Council must consider whether it can recommend the creation of a new faculty position. In other words, by approving the candidate to be invited to campus, the Council effectively recommends the creation of a new position in the event that the candidate is successfully recommended for appointment, an offer is extended, and the candidate accepts.

4. Approving a search does not automatically create a position

While these searches are subject to our standard procedures and in most ways resemble other faculty searches, their special context greatly raises the odds that the college will not succeed in filling all of the advertised positions during next year’s search cycle. In fact, as we continue this process, we need to be mindful of several ways in which these searches depart from our accustomed expectations. First, and most important, it is possible that an advertised position may or may not result in an appointment next spring. Second, our experience this year confirmed that the varied timing of searches in different fields impedes the simultaneous evaluation of finalists from different departments. The Executive Council plays an important role by examining each proposal or recommendation, as these are submitted, from a broad college perspective. Finally, we should all recognize the dynamic balance among Grinnell College’s most highly valued goals. It is a challenge to “have it all”—a more diverse faculty, a well-designed liberal arts curriculum, and total staffing in each program adequate to the challenge of providing excellent instruction to our students. To nurture this balance, the faculty in departments seeking an additive position must take a fresh look at the existing curriculum, at their accustomed teaching assignments, and at the current contributions made by their department to general education at the college.

As these searches proceed, please be aware that the college also continues its ongoing policy of accepting, at any time, nominations from departments of specific, highly qualified individuals in any field whose appointment would enhance faculty diversity, meet curricular needs, and contribute to a strong liberal arts faculty. The Dean brings these nominations to Executive Council for review and recommendation on whether to proceed with the nominee as a candidate. Such nominations may emerge in a process that is separate from the searches described above. In the event that these two processes converge, the Executive Council will once again be centrally positioned to examine and compare the entire set of potential new appointments, recommending those that will best strengthen diversity and excellence in our faculty.