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The Office for Diversity quite sincerely wants to make the lives and experiences of Aggies better. We cannot do it alone. Part of what attracted me to Texas A&M when I was hired in 2018 is the university’s willingness to work to positively influence inclusion among the Aggie community. There are countless students, faculty, staff, and former students who have been doing this important work for a long time and are wholly invested in making Texas A&M a place where everyone shares a sense of belonging and everyone is treated equitably. Texas A&M University understands that diversity — in experiences, cultures, and insights — is absolutely central to academic excellence and leadership.

Partnerships are key and the Office for Diversity welcomes collaboration with those who share in advancing our goals of diversity, inclusion, and equity, and holding us all accountable to meet these goals. My role is to work with units to connect their research, creative, pedagogical, and administrative efforts to an understanding of the complexities of culture, to intercultural insight, and to a vision for a diverse and inclusive campus.

The first half of 2020 has seen Texas A&M’s President, Michael Young, issue statements on the murder of George Floyd, the presence of the statue of Lawrence Sullivan Ross—former president of A&M and member of the Confederacy, and on racist discourse and behaviors from members of our campus. Additionally, 2020 has presented us with a pandemic, one that has further revealed health disparities. Systemic racism, transphobia, gun violence and other societal ills continue to threaten our very lives. My thoughts center on everyone understanding that Texas A&M’s Core Values — respect, excellence, leadership, loyalty, integrity, and selfless service — are synonymous with an ethos of diversity, equity, and inclusion. My prayers are for a campus community that leads with respect and belonging. My ambition is for tangible policies and strategies that center on an increasingly diverse and inclusive Texas A&M student, faculty, and staff community.

In some ways, Texas A&M’s strengths and challenges are one and the same: What we all want for our university is for it to always be at the forefront, to be a leader. That means we must learn from our past to cultivate an enlightened, aware, inclusive society for the future. Access to knowledge — historical, theoretical, political, scientific, technological, artistic, cultural, sociological, mathematical, philosophical, and the like — is always a corrective to a lack of progress, leading to growth and success.

As an institution of higher learning, what we do best is work to inform people’s thinking. Texas A&M is one of the largest and most respected universities in the world. Our greatest strength is education. Pedagogy is the most powerful and effective form of activism. I cannot do this work alone. We all must be education-activists. One can think of the 2020 State of Diversity Report as a roadmap for such activism. It tells us how far we have come and pinpoints the work we still have to do. It is my hope that armed with this information we all can continue the good, hard work of elevating Texas A&M’s commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. The change I would like to see is for us to be national leaders in inclusion, anti-racism, and belonging.
Executive Summary

2020 is the 10th anniversary of Texas A&M University’s 2010 Diversity Plan. The 2010 Diversity Plan established diversity as an indispensable component of academic excellence. Texas A&M “cannot achieve academic excellence without paying attention to and drawing from the richness and strength reflected in the diversity in our state and nation” (From the 2010 University Diversity Plan, p. 1). The purpose of the 2020 State of Diversity Report is to explore how Texas A&M University is advancing its land-grant mission to welcome and to serve people “of all racial, ethnic and geographic groups as it addresses the needs of an increasingly diverse population and a global economy” (Texas A&M’s Mission Statement, https://www.tamu.edu/statements/mission.html).

While the narrative of the 2020 State of Diversity Report is optimistic about advancing diversity and inclusion, Texas A&M must identify and dismantle systemic racist and discriminatory practices. Dismantling systemic racism requires an unrelenting dedication to examining practices and policies that impact admissions, hiring, promotion, graduation, resource allocation, budgeting, safety, assessment, accessibility, and expressive activity. Texas A&M’s most promising strategy to advance its land-grant mission and to dismantle systemic racism and discrimination is to recognize and reward progress towards diversity and inclusion while ensuring that policies, procedures, and plans are pursued with careful attention to their impact on recruitment, retention, campus climate, and equity.

