

**2005-2006 Club Achievement, Cultural Diversity
Austin Advertising Federation
Carl Settles, Diversity Chair, Scott Van Osdol, President**

MISSION STATEMENT / OVERVIEW

Objective:

Devise an approach for Austin’s advertising community to mentor local high-school and college students and encourage a more diverse advertising work force.

Background:

With exponential growth, Austin’s cultural landscape and tastes are also changing. There are now four major radio outlets that feature urban oriented music formats in a city where five years ago there was only one. Rumbo, an independent Spanish language daily, and ¡Ahora Si!, a Spanish language newspaper owned by the Austin-American Statesman, have become important resources for our fastest growing community segment - Hispanics. However, as revealed in a recent City of Austin study, African-Americans’ level of educational and economic attainment is severely lacking when compared to the rest of the population. Moreover, the study explained that highly educated African-American professionals have limited opportunities for cultural and social enrichment in the city, and often choose to live in other cities with richer cultural and social opportunities.

Demographics: Minority Market Percentages

Black or African American	9.3%
Asian	4.5%
Hispanic	28.2%
White (non Hispanic)	56.4%
Female	49.0%
Male	51.0%

Austin’s advertising industry is overwhelmingly white. Experienced minority talent is at a premium, especially as advertisers wake up to the potential of addressing minority markets.

Project: Promote Cultural Diversity as a common goal

Objective: Inform Ad Fed members and friends of the importance of Cultural Diversity in education and the workplace, gather data on existing diversity practices at area ad agencies and recruit new diversity committee members.

Target Audience: Ad Fed members and potential members, ad agency principals and HR staff.

Results:

The Cultural Diversity Chair began with a successful email campaign to ±1700 members and friends in the Ad Fed database. This was designed to recruit potential committee members and to put the issue of Diversity on the ad community's radar.

(EXHIBIT: CD email Call for Members).

The Cultural Diversity Committee now includes more than 15 members ranging from agencies to college students and community organization members. Members represent the following businesses and organizations: Diversity Chair Carl Settle's sub-Urban Media; Griot Media / SoulCiti.com, producers of the Urban Music Festival; Action Figure, an ad agency producing such highly regarded TV programs as PBS's *Downtown* and A&E's *Texas Roller Girls*; University of Texas professor and community activist Tom Philpot; UT and Texas State University students; an independent actor / producer; Diverse Arts Production Group; Youth Tech Visionaries, Dove Springs-Multi Media Instructor; EnviroMedia principal Valerie Davis and several EM staff members.

The committee has written and will soon distribute via interactive email a survey of diversity hiring practices at area ad agencies. We look forward to working with the resulting data, which we expect to inform our goal setting process. **(EXHIBIT: survey)**

The committee recently began a new communication innovation: a committee web log. This tool is already helping committee members communicate more effectively between meetings, and allows new members to get up to speed quickly. We expect other Ad Fed committees to soon follow this example. **(EXHIBIT: blog reprint).**

As part of our ongoing commitment to raising the issue of diversity among our members, the president took an opportunity to respond to a newspaper commentary written by Roy Spence, principal of GSD&M, Austin's largest ad agency. In that commentary Spence discussed the critical importance of educational funding. The president's response was an opportunity to reach this highly influential leader and update him on Diversity Committee initiatives. We will approach GSD&M for support in funding our mentor program. **(EXHIBIT: Top of Game Commentary email).**

Project: Ad Fed Board Cultural Diversity planning

Objective: Make Cultural Diversity a principal goal in all planning

Target Audience: Ad Fed Board members

Results:

The Cultural Diversity committee produces an annual Job Shadow Day which introduces minority high-school students to career opportunities in advertising. While effective, this single program constituted a form of tokenism: with this one program, the board felt it had effectively discharged its obligations to cultural diversity. The Cultural Diversity Committee challenged the board to take Diversity more seriously and provide more resources, support, and engagement.

Solution: *Increase number of minority board members. Create Vice President of Cultural Diversity Board position. Move Diversity up the agenda. Make diversity a mandatory committee report item.*

In recent years our 20- to 30-person board has always included several Hispanic and at least one African American member. This year the president focused on recruiting new members of color. Even though the Austin advertising community is overwhelmingly white, we succeeded in recruiting a second African American, a woman, two Hispanic women (one will become VP Membership and is being groomed for president), and one Asian-American woman.

In addition, one new board member is an Anglo male who works as Creative Director at the largest African-American owned ad agency in Texas, specializing in marketing to minority audiences. In a recent meeting he said, "I used to practice diversity

because it was ‘the right thing to do’. Now, it’s how I pay my mortgage. That change in perspective is huge.” This point of view makes him particularly effective in helping other Anglo board members broaden their thinking about diversity issues.

The diversity committee leads off each board meeting with a wide-ranging discussion of what diversity means in our industry. Discussion tends to focus on hard-headed business realities: how reaching out to underserved markets builds the bottom line, the pervasiveness of Black Culture in Popular Culture, especially among the young, the rapid growth of Urban mass media formats, hiring underutilized minority musical and production talent, the need to reach out to high school students to assure a broad pool of future employees capable of reaching minority markets. **(Exhibit: Diversity Report).**

Each committee is asked to speak to diversity issues, just as we speak to goals. We’re new to the process, and still learning. But early results are promising, and further discussion will help us broaden our Diversity practice. Future topics will include fundraising for stipends for minority mentors, supporting a new Urban Music Festival, and participating in a City of Austin led survey and discussion of minority cultural resources and career opportunity.

