INTRODUCTION

1. This is the first Annual Report to the Council on the College’s progress on equality and diversity. It was discussed and noted at the Management Board Meeting on 30 January 2003. An Annual Report is a requirement of our “Promoting Race Equality Policy” and it seemed appropriate that the report be broadened to include progress on the wider equality and diversity agenda.

2. As a responsible employer, the College has had policies and procedures in place for many years to ensure that we have complied with the law. The College recognised the necessity for equality issues to be dealt with at a senior level and had two formal committees that oversaw equality matters: the Equal Opportunities Committee and the Academic Opportunities Committee, both of which were responsible to the Rector. Historically, although equality of opportunity had been taken seriously, the business case for diversity and the need for a proactive approach, had not been widely recognised.

3. In the late 90s, two significant factors came into play: HEFCE’s requirement that each HE institution must have an Human Resources (HR) Strategy, which had to include equality and diversity objectives and action plans, and the significant increase in legislation aimed at promoting equality. In response, the College dedicated substantial resources to equality and diversity for the first time. At the beginning of 2002, the role of the Deputy Director HR was changed to include responsibility for equality and diversity and, in September 2002, we employed a specialist member of staff devoted to this area of work, our Equalities and Diversity Consultant. In addition, HR Strategy funds were earmarked for spending to achieve our equality and diversity objectives.

4. One of the objectives of the HR Strategy was to undertake a consultation exercise with all of our staff on equality and diversity – “Imperial College – A Good Place to Work?” - and to identify key requirements for change. This resulted in the Schneider-Ross report of September 2002, which has been received and discussed by Council, the then Executive, other College committees, and by staff in a series of Roadshows. The conclusion and recommendations in the Schneider-Ross report (Appendix 1) provide an appropriate starting point for this first annual report.

ACTIONS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

The College’s Equality and Diversity Committees

5. The Equal Opportunities Committee has been renamed the Equal Opportunities and Diversity Committee (EO&DC) to reflect its wider purpose and the College’s recognition that promoting equality and valuing diversity makes good business sense. The membership has been widened to include representation from the Students’ Union and greater representation from staff at all levels and ethnic origins. Over the past year, many members have participated in working groups (on
disability, race, harassment) and have been active on committee business outside of the main committee cycle. Committee meetings are participative and lively; it is a pleasure to note that we have a waiting list of staff who would like to join.

6. The Academic Opportunities Committee continues to focus upon ensuring that the College has a “level playing field” for female academic staff by removing any barriers that might exist in appointment or career advancement. Membership of this committee has also been widened and strengthened; it is notable that the membership has also been augmented by senior male staff – a strong signal that the College recognises that the issues dealt with by this committee are of significance to both female and male academic staff and, moreover, are important for its overall academic strategy.

7. As a result of the Support Services Initiative, a review has been undertaken of the College’s committee structure. The College has underlined its commitment to equality and diversity by maintaining these committees as Rector’s committees. Over the past year, there has been senior level support for many of the initiatives generated by the committees e.g. the Rector addressed a session on harassment and bullying, provided a personal endorsement to the Disability Policy and chaired the Athena Lecturer during last year’s Women in Science Week. The Deputy Rector spoke about the Women in Science Week in the Reporter and chaired the Forum on Academic Women, also part of the Women in Science Week.

Using Specialist Expertise

8. While it is vital that we are mindful of the Imperial College context, we have made contact with specialists to ensure that we are aware of good practice in the higher education, public and private sectors. Visits to the College have been made by Robin Schneider (Managing Director of Schneider-Ross) and Mannie Kusemamuriwo (Lead Officer for Race at the Equality Challenge Unit). We have retained experienced outside consultants to work with our own specialist Equalities and Diversity Consultant on policy development and training. The Deputy Director HR and the Equalities and Diversity Consultant are members of higher education and national networks on gender, race and disability matters.

Staff Development, Leadership and Management Capability

9. Staff development work that had begun during 2002 was given an extra push last year. Many of the issues raised by staff in the audit showed clearly that managers needed to become more effective managers generally in order to achieve a positive and inclusive culture.

