**Establishing and Maintaining an Affinity Group at BC**

In order to support Boston College’s commitment to diversity and inclusion in the workplace, Human Resources through the Office for Institutional Diversity will provide guidance in forming and supporting Affinity Groups. The following provides information on the process to establish and maintain an affinity group at Boston College.

**What is an Affinity Group?**

An affinity group represents the interests and concerns of traditionally underrepresented populations and/or protected classes of people. They also help others understand those interests and concerns by sponsoring programs and events shared with the broader community. An affinity group’s mission and purpose must also be aligned with the University’s and it must be open to all BC faculty and staff.

**Benefit to the University**

Affinity groups benefit the University by supporting community building, providing visibility and practical support to its diversity and inclusion efforts (e.g. participating in diversity recruitment and retention efforts, identifying and raising concerns that might not otherwise be visible, building diversity competence and cultural sharing in the community).

**Benefit to Recognized Affinity Groups**

Recognized groups will, among other things, have access to BC resources including financial support via a budget, determined annually (see below), use of meeting space, use of the Boston College name and other identification (logos etc.) for approved activities, technology including web site support, logistical and other support from the Office for Institutional Diversity and representation on the BC Diversity Advisory Committee.

**Affinity Group Recognition and Budget Process**

To be eligible for new or continuing recognition, financial and other support, groups must submit an annual report to the Office for Institutional Diversity by May 31 of each year detailing the events, programs and related itemized expenditure from the previous year (if applicable). The report will also include a description of proposed programs and events for the coming year and an itemized proposed budget required to support them. Proposed programs and events should align with the University’s diversity and inclusion mission and with some or all of OID’s 8 strategic initiatives (see below);

Funding that is made available to groups may vary from year to year depending on factors including availability, activities proposed (activities proposed jointly by more than one group may receive priority consideration), previous activities etc. The OID will, determine how available funds will be distributed in response to annual requests with the approval of the Vice President of Human Resources.

**Groups seeking initial recognition**

Proposals to become recognized and thus eligible to receive the benefits outlined above must be submitted to the Office for Institutional Diversity for review. To be recognized the proposal must demonstrate, at a minimum, that the group meets the affinity group definition above. In addition, it must include evidence that the group represents an, as yet, unrepresented interest that cannot, as a practical matter, be supported by an existing affinity group or other University entity (For other factors to consider see, *What are some best practice considerations/to-do’s when drafting a new affinity group proposal?* in the frequently asked questions section below). Taking into account these and other factors that it deems relevant the OID will make a recommendation to the Vice President of Human Resources on the question of recognition. The Vice President of Human Resources will make a final determination on the question based on the factors outlined here and/or others that he/she deems appropriate.

Newly recognized groups will not be eligible to receive an annual budget until the completion of at least one year of activity. Newly recognized groups may request funding and other support in their first year of recognition on an activity by activity basis. To be eligible for consideration to receive an annual budget after their first year of operation newly recognized groups must submit an annual report and at a minimum demonstrate an ability to sustain themselves and effectively utilize University funds and resources provided during their first year of operation.

Decisions regarding approval of a new group’s first annual budget will be based on considerations raised in the **Affinity Group Recognition and Budget Process**. If a group is denied an annual budget, it may continue to request funding on an activity by activity basis, as described above, and may submit new budget requests in subsequent years.

Frequently Asked Questions

**What are some questions to consider when thinking about starting an affinity group?**

* What are the group’s goals? Are they aligned with the University’s?  With OID’s strategic initiatives?
* Can an existing group or university entity accomplish these goals?
* How is the group different from other groups on campus?
* Is there sufficient interest among current faculty and staff to support the new group?  Is this a viable short-term and/or long-term organization?
* How would this group offer value to faculty and staff? To the University?  To OID?

**What are some best practice considerations/to-do’s when drafting a new affinity group proposal?**

1. Meet with OID to discuss process;
2. Identify the common interest(s) or characteristic(s) that will connect members of the Affinity Group;
3. Provide a mission statement for the group.  The mission statement, along with the group’s purpose and vison should align with the University’s mission.
4. Ensure the group’s name is reflective of its core values and common interest and of the mission of the University.
5. Describe how one becomes a member of the group keeping in mind that such groups should be employee initiated, voluntary, and open to all employees.  Determine how you will promote and invite members to join.
6. Describe the leadership structure including how succession will be sustained over time and how its two representatives to the Diversity Advisory Committee will be selected.
7. Describe how often and when the group will meet if possible, specify the day, time, length and frequency of meetings and/or how members and prospective members will be notified.
8. Outline the group’s method of communication and online presence.
9. The proposal should also include proposed goals, programs and activities:
   1. Formulate and prioritize goals for the short and long-term that are consistent with the Group’s mission;
   2. Develop and maintain an annual plan of programs, activities and events that are in alignment with the Group’s goals; and
   3. Create measurable indicators for each area of focus within the program/activity plan.

**What should be included in an annual report?**

1. Include a section on Annual Planning
   1. Review, update, and prioritize goals for the short and long-term
   2. The goals, programs, and activities of the Group should align with its mission
   3. Maintain an annual plan of programs, activities and events
   4. Create measurable indicators for each area of focus within the program/activity plan.
2. Include a section on the successes, challenges and overall outcomes:
   1. Track and report on programs, activities and progress towards achieving goals.
   2. Communicate the value of the programs, activities, and/or events to the BC community and to the organization’s leadership and members.

**What sort of information should be included in the budget sections (previous year expenditure report and proposed budget for the succeeding year) of the annual report?**

* 1. Previous year expenditure reports should include a detailed listing of all activities for the year and the associated costs. Please be as specific and detailed as possible utilizing the four categories in the grid below.
  2. Proposed budgets for the succeeding year should include resources needed to achieve planned activities for the fiscal year ahead. Cost items to consider include, meetings, refreshments, speakers, etc… Please be as specific as possible. Note: Requests for items not included in the proposed budget and approved in advance must be submitted to HR separately and approved prior to any expenditure is made related to them.

A sample spreadsheet to track costs is provided below.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Name of Expenditure | Budgeted Amount  ($) | Actual Cost ($) | Variance ($) | Notes |
| 1. Expenses related to regularly scheduled meeting (e.g. refreshments) |  |  |  |  |
| 1. Amounts contributed to activities co-sponsored with other groups (one row per activity) |  |  |  |  |
| 1. Special events or activities (e.g. retreats/events with paid speakers etc.)(one row per activity) |  |  |  |  |
| 1. Other activities – please specify (one line per activity) |  |  |  |  |
| Total: |  |  |  |  |

**What happens once an Annual Report is submitted to the Office for Institutional Diversity?**

Annual review of all Affinity Groups will be conducted to ensure their goals and objectives continue to contribute to the University’s mission, core values, and organizational outcomes. Continued recognition as an Affinity Group at BC is contingent upon receipt of an Annual Report by May 31st.

**What happens if the Annual Report is not submitted?**

An appropriate annual budget cannot be determined without the information provided in an annual report. Failure to submit an annual report (including budget request) in a timely manner therefore will make it impossible to arrive at an appropriate allocation for a group. In that event an affinity group will be required to request funding and other resources for events on a case by case basis.