INITIATIVE THREE:

Ensure a university environment that is inclusive as well as diverse and that fosters a spirit of community among faculty, staff, and students.

The University of Maryland has gained national recognition for its commitment to diversity as a major educational benefit and an essential component of academic excellence. In the past decade, the University has consistently graduated a larger number of black doctoral students than most other traditionally white institutions, and a significant number of our undergraduates are from groups that have been historically underrepresented at the nation's public research universities. Senior administrators on campus regularly seek the advice of commissions, associations, and ad hoc groups that represent the concerns of those who have felt excluded from the mainstream, and a wide range of innovative activities in every unit on campus has established diversity as a major characteristic of this community and one of its most important priorities. Complementing these extracurricular activities, the University of Maryland has become a leader in research on issues involving race, gender, and sexual orientation and has made strides in transforming the curriculum to reflect our new understanding of identity and diversity.

Though our progress in embracing diversity has been great, much remains to be done. In spite of our leadership in diversity among our students, there is a relatively less diversity in key academic, administrative, and staff leadership positions as well as in the general faculty. Due in part to recent legal constraints on the distribution of financial aid, the numbers of ethnic minority students enrolled in undergraduate and graduate programs declined from 1997-1999, and retention rates for many ethnic minority students remains low. A serious concern is growing evidence that the campus climate is not as supportive as it should be for all members of the University community. Action items listed below address the continuing need to mount a strong campaign for inclusion of diverse groups to maintain a vibrant university environment.

The University values diversity as a key to its excellence, but we are also mindful of the importance of a spirit of community and harmony in an institution that counts a wide range of diverse groups as members of its faculty, staff, and students. Recognizing the need for a vigorous new effort to create deeper understanding and serious engagement among the members of the University family, President Mote has appointed a panel of faculty, staff, and students to conduct an across-the-board review of all University programs and propose new actions that promote community building. The panel is expected to recommend actions to promote greater understanding and inclusiveness throughout the University among its diverse groups.

Specific steps:

1. Encourage campus-wide support and follow-through on the recommendations of the President's Diversity Panel that have been approved for implementation.
The President's Diversity Panel has been asked to roll out recommendations for immediate new initiatives through the Spring Semester 2000 and submit a final report with long-range program suggestions in early summer. It is understood that the recommendations approved for implementation will have the same priority as the action steps included in this Plan.

2. Develop coherent and comprehensive strategies to increase the diversity of our faculty and staff.

- Establish procedures to enable "opportunity hires" and develop specific retention mechanisms for talented members of under-represented groups.
- Conduct ongoing, campus-wide equity reviews to ensure parity across gender and ethnic groups.
- Establish a voluntary clearinghouse for current faculty and staff from underrepresented populations that alerts them to campus vacancies.
- Direct all search committees for key administrative positions to more diligently seek female and ethnic minority candidates through the use of professional search firms and other aggressive strategies.
- Appoint more women and ethnic minorities to acting positions when vacancies occur.
- Provide financial and administrative support for activities that capitalize on areas where we have a strong cadre of ethnic minority scholars or other successful diversity initiatives.
- Promote the University as a site for ethnic minority association and diversity-related meetings and conferences.
- Provide an annual workshop for first year women and ethnic minority faculty, conducted by key administrators and senior faculty members from these groups, that addresses their unique issues and provides successful strategies for enabling these individuals to succeed in the tenure and promotion process at College Park.

3. Develop strategies to increase the enrollment of undergraduate and graduate ethnic minority students and improve their graduation rates.

- Provide incentives for more faculty-student mentoring and the development of summer and winter term programs with local school systems, historically black institutions and other institutions with high minority representation.
- Provide incentives for programs to identify and recruit talented ethnic minority students at the community colleges.
- Increase the amount of scholarship/grant aid for graduate students and reward achievement of diversity in allocating individual student aid and block grant awards to programs.
- Improve retention of ethnic minority students enrolled at the University by supporting programs that pair students with faculty mentors, increase opportunities for student employment, and address the development of skills associated with higher retention rates.
- Charge the relevant campus offices to conduct surveys of departing faculty, staff and non-returning students with emphasis on determining reasons for departure and possible retention remedies.
4. **Build a greater sense of community among faculty, staff, students, and alumni.**

- Develop an expanded and improved Faculty and Staff Club that would attract to campus a greater presence of faculty and staff outside of working hours.
- Encourage greater funding of activities that increase student-faculty interaction, such as departmental commencement receptions, "take a student to breakfast/lunch/dinner" programs, and student/faculty and staff/faculty mentoring programs.
- Continue to build ties to alumni that stress their importance as members of the University family and as an important resource to students and faculty.
- Encourage greater student involvement in the life of the campus community including attendance at cultural events and academic lectures; participation in service and volunteer opportunities, leadership development and governance, and other campus activities or organizations; and participation in intramural sports.
- Ensure the successful operation of a model NCAA Division 1 intercollegiate athletic program that builds alumni loyalty and greater campus and community spirit.