

Office of the Dean

COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS & SCIENCES AT ILLINOIS

LAS Strategic Plan Development

Strategic Plan Working Group Report III

College Goal: Promote Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Brief Summary of Recommendations

As a task force, we agree that diversity and inclusion must be understood as central to University excellence – not as a separate or distinct goal apart from other categories of “excellence.” We believe that this diversity work does not simply generate knowledge about the University; it should transform it. Diversity and inclusion have been incorporated into our strategic plans for some time, but so far *without* transformation. We believe that the actions we take to transform the University now are how we then create new knowledge; our recommendations therefore aim to *redress a pervasive hostile climate; improve URM faculty recruitment and retention; and improve URM student recruitment and retention.*

Working Group Process

Given the short time frame of two months for our report, the task force met in person three times between the end of August and October 2019. In addition, most members attended the strategic planning roundtables convened by the College on October 9-10. Throughout its deliberations, the task force accessed an active Box folder containing almost sixty files including statistical data, reports, white papers, and strategic plans. The group also regularly corresponded via email. We chose early on to include a narrative with our report, because we shared concerns about diversity, equity, and inclusion that required we invoke institutional history and context.

Core Concerns

The members of the task force agreed that the University of Illinois, and this campus and the College of LAS in particular, bear significant challenges for diversity and inclusion. These challenges are outlined in the [Diversity and Inclusion Goals and Actions: Proposed for the 2018-23 Campus Strategic Plan](#) document authored by the Diversity Strategy Task Force, chaired by Assata Zerai, then Associate Chancellor for Diversity, and we mostly agree with these (as listed on p. 6). We did wish to expand upon the language of the first challenge listed as, “perceptions of an inhospitable climate by marginalized groups among students, staff and faculty,” however – as recent events on campus demonstrate, this *perception* of an inhospitable climate seems to have become more evident. These include, but are not limited to, the revelation by ProPublica of [multiple investigations of faculty for sexual misconduct, including assault](#), which were previously undisclosed to the campus community; multiple nooses and swastikas found across campus, from dormitories, libraries, departmental and administrative buildings, and staff areas; the ongoing shrinking of the American Indian Studies Program

specifically and indigenous studies broadly, on this campus post-Salaita; and ongoing targeted harassment of certain academic and non-academic units representing vulnerable and/or targeted populations. Meanwhile, the continued presence of the Chief at sanctioned University events (most recently seen performing at Homecoming 2019) and in the greater campus community, as well as the University's lax enforcement of its copyright and refusal to commit to a new mascot, contributes to the hostile campus climate, especially for URM students, staff, and faculty.

As one of the members of the task force said, "You cannot invite people to your house if you haven't cleaned up the mess. Nor can you expect them to do it for you." To put another way, we cannot expect persons from underrepresented populations to provide pedagogical value as students, staff, or faculty, at the cost of their own sense of belonging or safety. Recruitment goals at all levels including undergraduate, graduate, staff, faculty, are unhelpful without the attendant commitment to transform campus cultures and support structures necessary to recruit *and* retain URM and other vulnerable populations.

We also shared the concern that multiple documents with action items for promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion at the College and university levels have not significantly diminished the continued presence of hostility toward URM and vulnerable populations in campus life. We have the [2017 University of Illinois External Review and Report](#) and the [2018-2023 Diversity and Inclusion Goals and Actions](#) report, and at the College level, we refer to the 2013 report produced by the LAS Diversity Subcommittee of the Faculty Input Team (FIT), appointed by then Dean of LAS Ruth Watkins (see Appendix A), and the 2019 White Paper prepared by Faculty Director of Diversity and Inclusion Isabel Molina-Guzman. The task force therefore chose not to reinvent the wheel but rather to ask the College to consider how and why such action items have or have not been pursued, and to reiterate recommendations previously made.

We are guided here by Sara Ahmed's ethnographic study of diversity work in institutions of higher education, in which she notes, "After all, universities often describe their missions by drawing on the languages of diversity as well as equality. But using the language does not translate into creating diverse or equal environments. This 'not translation' is something we experience: it is a gap between a symbolic commitment and a lived reality." It is our hope that the College, and the University as a whole, commits to the lived reality.