To further the effectiveness of these initiatives, the board recently approved a motion to amend the constitution to create a Vice President of Cultural Diversity position. The amendment will be presented for approval at our annual business meeting, taking place at the Big Wig Awards in June.

Solutions: *Gathering Data. Making Connections.*

Recent discussions revealed strong potential in linking resources and programs in our education, public service, and diversity committees. For example, our work with the SIMS Foundation program providing low-cost mental health care to musicians opens up opportunities to work with a new Urban Music Festival tied to The Texas Relays, a track meet that brings 60,000 primarily African-American attendees to Austin.

Within the coming weeks we will meet to plan fundraising development to underwrite stipends for mentors to minority high-school students. This program will involve members from Diversity and Ad Education committees, supplemented by our Fundraising Chair. Without these discussions, we wouldn’t have begun the process of providing mutual support across committees for our Diversity programs.

The Diversity Committee has written and is now publishing an on-line survey of employment diversity at Austin ad agencies. As results are evaluated, we expect the metrics to help focus our discussion and planning. **(Exhibit: Diversity Survey)**

Project: Job Shadow Day

Objective: Continue the successful Job Shadow Day, exposing high-school students to careers in advertising. Expand the program to become an ongoing mentoring program with paid mentors.

Target Audience: AISD development staff, high-school students and their parents

Results:

Job Shadow Day typically draws some 40 high-school students who spend a large part of the workday at area agencies. In 2005, 12 agencies and industry vendors participated. The program continues to make significant strides by developing strategic partnerships with area schools, organizations and businesses. **(EXHIBIT: Shadow Day poster, photos.)**

Project: On-going Mentoring Program

Objective: Promote advertising as a career choice among high-school students by hiring college advertising students as mentors, provide real life learning opportunities to students and expose ad agencies to potential employees.

Target Audience: Austin Independent School District development staff, high-school students, student's parents, area universities' ad staff and student ad clubs, City of Austin Diversity Staff

Results:

In the past 2 years, the Austin Ad Fed has sponsored Job Shadow Days in which area students spend a day at an ad agency or creative marketing department. These efforts have successfully exposed close to 100 students to career paths in advertising. However, in light of the recent City of Austin study lamenting quality-of-life issues for African-Americans in the city, the Cultural Diversity committee started having a series of discussions with area advertising professionals and community organizations. The emerging issue has been the lack of a *sustainable* approach to attracting and training minority students in advertising related careers. We believe that our pilot mentoring program, which is based on the structure of successful models in other cities, offers the framework for such a sustainable approach.

The Austin Ad Fed is partnering with area businesses, community organizations, schools and universities to implement a program in which paid college mentors work with a group of high school aged students and professional Ad Fed consultants. The teams will develop a marketing campaign for the 2007 Urban Music Festival.

Each April, The Texas Relays brings an influx of 60,000 African-Americans from throughout the state to Austin. The Urban Music Festival is a new city-sponsored event that will take place during this time. Like SXSW, we envision the Urban Music Festival eventually encompassing film and interactive mediums as well but with an urban focus. By having our students participate in the planning and promotion of the festival, we see a great opportunity to encourage both economic and cultural vitality. Our plan is that this summer, our students will develop and implement a campaign for the 2007 Urban Music Festival. Ad Fed professionals will serve as consultants at appropriate times in the process. During the fall semester, the students will intern at area ad agencies and then become production staff for the spring 2007 festival.

To help us in this endeavor we are partnering with the Urban Music Festival www.urbanmusicfest.com, sub-Urban Media www.sub-urbanmedia.com, the River City Youth Foundation www.rivercityyouth.org, and area universities. We have also begun meeting with members of the City's Multimedia Development Office and Digital Media Council, and Skillpoint Alliance, a project of the Capital Area Training Foundation, the major Central Texas public/private development and training organization. As we continue our research and networking, we expect to discover additional organizations to work with.

Conclusion

The Austin Ad Fed is a recognized leader in public service, with three recent first place public service National Club Achievement awards. Our three non-profit clients, Hill Country Ride for AIDS, Art From the Streets, and the Sims Foundation (affordable mental health care for musicians), already serve client populations with unusually high number of minority members. By focusing on our cultural diversity practice and process, we hope to extend those services more deeply into minority communities.

It is important to recognize that we are making a start—that we are still in the research, outreach, and partnering process of our mentoring program. As we continue, we expect to see dramatic results in funding mentors, reaching out to students, and tying our work to existing social service/development programs.

As a professional association representing one of the most innovative and progressive markets in the nation, the Austin Ad Fed has a duty to help lead our industry into new areas. We see our Cultural Diversity initiatives as a step in that direction. By encouraging industry-wide and community-wide discussion, providing educational programs to our members and potential members, and working to diversify the future workforce, we hope to make a contribution to creating a broader, more diverse advertising industry in Austin.