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AT THE DEPARTMENT WE ARE PROUD TO BE A LEADER AMONG FEDERAL AGENCIES IN THE EMPLOYMENT OF HISPANICS. IN FACT, OUR HISPANIC REPRESENTATION OF 10.5% (9,946) MAKES US NUMBER ONE AMONG ALL AGENCIES. THAT'S CERTAINLY SOMETHING THAT WE CAN ALL BE PROUD OF, BUT WE KNOW THAT THE REPRESENTATION IS NOT CONSTANT IN ALL COMPONENTS OR AT ALL GRADE LEVELS, ESPECIALLY IN HIGH LEVEL AND POLICY MAKING POSITIONS. UNFORTUNATELY, THIS IS THE SITUATION FOR OTHER MINORITIES AS WELL.

I AM STRONGLY COMMITTED TO THE BELIEF THAT SINCE THE DEPARTMENT REPRESENTS THE INTERESTS OF ALL OUR CITIZENS, IT IS ONLY PROPER THAT THE DEPARTMENT REFLECT THIS DIVERSITY. MY VISION IS TO MAKE THE DEPARTMENT A MODEL EMPLOYER WHERE EQUAL OPPORTUNITY CONSIDERATIONS ARE AN INTEGRAL PART OF OUR MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS.

TO REALIZE THIS VISION, I ISSUED A MEMORANDUM ON AUGUST 16TH TO THE HEADS OF DEPARTMENT COMPONENTS OUTLINING KEY OBJECTIVES AND INITIATIVES WHICH ARE TO BE IMPLEMENTED. THE FIRST OBJECTIVE IS "TO FOSTER AN ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH CULTURAL DIVERSITY IS VALUED AND UNDERSTOOD." THIS IS THE FIRST OBJECTIVE BECAUSE WHEN DIVERSITY IS VALUED AND UNDERSTOOD, THEN GLASS CEILINGS AND OTHER BARRIERS TO FULL PARTICIPATION ARE MORE EASILY ELIMINATED.

EACH HEAD OF COMPONENT HAS BEEN ASKED TO DEVELOP AND SUBMIT A COMPREHENSIVE REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS PACKAGE OF INITIATIVES. ADDITIONALLY, JUST LAST WEEK I SIGNED A MEMORANDUM TO COMPONENT HEADS WHICH CALLS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF ACTIVITIES IN CONJUNCTION WITH AND IN SUPPORT OF THE HISPANIC ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES (HACU) AND ITS MEMBER INSTITUTIONS. THE MEMO OUTLINES SPECIFIC AFFIRMATIVE ACTION ACTIVITIES WHICH ARE DESIGNED TO ENHANCE HISPANIC EMPLOYMENT HERE AT THE DEPARTMENT THESE INITIATIVES NOT ONLY ASSIST IN REALIZING THE DEPARTMENT'S GOALS OF COMMITMENT TO ACHIEVING A DIVERSE WORK FORCE, THUS, MAKING OUR ORGANIZATION MORE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PEOPLE WE SERVE, BUT ALSO SERVE TO COMPLY WITH THE PRESIDENT'S EXECUTIVE ORDER 12900 ON "EDUCATION EXCELLENCE FOR HISPANIC AMERICANS." SINCE THE EDUCATION OF OUR YOUTH IS KEY TO THE FUTURE WELL-BEING OF OUR COUNTRY, IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE TAKE APPROPRIATE ACTIONS, AS THE PRESIDENT'S EXECUTIVE ORDER ASKS US TO DO, WHICH WILL ADVANCE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR HISPANIC AMERICANS. I UNDERSTAND THAT COPIES OF THOSE MEMOS ARE AVAILABLE IN THE BACK OF THE GREAT HALL .

THE DEPARTMENT IS A GREAT ORGANIZATION, IT SEEMS TO ME, NOT ONLY BECAUSE OF WHAT WE HAVE ACCOMPLISHED, BUT BECAUSE OF WHAT WE HAVE COMMITTED OURSELVES TO BECOME. I FIRMLY BELIEVE THAT WITH YOUR HELP AND PARTNERSHIP WE CAN ACCOMPLISH THESE GOALS. MUCHAS GRACIAS POR SU ATENCION.