The Student Diversity Task Force began holding weekly meetings in October, 2012. Participating members are Hassab Ali, Lydia Anderson, Murial Berg, Juan Cruz, Alexandra Fitts, Mari Freitag, Claudia Koch, Jenny Liu, and Anjela Wong.

The task force has begun to study the range of student services provided at UAF; issues of student recruitment, retention and achievement; staffing necessary or desirable to support diverse students; physical space requirements and desirable locations. We began by inviting representatives from the Office of International Programs and Rural Student Services to meet with us and discuss the services they provide and any gaps or additional needs that they have identified. In the spring, we will continue to meet with other groups that work with diverse students to identify the resources that already exist. It is clear that UAF has a number of offices and organizations that provide services to students of diverse backgrounds, and one of our goals is to think about how these groups can coordinate and communicate more effectively. Early in the Spring semester, we will be holding an information session or focus group with students to gather input on what students used the Office of Multicultural Affairs for, what they thought OMAD was not able to provide, and what additional needs they would like to see met by a diversity office.

While we do not yet have any specific recommendations, the task force agrees about certain key issues:

- OMAD was filling a clear need for students: not merely the services and programs that it provided, but also the easily identified “safe space” where students from diverse backgrounds felt comfortable.
- This safe space needs to be centrally located and at minimum, be large enough for student groups to meet.
- RSS is an admirable model as an office that provides multi-faceted services to students: academic, social, and cultural activities make students feel welcomed and supported.
- Diversity needs to extend beyond one office: one of the missions of the Diversity Office should be to work on infusing the campus (including academic programs) with the message of diversity.
- Outreach should start before students set foot on campus, through recruiting, admissions, and pre-arrival contacts.
- Staff in the Diversity Office should serve as advocates for the students they serve and act as facilitators in navigating the academic environment.
- While we aren’t yet prepared to make recommendations about staffing, it seems that one person is not sufficient to accomplish these goals.
Thank you for the opportunity to work on this important project, and we will provide you with a complete report and recommendations by the end of the spring semester.