The Diversity Committee completed its inaugural year in operation in the 2011-2012 academic year and submitted a report of its activities and findings to President Schutte in August 2012. The report summarizes the formation and structure of the committee as well as the activities, research, recommendations, and other work completed by the committee. The full report including background information, general findings, a report from each of the respective subcommittees, recommendations, and an appendix of references and data utilized by the committee is available on the Diversity page of my.pratt.edu.

In brief the Committee’s mission is focused on recruitment and retention of individuals from diverse and/traditionally underrepresented backgrounds, fostering a campus environment welcoming to all, encouraging mutual respect and appreciation among all members of the Pratt community, increasing understanding of the benefits and value of diversity, and promoting principles of equal opportunity in the areas of student admissions and financial aid, employee hiring and retention, multicultural education and the academic program, and campus accessibility, openness to diversity, and community development. It is charged with recommending institutional goals and objectives relating to diversity, researching strategies to achieve them, annually reviewing and monitoring levels of diverse representation, proposing means of improving the Institute’s diversity efforts where necessary, hosting discussions related to the campus climate and other diversity topics, conducting outreach to the Pratt community on diversity issues, responding to bias incidents where appropriate, and in general advocating diversity initiatives and its benefits.

There are five subcommittees within the Diversity Committee to address diversity issues in the respective areas: 1) campus climate, 2) hiring and retention, 3) admissions, 4) curriculum, and 5) educational outreach/training.

The full Diversity Committee met a total of five times: on June 28th, September 20th, and November 15th of 2011, and January 25th and April 25th of 2012. The subcommittees met separately, reporting back to the full committee periodically on their progress and each created a written report of its work and findings.

A number of notable issues and themes listed below arose from the committee’s activities and discussions.

I. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- This diversity initiative represents a transition from equal opportunity to a new paradigm of diversity and inclusion, consistent with the trend in higher education and beyond.
- It is important to have a definition of diversity and common understanding of what it encompasses. At a minimum the definition of diversity encompasses the legally protected categories of race, color, ethnicity, national origin, alienage, citizenship, religion, creed, gender,
gender identity, sexual orientation, marital status, age, and disability. It also may include socioeconomic status and geographic diversity as well as others.

- Some aspects of diversity are not apparent and thus are not amenable to measurement (e.g. religion, disability, sexual orientation).

- The committee can provide structure and organization for some diversity-related activities already existing at Pratt (i.e. student organizations, courses, lectures, HEOP).

- There is considerable interest within the Pratt community in diversity and many existing resources that can be utilized to advance the initiative, as was evidenced from “diversity jams” and town hall meetings held on campus.

- Pratt is at the nascent stages of its diversity initiative and needs to create a foundation for future work of the committee and an expanded focus on diversity throughout the Institute.

- There may be some “low-hanging fruit” in terms of changes that Pratt can make relatively easily to improved diversity (e.g. recruitment processes, publicizing existing programs, initiatives, training, etc.) while at the same time addressing long-term changes.

- It is necessary to have a comprehensive assessment of the current status of all areas of Pratt related to diversity, including representation of students, faculty and staff as well as the campus climate and environment.

- A common theme or refrain is that Pratt is a neutral campus in terms of diversity and inclusion that does not feel particularly welcoming or unwelcoming to individuals from diverse groups.

- Another common theme concerns the relationship with the neighboring community, a feeling that the campus is not welcoming enough to members of the community and failing to fully integrate with the community.

- There are lots of resources in the surrounding community and the larger Brooklyn and NYC communities that Pratt could utilize to enhance its diversity efforts, including funding opportunities for scholarships and other programs.

- Although there are legal restrictions on taking race and other protected categories into account in admissions and hiring, there are appropriate alternate means of attracting more diverse students, faculty and staff.

- There is a compelling need to improve communication throughout the campus and provide a safe place for discussion of issues related to diversity.

- It’s important to develop means to encourage candor among members of the Pratt community and drill down to underlying opinions and feelings and to overcome people’s natural reticence or fear of offending in discussing sometimes emotional topics.

- It’s also important that people check their assumptions and suspend judgment in discussion of diversity-related topics.

- There are methods to uncover and minimize the influence of unconscious bias in organizational decisions.

- Pratt can advance its mission by making diversity a priority and ultimately achieve a stature where it can point to its diversity as a means to attract potential students and employees, and further advance the organization based on the presumption that a diversity of ideas, perspectives, backgrounds, approaches and experience will strengthen the organization.

The Diversity Committee recently began to plan its work for the current academic year, meeting on September 25, 2012. The respective subcommittees will all be meeting prior to the next scheduled full committee meeting on November 6th. The committee is also planning to conduct an anonymous survey of Pratt faculty and staff shortly on diversity and inclusion.
IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

General
• Consider utilizing diversity consultant to advise and guide Diversity Committee in conducting a campus-wide diversity audit and establishing diversity function at Pratt.
• Consider creation of full-time diversity position in future.

Campus Climate
• Continue Town Hall meetings on campus climate and devote meetings to discussion of Diversity Committee report following its publication.
• Increase visibility of Diversity Committee on campus and awareness of diversity issues among students, faculty and staff.
• Review campus climate data from students and prepare follow-up studies to delve deeper and/or update data.
• Conduct comprehensive survey of faculty and staff regarding campus climate and experiences related to diversity throughout employment at Pratt.

Hiring & Retention
• Revise recruitment policies and procedures and conduct training of search committees and hiring managers in diversity issues as well as in recognizing and minimizing unconscious bias; promote Pratt as diverse, welcome work environment to prospective employees.
• Modify hiring process for part-time faculty to include some advertising of potential opportunities to reach a more diverse pool of potential candidates.
• Develop new employee orientation program to make work environment more welcoming and inclusive for all new hires and enhance Exit Interview process to include assessment of campus climate, inclusivity, and diversity in general.
• Follow up surveys with focus groups to pinpoint ways to improve hiring practices and retention of employees.
• Consider supplemental payment to employees with same-sex partners on health insurance to offset taxability of benefit.
• Create succession plan to develop employees for advancement within Pratt.

Admissions
• Refine the definition and understanding of student diversity and develop educational rationale for student diversity to identify goals for diversifying student body at Pratt.
• Identify appropriate outside funding sources to assist in Pratt’s diversity efforts (i.e. scholarships, grants, etc.)

Curriculum
• Develop a web-based database of diversity-related courses as a resource for students and faculty.
• Devote appropriate amount of faculty-development funds (i.e. $25,000 annual) to build diversity courses and course components across Pratt’s curriculum, over next 2 years.
• Develop program to improve faculty knowledge and use of different learning styles and cross-cultural perspectives, and on how to address and incorporate diverse perspectives and styles in the classroom, and other relevant topics.

Educational Outreach & Training
• Increase utilization of diversity website, including posting of learning videos and other teaching resources.
• Develop program to bring outside speakers on various diversity topics to campus to speak to students, faculty and staff and devote appropriate amount (i.e. $20,000 annual) to secure relevant speakers.