Texas A&M has been recognized in many different ways for its combination of excellence, affordability, and its ability to develop leaders of character who have an impact on the state, nation, and world. We can point to progress such as increases in the numbers of undergraduate Hispanic/Latinx students and tenured female faculty. However, we struggle to increase the number of Black/African American students, faculty, and staff. Harper and Simmons (2019) provide a statement from their research that the Office for Diversity affirms for the 2020 State of Diversity Report: “This report should not be misused to reinforce deficit narratives about Black undergraduates. Problematic trends … are attributable to institutional practices, policies, mindsets, and cultures that persistently disadvantage Black students and sustain inequities” (p. 3). For example, an institutional policy whose effects linger, and we seek to reverse, is that in 1963, barely one generation ago, Texas A&M was an all-white, all-male, military institution that did not admit African Americans, women, or non-cadets.

While our progress in rankings over the past six years shows improvement in some noteworthy areas, years of campus climate assessment data reveal concerns among students, faculty, and staff about safety and belonging at Texas A&M. Too often, the lived reality of students, faculty, and staff from historically underrepresented and excluded groups contrasts starkly with Texas A&M’s Core Values. To advance Texas A&M’s mission and Core Values, the 2020 State of Diversity Report provides four major priorities embedded in the 2010 Diversity Plan goals of accountability, campus climate, and equity:

1) Engage campus leadership (accountability): Campus leadership must be committed, in practice and publicly, to promoting and advancing diversity, inclusion, and equity. Engaged leadership, students, faculty, and staff participate in campus forums and seminars; are up-to-date on the relevant literature; promptly and candidly respond to occurrences of discrimination, harassment, and hate; follow-up with actions and updates to the campus and the community; and recognize and reward commitment and progress towards diversity and inclusion. Additionally, engaged leaders ensure that policies, operations, procedures, and plans are pursued with careful attention to their impact on diversity, inclusion, accessibility, campus climate, and equity.
2) **Address safety, well-being, and sense of belonging (campus climate):** Texas A&M University’s primary concern must be for the physical safety and psychological well-being of current students, faculty, and staff. Enduring racism, bias, discrimination, isolation, and hate takes a toll on mental and physical health. For people from groups who have been historically excluded and marginalized at Texas A&M, a sense of belonging positively impacts achievement, success, and retention (Strayhorn, 2019). By improving campus climate, accessibility, and equity, Texas A&M can provide our students, faculty, and staff with a safe and inclusive environment in which to study and work.

3) **Improve structural diversity (equity):** As a land-grant university, Texas A&M’s students, faculty, and staff should be representative of the demographic diversity of the State of Texas. To be representative of Texas’ population by race/ethnicity, Texas A&M’s population would need to be at least 13% Black/African American as opposed to its current 3% Black/African American and 49% Hispanic/Latinx as opposed to its current 24% Hispanic/Latinx. Furthermore, to be designated as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI), Texas A&M must meet and maintain an enrollment of at least 25%, full-time undergraduate students who are Hispanic/Latinx.

4) **Improve student success (equity):** In 2019, Provost Carol Fierke increased first-year retention goals from 92% to 95%; four-year graduation rate goals from 56% to 65%; and six-year graduate rate goals from 82% to 85%. To address the disparities in our student success rate so that persistence and graduation are realistic goals for every student, Texas A&M is working to decrease achievement disparities across ethnicity, first-generation college student status, gender, and socioeconomic status.

Texas A&M’s 2010 University Diversity Plan includes everyone in the shared responsibility of creating a culture where people are treated equitably, and a campus climate that fosters success and achievement. Texas A&M University’s commitment to diversity and inclusion is attributable to countless current and former students, faculty, and staff, who are engaged in making the campus a community where everyone shares a sense of safety and belonging. The 2020 State of Diversity Report recognizes many of the people, programs, and strategies that are working to remedy pervasive campus climate issues by engaging campus leadership, addressing safety and belonging, and improving structural diversity and student success.
Introduction

Texas A&M University is committed to enriching the learning and working environment for students, faculty, staff, and visitors by promoting a culture that embraces inclusion, diversity, equity, and accountability. Diverse perspectives, talents, and identities are vital to advancing our land-grant mission and living our Core Values: respect, excellence, loyalty, leadership, integrity, and selfless service. Diversity and inclusion are embedded in Texas A&M’s mission and academic excellence. Advancing Texas A&M’s institutional mission and living up to our Core Values depends on improving the campus climate; addressing the safety and belonging concerns of current students, faculty, and staff; and establishing structural diversity in our students, faculty, and staff that is representative of the State of Texas and the communities we serve.