10. The crucial importance of recruitment and selection in the promotion and achievement of equality and diversity was underlined by the College when it instituted its policy that all interview panel members must be trained. Consequently, during the first half of 2003, training sessions were held College-wide, with the most regular recruiters and chairs of interview panels being trained first. The sessions incorporated training on all aspects of equality and diversity e.g. disability, race, gender, and on the College’s recruitment and selection procedures, which had also been revised thoroughly. In the 02/03 academic year, 521 staff were trained – 51% of the total number were academic staff and 29% were managerial/administrative; 30% of participants rated the usefulness of the courses as “Very High” and 50% rated the usefulness as “High”. At the end of 2003, procedures were drafted to monitor the make-up of interview panels and to ensure that panel members have been trained.
11. The College has developed “Career Pathways” for each of its staff categories and attendance at workshops to understand and promote the value of equality and diversity is a major element of each pathway. Workshops are being organised for each department/division and attendance is mandatory. To date, approximately 250 staff have attended. Initially, we have focused upon departments/divisions with front-line staff e.g. catering, residences, security and their managers. A number of briefings for senior managers have taken place; one outcome has been the formation of a Diversity Committee in Residences; another has been that clear local action plans have been produced which include impact assessments. The staff development activity in relation to equality and diversity is a major programme of work and will continue into 2004 and beyond. It will help move our equality agenda into mainstream practice.

12. Changes have been made to the academic promotions procedure. In addition to changes in process, applicants for promotion to all academic levels are now required to demonstrate attendance at development activities to develop management and leadership skills. Attendance at mandatory programmes e.g. recruitment and selection, and equality and diversity briefings, are a prerequisite of promotion.

13. A greater emphasis has been placed on equality and diversity in the College’s corporate induction programme for new staff and, increasingly, departments/divisions which design and deliver local induction include sessions on HR and equality - a noteworthy example is Security. The manager’s responsibility for promoting and ensuring equality and diversity is an integral part of the College’s management development programmes.

14. As part of the College’s appraisal system, the Personal Review and Development Plan (PRDP), appraisees are assessed on their competency and success in developing others/promoting potential/promoting equal opportunities and diversity. For most staff, the PRDP will be used to inform the promotion and reward process, thus building in equality and diversity into career progression and reward.

**Disability**

15. The Schneider-Ross report identified that the experience of staff with disabilities was the most negative of all those who responded. It also pointed out that the College did not monitor for disability and did not have an explicit policy.

16. At the start of 2003, the College revised its data collection procedures and instituted monitoring for disability. Also, the EO&DC established a working group consisting of interested and knowledgeable staff, the Disability Task Group. Its first major task was to feed into the development of our Disability Policy, which has now been completed and approved by the EO&DC. In early 2004, the policy will be implemented and integrated into the most important day-to-day work practices and into our recruitment and selection procedures. This policy draws on good practice research from specialist bodies, such as the Employers’ Forum on Disability – the UK’s national employers’ organisation – of which we are a member. The Disability Task Group works in conjunction with HR to review the policy and to focus upon issues of concern and importance.

17. The College has had a Disabilities Officer for many years and her main focus has been, and continues to be, on students. (The Disabilities Officer prepares a separate report on student matters for the Pro Rector Educational Quality). In 2003, her role widened so that she is also now available formally for individual staff so that
they may discuss issues of concern in confidence. The Disabilities Officer also works closely with Occupational Health staff who, in turn, have close relationships with our employee assistance scheme, Care First.

18. HEFCE has provided the College with funding to help improve provision for disabled students and this has involved the Disabilities Officer, the Centre for Educational Development and HR working together to develop staff awareness and to provide training for key groups of academic and support staff.

Respect for Others

19. The Schneider-Ross analysis of the staff questionnaire showed that a wide range of staff made a significant number of comments relating to the incidence of harassment and bullying. In response, the following actions have been taken:

- an Harassment and Bullying Policy, that stresses that this behaviour is unacceptable, has been approved by the EO&DC; it includes a clear procedure for supporting individuals and for dealing with complaints;
- monitoring systems have been introduced to chart the incidence and severity of complaints and the appropriateness of follow-up action;
- a network of Harassment Support Contacts (HSCs) has been established; 50 staff volunteered and 25 have been trained and are ready to take up the role as part of the policy implementation (another training programme is scheduled for this year); the HSCs have been put in place to discuss what the individual might do to improve the situation, what the options for action might be, and to generally provide confidential support to any staff member; HSCs are in addition to the more formal support provided by the unions, HR and Occupational Health and 28 of these staff have been trained on the policy;
- publicity has been produced, and briefings, workshops and training have been provided during 2003 to communicate and involve staff;
- information about the implications of legislation on sexual orientation and religious belief has been included in our training provision.

