

Continuing the dialogue

BY LUIS M. PROENZA

Editor's Note: This is the second article from the University of Akron President Luis M. Proenza discussing minority alumni concerns and progress at the University of Akron.

Continuing my pledge to build an open and honest exchange of information regarding the concerns of the African-American community, I was privileged several weeks ago to host a distinguished group of African-American leaders at a luncheon on The University of Akron campus, as the first in a series of ongoing discussions.

During my presentation, I provided much of the most sought after information regarding the University and its service to African-Americans. In this letter, I want to provide the latest information regarding employment and student representation.

First, The University of Akron meets national levels in the percentages of full-time African-American employees, 11.6 percent, and exceeds the U.S. average in the part-time categories, 9.7 per-

cent at Akron and 6.7 percent nationally.

Second, the University exceeds the national average (8.7 percent) of African-American executives, administrators and managers, with 10.5 percent. There is solid representation at the highest levels of the University with African-American administrators in key central administration roles, including an Assistant to the Provost, an Associate Vice President for Student Affairs, and an Associate Provost and Special Assistant to the President.

Third, African-Americans are well represented in our faculty, again at levels near or exceeding the national average. The percentage of African-American full professors is 3.2 nationally and 3.0 at Akron.

The percentage of our associate and assistant professors are 8.6 and 7.2, while the national averages are 4.7 and 6.2, respectively. The overall percentage of African-Americans on the faculty is 5.7 at Akron and

4.8 nationally.

It is important to note that there has been a substantial increase in the numbers of African-American employees during the past two decades. In 1982, approximately 5.2 percent (139) of all University of Akron employees were African-American. Today that figure is 9.5 percent (302). Still we cannot rest on our achievements to date. We want to do better as a whole, and we will do our best to recruit well-qualified minority candidates. We also plan to monitor more closely the experiences and career paths of individual employees.

Fourth, our representation of African-American students is good (15 percent); only Central State and Cleveland State are higher in Ohio. The *Akron Beacon Journal* reported that, for Fall Semester 2001, The University of Akron had 3,174 black undergraduate and graduate students, the most in the University's history, and an increase of 231 students since

Fall 2000. For comparison, Kent State University posted a 5 percent increase on a smaller base.

Fifth, African-American students received nearly 24 percent of the \$93.5 million in financial aid awarded by The University of Akron in 2001, and more than 12 percent of \$16 million in scholarships.

So, what do all these numbers mean?

While statistics do not tell the whole story, they serve as indicators of past performance and baselines against which to gauge future success. More important, though, they are objective, accurate and measurable data in response to your requests — a practice which I believe is vital and which I intend to continue. In my next letter, I will share some of the data regarding the retention of African-American students.

I hope that you will join in this dialogue.