For Texas A&M University, diversity and inclusion mean welcoming and supporting people from all groups that encompass the various identities and characteristics of people on our campuses and in our communities. These identities and characteristics include but are not limited to: Age, background, citizenship, disability, education, ethnicity, family status, gender, gender identity/expression, geographical location, language, military experience, political views, race, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and work experience. Broadly, diversity means differences in society’s opportunities, the shaping of institutions by different social factors, the formation of group and individual identities, and the processes of social change (Anderson & Taylor, 2008). Inclusion relates to a sense of belonging, the perception of “social support on campus, a feeling or sensation of connectedness, and the experience of mattering or feeling cared about, accepted, respected, valued by, and important to the campus community or others on campus such as faculty, staff, and peers” (Strayhorn, 2019, p. 4).

The 2020 State of Diversity Report explores pervasive campus climate issues that jeopardize the sense of safety and belonging for current students, faculty, and staff. Campus climate describes how students, faculty, and staff feel and experience the campus environment. Hurtado, Clayton-Pedersen, Allen and Milem (1998) describe an institution’s campus climate as the product of the institution’s historical legacy of inclusion or exclusion of various racial or ethnic groups; the psychological climate including perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes about diversity and inclusion; the behavioral climate describing how people interact on campus; and structural diversity, the numerical and proportional representation of diverse groups on campus.

Hurtado et al. (1998) explain that “…one important step toward improving the campus climate for diversity is to increase the representation of people of color on campus” (p. 287). At Texas A&M, many people are frequently one of few or the only one from their identity groups. Improving Texas A&M’s structural diversity (e.g., attaining race/ethnic demographics representative of the State of Texas) has the potential to address pervasive safety and belonging issues. Additionally, faculty that reflect the demographics of their students can contribute to well-documented educational benefits such as student retention and sense of belonging (Stewart & Valian, 2018). Improving campus climate has been shown to influence the success of historically underrepresented students and faculty (DeCastro, Sambuco, Ubel, Stewart, & Jagsi, 2013; Driscoll, Parkes, Tilley-Lubbs, Brill, & Pitts Bannister, 2009; Helm, Sedlacek, & Priet, 1998; Hurtado et al, 1998; Turner, Gonzalez, & Wood, 2009).

Texas A&M University’s commitment to creating diverse and inclusive campus communities is articulated in the 2010 University Diversity Plan. The 2010 University Diversity Plan embeds diversity and inclusion in Texas A&M’s institutional mission and academic excellence through three goals:
1. **Accountability**: Establish structures, processes, and policies that hold all units accountable, and reward units and individuals for demonstrating their current standing, plans, and progress in creating an environment where individuals are treated equitably in a climate that fosters success and achievement.

2. **Campus climate**: Promote an affirming campus climate by identifying practices across the University, which either foster or impede a working and learning environment that fully recognizes, values, and integrates diversity in the pursuit of academic excellence.

3. **Equity**: Integrate into the mission and goals for the University and units the assurance that students, staff, and faculty are treated fairly and without discrimination.

To advance the goals of **accountability**, **campus climate**, and **equity**, Texas A&M’s colleges and administrative units have implemented strategies to improve the recruitment and retention of historically underrepresented groups; to address campus climate issues; and to resolve disparities around resources, rewards, and compensation for students, faculty, and staff. While **accountability**, **campus climate**, and **equity** are distinct goals, progress in any of these goals advances the others.

Additionally, the **2010 University Diversity Plan** established three major expectations grounded in **accountability**. First, everyone in the campus community shares the responsibility of creating a campus climate that fosters success and achievement for all. Second, the colleges and administrative units submit annual **Diversity Plan Accountability Reports** to the Office for Diversity and the President’s Council on Climate and Diversity (PCCD). The purpose of the accountability reports is to monitor and evaluate progress towards recruiting, retention, campus climate, and equity. And, third, the Office for Diversity is responsible for the implementation of the **2010 University Diversity Plan** and is charged with assessing progress and sharing the results widely.