Race

20. The requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 are, arguably, some of the most significant affecting College because, not only does the legislation cover both staff and students, action is required in relation to most functions that we perform.

21. In May 2002, Council approved the College’s first “Promoting Race Equality Policy”. HEFCE assessed the sector’s policies and we were required to resubmit a year later. In addition to the resubmitted policy, HEFCE was provided with five Codes of Practice and detailed Action Plans. Our approach was to view the policy as a framework, which was then supplemented by documents that detailed who was responsible for what, and by when. The Codes relate to: Procurement and Contract Compliance; Teaching, Student Services and Widening Participation; Partnerships with Business and Local Communities; Employment, Staff Development and Staff Representation; Governance. This project involved participation from staff throughout College. It was a complex task that was completed on schedule.

22. While progress has been made, it is true to say that we still need to undertake significant action in many aspects covered by the Codes. As part of its monitoring role, the EO&DC had a special meeting in November 2003 to assess our progress. Those individuals who have lead responsibility for each Code were required to:
(a) update their Action Plans, indicating when an action had been achieved, or if a revised timeframe is required and why;
(b) provide a qualitative assessment of progress – what had gone well or not and why.

23. In general, while some specific targets in most of the Action Plans had been met, the timescales had slipped. A considerable amount of additional work has been required (particularly by Registry and HR) to establish monitoring systems and procedures, and to produce, or revise, policy documents and guidance. The need for central monitoring involves increased work in the form of data collection by each department and division and some have been more able than others to comply. It was also clear that we have far more work to do to ensure that staff, at all levels, understand their responsibilities and obligations so that the College really does “promote race equality” and tackles any indicators, or occurrences, of institutional racism.

Gender

24. In general, the Schneider-Ross report did not identify that female staff felt disadvantaged in relation to their male colleagues; however, this was not the case for female academic staff who, apart from staff with disabilities, were the most outspoken respondents with the most negative experiences.

25. In light of the above, during 2003 the Academic Opportunities Committee (AOC) has continued to press ahead with initiatives and to push for changes to existing College practices. Examples of concrete actions are as follows:

- participation in the “Opportunity Now” (national and multi-sector) and Athena (higher education science, technology and medicine) surveys to benchmark the College’s progress on gender-related matters – in 2002, the College gained the silver level award from “Opportunity Now” and we await the outcome of the 2003 survey; with regard to the Athena survey, we will hear how the College compares with other HE institutions when the project manager gives a presentation at the next AOC meeting; the Chair of the EO&DC is the College’s “Opportunity Now” gender champion;
- a survey on the way departments and divisions deal with the academic promotions exercise which has resulted in changes that should benefit female and male academic staff alike e.g. clearer instructions to Heads of Department/Division about how the process should be handled, which should result in transparent, fairer treatment;
- invitations to each of the four Faculty Principals to discuss how they have fostered a level playing field within their faculties;
- the launch of Women in Science Week in May 2003, where the main attraction was Professor Dame Lesley Rees speaking at the Athena Lecture on fraud and misconduct in medical research; other events were participatory and, on the last day of the week, the female members of Council joined female professors and readers for a discussion and lunch;
- the College came joint second in this year’s Athena Awards for the pioneering work of the Academic Opportunities Committee; the prize money has been used to commission a work of art from the Royal College of Art to celebrate female endeavour in science (it will be unveiled at the next Council meeting and then hung in the SCR);
• a pledge, that stresses our commitment to promoting equality of opportunity, has been produced that will be used in our recruitment literature for female academic staff.

26. An equal pay audit was undertaken in 2003 which looked at staff salaries and remuneration for staff in all categories. The analysis did not highlight pay anomalies with regard to female academic staff. The most consistent pay gap arose at the senior administrative staff level because, where men were external appointments, their starting salary reflected their historic, larger earnings. Generally, however, the analysis for all grades did not reveal serious problems. The implementation of the Hay job evaluation system will be used to iron out problems in individual cases.

Data Collection

27. The collection of accurate data, and subsequent monitoring, is vital to the achievement of the College’s equality and diversity objectives, and it is a specific requirement of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2002. Some fundamental actions have been taken in 2003 to improve our baseline data. Appendix 2 lists the most common data sets collected.