Specific Areas of Concern

The task force recognizes that the College of LAS does much for diversity and inclusion for the campus but does not receive the appropriate resources to reflect this crucial contribution to our University strategic goals. In demanding that the campus value diversity and inclusion *in practice*, we must address how a culture of scarcity keeps us from working together.

The values that seem most pressing to university administrators are financial stability and the maintenance of the University reputation. These would appear to be the primary considerations driving decision-making on crucial issues, such as faculty sexual misconduct and the unreplaced university mascot. We believe that these considerations, especially when prioritized over other values including diversity, equity, and inclusion, contribute to the major areas of concern identified by the task force and the faculty participating in the strategic planning roundtables. These concerns include a

pervasive hostile climate, faculty recruitment and attrition, and student recruitment and attrition, and provide the rationale for the recommendations that follow.

- **CLIMATE.** In addition to the aforementioned incidents, the University and the College (whether or not the College is “just” following the lead of campus leadership) has failed to act decisively regarding sexual misconduct, gender-based harassment, and racist hostility. The recent publicity around multiple investigations demonstrates that campus leadership has chosen to invest its resources in sweeping under the rug long-practiced behaviors that have caused immeasurable harm. Furthermore, existing required training modules, including the ethics training and the sexual misconduct training, focus on compliance with the lowest possible bar of legal liability for the University, rather than active transformation of best practices or campus culture.
- **FACULTY RECRUITMENT AND ATTRITION.** As the White Paper notes, despite the best efforts of the DRIVE committee, that the underrepresentation of African American, Latina/o, and Native American faculty remains severe and systemic within the College and campus as a whole, as does the gender imbalance in the promotion of Associate professors to Full. Many faculty from under-represented minorities, both “officially” recognized and otherwise, experience marginalization on campus, or in their departments.
- **STUDENT RECRUITMENT AND ATTRITION.** At the University level, URM undergraduate and graduate student enrollment continues to lag as the campus leadership fails to invest in appropriate financial resources, academic resources, and support resources. At the College level, undergraduate majors in LAS are not easily accessible for undeclared students or students wishing to change curricula, especially in the sciences. Interdisciplinary majors for students with a range of science coursework are non-existent in the College or have strict rules for declaration. Considering that underrepresented students’ performance in critical courses is vital to major declaration, persistence, and completion, a lack of diverse instructional methods in the classroom creates a gap in content attainment and academic success. For undergraduate students, navigating the college of LAS is difficult due to academic silos, complex organizational structures, and competing interests. The lack of URM academic advisors and counselors that can help URM students access guidance and advice regarding their success is also missing in the College.

Recommendations

Given the numerous documents that have outlined and reiterated the same or similar recommendations over the years, we recommend that the College of LAS follow those guidelines and action items that have not yet been implemented. We refer again here to the [2018-2023 Diversity and Inclusion Goals and Action](#) report created by then Associate Chancellor of Diversity Assata Zerai, and the 2019 white paper created by Faculty Director Molina-Guzman. For some of these items we have identified metrics where appropriate; however, we strongly believe that these action items are themselves the “deliverables.” The best way to measure and assess outcomes is to follow through on actions.

Lastly, we recognize that resources (including financial, technical, and skilled resources) are required for each of these action items; we also observe that having a policy for diversity and inclusion is not the

same as the commitment or resourced capacity to perform that policy. Just as we have incentives, reward structures, compensation, and skills-training resources towards scholarship and teaching, LAS should consider similar structures for the challenging work of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1: Redress climate and culture through transformative practices.

- **ACTION 1.** Invest in engaging face-to-face workshops on diversity, equity, and inclusion and sexual and gender-based harassment, and require faculty and staff attendance, organized around best practices for transforming work cultures rather than legal liability. While not all of us have had the opportunity to read the University of Illinois Report on Faculty Sexual Misconduct, we support an institutional response that puts an end to the harassment as quickly as possible, and that examines what structural conditions contributed to the harassment, and addresses those conditions.
- **ACTION 2.** Develop incentives for faculty and/or departments that implement diversity, equity, and inclusion strategic plans, including the US Minority Cultures General Education requirement (USMC).
- **ACTION 3.** Support all LAS departments in generating and recognizing actions that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion. This could include requiring a diversity, equity, and inclusion section in faculty members' annual reports, or conducting climate surveys to inform strategic plans that address endemic issues specific to each department. (The Department of Chemistry has a model here: <https://chemistry.illinois.edu/climate/climate-and-diversity-action-plan>)
- **ACTION 4.** Recognize the ethnic studies academic units, as well as Gender and Women's Studies, as high-performing departments. Such recognition should include financial support as well as other forms of support, including additional staff, fundraising and communications.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2: Improve URM faculty recruitment and retention.