Since 2010, the Office for Diversity has completed five comprehensive assessment reports that explore Texas A&M’s progress and challenges as we work to advance accountability, campus climate, and equity. Progress has been evident in Texas A&M’s institutional commitment to diversity and inclusion and its candid, transparent, and ongoing assessment of campus climate and equity. Some substantive examples of progress include:

- Every year, since 2010, all of the colleges and administrative units have participated in the **Diversity Plan Accountability Reports**. In spite of restructuring, outsourcing, and leadership transitions, people from across the university have stayed engaged and committed to assessing and sharing the results of their units’ challenges and strategies addressing accountability, campus climate, and equity.

- Two major advisory councils hold the colleges and administrative units accountable for their diversity and inclusion plans and reward units for demonstrating progress: The President’s Council on Climate and Diversity (PCCD) and the Diversity Operations Committee (DOC). DOC representatives often lead their units in contributing to the accountability reports that are read and scored by the PCCD.

- Texas A&M has established a culture of ongoing assessment that integrates recruiting, retention, campus climate, and equity in the strategic plans of the colleges, the administrative units, and the university. From annual faculty salary studies to institutional-wide campus climate assessments, Texas A&M has committed resources to develop a comprehensive understanding of the complexities of diversity and inclusion in the campus communities.
Texas A&M’s essential mission is education. Pedagogy, professional development, coursework, and high-impact learning practices are the most powerful and effective forms of developing people to be responsible leaders and of service to society. Texas A&M has made substantial commitments to student, faculty, and staff development by providing training to reduce implicit bias in hiring, to develop competence in critical dialogues and mediation skills, and to encourage students, faculty, and staff to attend and present at the National Conference on Race and Ethnicity (NCORE).

Texas A&M has been recognized for its combination of excellence, affordability, and its ability to develop leaders. Specific indicators of institutional progress towards 2010 University Diversity Plan goals of accountability, campus climate, and equity include:

- 1st in Texas in student 4, 5, and 6-year graduation rates overall and for historically underrepresented students (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, http://www.tamu.edu/about/at-a-glance.html)


While Texas A&M looks similar to and sometimes better than our peer institutions, we need to be cognizant of how we compare and represent the State of Texas and the communities we serve. In spite of increases in the numbers of some historically underrepresented groups, the numbers of others are woefully small, and not representative of the State of Texas. Furthermore, across the United States, institutions of higher education, in general, are not representative of the populations of their communities (Newkirk, 2019).

In 2019, the Office for Diversity applied for and won, on behalf of the institution, the Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (HEED) Award from INSIGHT Into Diversity magazine. The HEED Award is a national honor recognizing U.S. colleges and universities that demonstrate an outstanding commitment to diversity and inclusion. Not only did Texas A&M receive a 2019 HEED Award, but the reviewers recommended that the university be elevated to Diversity Champion. The designation of Diversity Champion indicates that Texas A&M scored in the top 15 of over 400 institutions that applied for the HEED Award in 2019. Table 1 provides a summary of Texas A&M’s responses to the question from the 2019 HEED Award application: “To what extent have you met your strategic diversity goals for the following?”

While the narrative of the 2020 State of Diversity Report is optimistic about Texas A&M’s progress in advancing diversity and inclusion, simultaneously, Texas A&M needs to identify and dismantle systemic racist and discriminatory practices. Explicitly stated, dismantling systemic racism and discrimination requires an unrelenting dedication to examine practices and policies that impact admissions, hiring, promotion, graduation, resource allocation, budgeting, safety, course evaluations, and expressive activity. Additionally, innocuous-sounding words and sentiments such as meritocracy, legacy, color-blind, race-neutral, best-qualified, good fit, and isolated incident need to be examined, as they have been used to establish and maintain racist and discriminatory practices and sentiments.
For example, Carter-Sowell et al. (2019) explain that “a discourse of meritocracy masks ways in which certain groups have benefited and others have been excluded from access to networks and resources that lead to professional advancement. These inequities need to be acknowledged and interventions implemented” (p. 306). For example, Texas A&M used legacy in admissions which privileged White people and discriminated against those belonging to historically-excluded groups until then-President Robert Gates stopped the practice in 2004. Color-blind, race-neutral, best-qualified, and good-fit can be problematic for hiring and admissions decisions because they may mask favoritism, bias, and discriminatory practices (Kendi, 2019; Stewart & Valian, 2019). Finally, using the word incident to refer to racist performances, hate speech, bigotry, and violence implies that the occurrence is occasional, one-time, or an isolated event as opposed to an indicator of pervasive and systemic racism (King, 2016; Patel, 2019).