28. In relation to staff, HR has written to all current staff requiring an updated individual return on ethnic origin and disability. The data collection forms for applicants, new starters and exit forms for leavers have also been improved so that we may fulfil the obligations of the Act to set targets and monitor recruitment, progress, promotion, pay, development take-up and disciplinaries and grievances. The 2001 census data is used as a benchmark for analysis of support jobs.

29. In relation to students, data is required on ethnic origin at the: application, offer and acceptance stages; in relation to fee status; in the choice of subject; with regard to dropout rates; on progress and attainment; in relation to the number of disciplinaries and complaints. The Registry has instituted systems to collect this data.

30. The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2002 also requires data collection in respect of those organisations with which we do business, with which we contract and from which we purchase goods and services. The Purchasing Manager uses the latest good practice models and guidance, and is liaising with colleagues within the Purchasing Consortium to which the College belongs so that a streamlined system of data collection can be agreed.

PROBLEMS AND ISSUES

Insufficient Data Leading to Inadequate Monitoring

31. A significant problem has been the rate of collection and accuracy of data for monitoring purposes. For example, previously, the Registry has not collected student data on ethnicity; a significant proportion of new and existing members of staff do not complete monitoring forms even though a clear explanation is given on why the College requires the information, what it will be used for and our responsibilities to protect privacy and confidentiality under data protection legislation. At this stage, therefore, we are only partially fulfilling our obligations under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 because we do not have an accurate baseline from which to evaluate, monitor and plan future actions.
Inadequate Impact Assessment

32. There is a requirement under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 to assess the impact of each policy and procedure, both current and new. For example, is there any evidence or possibility that a particular policy or procedure has led, or could lead, to a detrimental quantitative or qualitative difference in impact on particular groups? While this is a requirement under this piece of legislation, it is a useful general target in the context of ensuring equality and diversity. Impact assessments have not been undertaken in any systematic way to date because the major thrust of activity during 2003 has been on policy development, training and improving data collection.

Communications and Generating Understanding

33. Communicating with, and to, staff and students about equality and diversity requires skilful use of language and methods, as well as creativity and enthusiasm in order to get messages across. The number of equality initiatives that are required, the relatively small number of staff working on equality and diversity, combined with the heavy workloads of departmental/divisional managers have all had an impact upon effective delivery. Strategically, in order to achieve real and lasting success, departments and divisions need to have local equality and diversity action plans. This is a large programme and work began towards the end of 2003.

External Interest

34. We responded positively and proactively to the external interest that was shown in our equalities practices and procedures.

PLANS FOR 2004

35. Our major focus over the next year must be to consolidate and improve upon what we have begun and achieved to date. We will:

• improve our data collection so that we can undertake effective monitoring, identify accurate trends rather than come to conclusions from snapshot data, and instigate changes to practice where appropriate;
• begin a programme of impact assessment of College policies and procedures;
• ensure comprehensive implementation of equality and diversity policies, with the Disability Policy and the Harassment and Bullying Policy as priorities;
• continue to build our staff development and management capability so that equality and diversity are well-understood as being integral components of what it means to be an Imperial College manager;
• continue our equality and diversity workshop programme;
• continue to develop accessible and clear communications and publicity;
• ensure that the PRDP performance assessment and development system supports the achievement of equality and diversity;
• continue to implement the Codes of Practice and review the Action Plans of the Promoting Race Equality Policy;
• encourage and achieve more active participation by special interest groups in the development of policies and procedures;
• encourage and achieve feedback from staff and students which is then acted upon;
• develop a comprehensive family-friendly, flexible working and work-life balance policy;
• work in partnership with departments and divisions to develop local action equality and diversity plans;
• incorporate the recent legislation on sexual orientation and religious belief into College policies;
• consider the implications on policies and practice of the legislation on age which comes into force in 2006.

BRIEFING FOR COUNCIL MEMBERS AND SENIOR STAFF

36. A morning briefing session, led by Robin Schneider of Schneider-Ross was held on 27 January 2004. The session was well attended and discussion was wide-ranging.

DECISIONS

37. Council is asked to:

(a) consider the findings of this report and assess the impact of actions taken to date;
(b) review and, if appropriate, approve the planned actions for 2004;
(c) identify whether different, or additional, information is required in future reports;
(d) consider the 27 January briefing session and identify any action points.

January 2004