- **ACTION 1.** Set faculty hiring and promotion goals that meet and exceed Affirmative Action compliance. Following from the five-year Diversity and Inclusion campus strategic plan, the College of LAS should set a goal for at least a 25% increase in URM and a 40% increase in women's representation among faculty at all ranks.
- **ACTION 2.** Fully fund and expand programs like TOP/Dual Career within the College, while supporting the full funding and expansion of Chancellor's diversity and Illinois Distinguished postdoctoral programs, including the proposed postdoctoral program for transgender studies for Gender and Women's Studies.
- **ACTION 3.** Provide start-up funds for more categories of marginalized faculty who do not meet the demographic bar or classifications for "underrepresentation," including persons with disabilities, or transgender faculty.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3: Improve recruitment and retention of URM students at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

- **ACTION 1.** Set enrollment goals for an undergraduate and graduate populations representative of the composition of the state for the College. This must also include support for a radical restructuring for the provision of academic and non-academic support for URM populations, including the Access and Achievement Program, Inspire Illinois, mental health support at McKinley, and confidential advocates at each of the student cultural centers. We also recommend funding and expanding graduate diversity fellowships and undergraduate scholarships within the College.
- **ACTION 2.** Lead in the implementation of the US Minority Cultures General Education requirement (USMC) for all undergraduate students. Given that the interdisciplinary units along with the humanities are best equipped to meet these curricular needs, LAS must acknowledge the pedagogical value of the ethnic and gender and women’s studies departments in particular, but also the humanities and social sciences in general, with commensurate resources including TAs and curricular support. In creating courses across the departments under the College, the College should fund and support cross-departmental collaborations to develop and offer USMC courses and curricula (with teaching releases, for instance). The College of LAS should also create a five-year plan to invest in the ethnic studies and gender and women’s studies units, including an accessible building with dedicated classrooms and a lecture hall.
- **ACTION 3.** Increase staff numbers in the offices of recruitment, admission, and advising in all LAS departments and better equip them with financial resources to assist with improving diversity and climate.

Further Recommendations

Some of what the College confronts with regard to the pursuit of diversity and inclusion is beyond the scope of the College. To the campus, we additionally reiterate the campus-wide reports, and recommend these steps in particular:

- Consistent, public messaging on diversity and inclusion is not a part of our “brand.” This is due in no small part to the continued presence of the Chief, which communicates “tolerance” for racism and white supremacy. The University needs to replace the mascot as soon as possible.
- Following the sixty-four recommendations of the [2019 Report on Faculty Sexual Misconduct](#), we support the overhaul the system regarding sexual misconduct and gender-based harassment in which clear procedures and fair processes are set in place.
- Develop new categories for diversity and inclusion across the University HR systems and graduate and undergraduate admissions portals, to include categories beyond binary gender, for instance, or disaggregating Arab from “white.”
- Invest in our student resource centers, including the Women’s Resource Center (which houses the confidential advocates), the Counseling Center, and DRES. There are not enough staff to serve students requiring these resources, and students should not have to wait to receive their important services.

APPENDIX A.

Report of the Faculty Input Team Subcommittee on Diversity Activities for AY 2012-2013

Prepared by Erik S. McDuffie in consultation from Lisa Cacho and Mariselle Meléndez
April 15, 2013

Members

Lisa Cacho (Department of Latino/Latina Studies, Department of Asian American Studies)

Erik S. McDuffie (Department of African American Studies)

Mariselle Meléndez (Department of Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese)

Summary of Activities

Our subcommittee has been actively involved in nurturing initiatives on campus related to transforming the University around diversity-related issues during AY 2012-13. Our group was formed at the October 17, 2013 meeting of the FIT committee. Initially, our subcommittee's primary goals were to acquire data within the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences related to the recruitment, retention, and attrition of graduate students and to offer recommendations for increasing the numbers of graduate students from underrepresented groups and ensuring their success. However, we expanded our charge. By the end of the year, our subcommittee focused our attention on improving the status of underrepresented faculty and students across the University. We concluded that strengthening the Ethnic Studies units, including Gender and Women's Studies; and working with other initiatives on campus concerned with transforming the University around diversity-related issues was essential to our subcommittee's mission.

