At the recent end of the cold war, there was widespread hope for the beginning of an era of enhanced peace, tolerance, fairness, and goodwill among the people of the world. In fact, the opposite seems to be happening, with a resurgence of hatred, bigotry, and racial, religious, and ethnic intolerance in Asia, Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and the Americas.

Close to home, a majority—54% to 46%—of those Coloradans who voted in the November election passed an amendment to the state constitution (Amendment 2) that would prohibit antidiscrimination laws against homosexuals, in effect permitting, if not encouraging, discriminatory practices by employers, apartment owners, and others. This vote has attracted national attention and represents another example of intolerance, misunderstanding, bigotry, and hatred of one part of society by another part.

The question I grapple with is what should I as an individual do about such matters, and from an institutional point of view, what should I as the president of UCAR do. The answer, I think, is a version of the environmental movement’s admonishment to “think globally and act locally.” Although I can probably have only minimal impact on the killings in Bosnia or the starvation in Somalia, I can certainly work on a personal level within the state of Colorado to repeal Amendment 2 and, with the help and support of UCAR leadership, management, and staff, work within UCAR to eliminate bias, bigotry, and intolerance in the organization. (Here UCAR refers to UCAR management, NCAR, and all other UCAR programs.) As one small step in this direction, the UCAR and NCAR directors in November unanimously modified the UCAR Equal Employment Opportunity policy and the UCAR Affirmative Action plan to explicitly include sexual orientation with the other factors (race, color, religion, national origin, gender, age, and handicap or disability status) protected against unfair treatment at UCAR.

Of course official statements of policy against unjust discrimination, important as they are, do not guarantee a fully equitable organization with fair practices in all aspects of employee interactions and relations. A continual awareness and effort by management and all staff must occur to ensure that the policies are reflected by reality and practice, and that each of us treats others fairly and with dignity.

In June 1991, at the NCAR directors’ planning retreat, the directors discussed the issue of gender and racial
equity, together with the broader issues of fairness and tolerance for all UCAR employees. Because the directors felt that some examples of inequities and attitudes of intolerance did exist within UCAR, in August 1991 NCAR director Robert Serafin and I appointed an ad hoc Committee on Institutional Equity (CIE) to explore the broad range of issues surrounding equity at UCAR and to recommend actions to improve any areas of deficiency found in their assessment. Thomas Holzer, director of NCAR's High Altitude Observatory, and Edna Comedy, UCAR Human Resources manager, cochaired the committee. In January 1992, the CIE distributed a corporate culture survey, prepared by a professional consulting firm, to all UCAR employees. This survey revealed that UCAR is a healthy and fair organization relative to other organizations of its size. However, a significant fraction of the respondents identified discrepancies between sound management, equity, and tolerance of diversity as reflected in UCAR policies versus the practices of some employees and managers. In short, the survey revealed real and/or perceived examples of bias, intolerance, and unfair treatment of some employees based on gender, race, job level, or job type.

Over the spring and summer of 1992 the CIE developed an action plan to address the discrepancies revealed by the survey. A draft of this plan was completed in October and is currently being discussed with UCAR staff. As a first step in the plan, members of UCAR management participated in all-day sessions to explore their own personal values regarding management, equity, and diversity, as well as the organizational values on these topics. Five separate value-exploration sessions were held involving more than 40 members of UCAR management. Many common values emerged from these sessions, and in November UCAR management adopted a set of ideal values of the organization necessary for effective management and achievement of UCAR goals as expressed in UCAR 2001—A Strategic Outlook for the University Corporation for Atmospheric Research. These, as well as personal values, are summarized in a report, "Steps toward Institutional Equity at UCAR." This report is available to interested individuals or institutions from me, or from Edna Comedy at 303-497-8705.

The CIE recommended a number of actions, including training programs to address various personnel issues such as sexual harassment, managing diversity, mentoring and staff development, and managing for performance. The CIE also recommended the creation of standing committees at the division or program level within the organization to address all issues surrounding institutional equity and to monitor progress. We recognize that achieving our goal of making UCAR a model organization in terms of employee equity, diversity, and support and tolerance for others will require a strong and continual effort by both management and staff.

Robert Serafin, Thomas Holzer, Edna Comedy, or I would be pleased to share our experiences and plans, and we would welcome your comments and experiences as well.