The subcommittee met several times this academic year. After a meeting attended by Lisa Cacho and Mariselle Meléndez (November 8, 2013) and a meeting between Erik McDuffie and Karen Carney (November 14, 2013), we learned that multiple units on campus, including LAS, had compiled significant data on racial and gender demographics of the faculty and students. Given our concern about not reinventing the wheel, we decided to collaborate with other initiatives on campus concerned with addressing diversity-related issues.

On December 18, 2012, Lisa Cacho and Erik McDuffie met with Karen Carney, Assistant Provost Administrator; Menah Pratt-Clarke, Associate Chancellor; and Heidi Johnson, Assistant Director of Human Resource and Information Systems in the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Access. Lisa and I shared the objectives and findings of our subcommittee. After our presentation, Menah Pratt-Clarke suggested that various initiatives on campus had sufficient data about diversity-related issues. She suggested that FIT should work with her office and other groups such as the Committee on Race and Ethnicity (CORE) in transforming the campus' racial climate. Given this, she called a meeting of all the EO's of the Ethnic Studies units, including Gender and Women's Studies, as well as faculty and campus administrators involved in CORE and other diversity initiatives. The "CORE & LAS FIT Ethnic & Gender Studies Meeting" was held on January 8, 2013 in Swanlund (see the list of attendees below). We discussed the need for the University to implement concrete plans and timelines for hiring more faculty of color, constructing a building to house the Ethnic Studies units, and establishing Ph.D. programs in Ethnic Studies. From this meeting and subsequent conversations, Robert Warrior in

consultation with Chantal Nadeau, Ronald Bailey Augusto Espiritu, and Richard Rodriguez prepared the “CORE/LAS/FIT Proposal” (see attachment). This proposal offered suggestions “to robustly support the goals of ethnic and gender and women’s studies units on the Urbana campus” (“CORE/LAS/FIT Proposal”). Although it remains to be seen how the University will respond to it, the proposal, we believe, serves as a useful roadmap for supporting the Ethnic Studies units on campus and transforming the campus around diversity-related issues.

Attendees: Menah Pratt-Clarke, chair; Ave Alvarado (Vice chair CORE), Ron Bailey (DAAS), Karen Carney (LAS), Karen Flynn (GWS/DAAS), Joycelyn Landrum-Brown (Program Coordinator Student Services), Erik McDuffie, Mariselle Meléndez, Chantal Nadeau (GWS), Yoon Pak (EPOL), Richard Rodriguez (LLS), Robert Warrior (AIS)

Recommendations

1. The Chancellor’s Office, Office of the Provost, and LAS endorse and implement the “CORE/LAS/FIT Proposal.”
2. LAS create a permanent committee to monitor racial and gender demographics in the college, with a focus on the retention, promotion, and attrition of faculty of color, as well as to the retention and attrition of students of color (graduate and undergraduate). This committee would issue a report every five years about these issues and provide comparative data from our CIC peer institutions. This committee would also make recommendations to the Dean about improving the status of underrepresented groups within the College.
3. LAS institute a five-year plan to develop Ph.D. programs in all the Ethnic Studies programs, including GWS, that supports current efforts on the ground. Our subcommittee supports current efforts within the Ethnic Studies programs to develop programs from the bottom up, not from the top down. We are especially concerned in maintaining the distinct intellectual identity and mission of each Ethnic Studies program.
4. Develop a University-wide comprehensive study and plan for the recruitment, promotion, and retention of faculty from underrepresented groups.
5. Formulate a University-wide comprehensive study and plan for the recruitment, promotion, and retention of graduate and undergraduate students from underrepresented groups.

Links to campus initiatives and databases related to diversity-related issues:

<http://oeoa.illinois.edu/SupportingDocs/HowToDiversifyTheFaculty.pdf>

<http://www.uillinois.edu/trustees/agenda/May%2031,%202020/000%20may%20presentation%2004%20-%20Recruiting%20Diverse%20Faculty.pdf>

<http://www.provost.illinois.edu/committees/reports/DiversityReport.pdf>