For the success, safety, and welfare of our campus community, Texas A&M needs to acknowledge and address racism, discrimination, and hate as current, systemic, societal issues. Left unexamined and unchecked, hate, bigotry, and discrimination permeate our structures, belief systems, and campus climate. The 2020 State of Diversity Report provides examples of strategies that former and current students, faculty, and staff have implemented to dismantle racist and discriminatory practices. These people are engaged in advancing diversity and inclusion by making the campus a community where everyone shares a sense of safety and belonging.
Table 1. 2015-2018 Strategic Diversity Goals from the 2019 HEED Award Application

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Finding</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase the number of female full-time non-tenured faculty</td>
<td>NO - 2015 (53% female) &gt; 2018 (49% female)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase the number of female full-time tenured faculty</td>
<td>YES - 2015 (28% female) &lt; 2018 (33% female)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase the racial and ethnic* diversity of full-time non-tenured faculty</td>
<td>YES - 2015 (5% Hispanic/Latinx, 3% Black/African American) &lt; 2018 (6% Hispanic/Latinx, 3% Black)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase the racial and ethnic diversity of our leadership</td>
<td>YES - In 2015, Dr. Eli Jones was appointed as Dean of Mays Business School: Dr. Jones is the first African American Dean of Mays.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase the number of women in leadership positions</td>
<td>YES - Two of the three deans of the science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) colleges, Engineering and Geosciences, are women.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase the number of female Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM)** faculty members</td>
<td>YES - 2015 (14% female) &lt; 2018 (16% female)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase the number of full-time underrepresented students</td>
<td>YES - 2015 (19.4% Hispanic/Latinx, 3.7% Black/African American) &lt; 2018 (21.3% Hispanic/Latinx, 3.4% Black/African American)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase the racial and ethnic diversity of full-time tenured faculty</td>
<td>YES - 2015 (6% Hispanic/Latinx, 3.4% Black/African American) &lt; 2018 (7% Hispanic/Latinx, 4% Black)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data sources: Faculty data were retrieved on 06/26/19 from Business Objects Warehouse. Student data were retrieved on 06/14/19 from https://accountability.tamu.edu/All-Metrics/Mixed-Metrics/Student-Demographics. *International faculty are included in the race/ethnicity demographic categories. **Texas A&M has STEM integrated throughout many departments housed in several colleges across campus. However, only the entirely STEM colleges — Engineering, Science, and Geosciences — are included in these numbers.
Accountability

_**Accountability**_: Establish structures, processes, and policies that hold all units accountable, and reward units and individuals for demonstrating their current standing, plans, and progress in creating an environment where individuals are treated equitably in a climate that fosters success and achievement. (From the 2010 University Diversity Plan, Page 2)

Engaged Leadership

The 2010 _University Diversity Plan_ stated that Texas A&M “must hold ourselves accountable, individually as well as collectively, for the goal of becoming a campus that is welcoming to all” (p. 5). _Accountability_ involves leadership at the (1) individual level, (2) interpersonal level, (3) group level, and (4) institutional level. Stewart and Valian (2018) point out:

> Leaders are responsible for diversity, and they must solve two puzzles, regardless of the size of the group that they lead. The first is how to overcome the tendency for groups to be homogenous. The second is how to bring out the best efforts of everyone in the group ... A leader may lead a class, a small group of students, a large lab, a committee, a department, a school, or a university. Whatever form leadership takes, leaders will benefit from knowing what makes groups work well ... diversity increases positive outcomes, but only if everyone in the group can contribute [their] best. (p. 41)

Many of Texas A&M’s student, faculty, staff, and administrative leaders have been committed, in practice and publicly, to promoting and advancing diversity, inclusion, and equity. Engaged leadership across the university has been critical for advancing the goals of the 2010 _University Diversity Plan_ (Stanley, Watson, Reyes, & Varela, 2019). Engaged leaders participate in campus forums and seminars; read the cutting-edge diversity literature; promptly and candidly respond to occurrences of racism and hate and then follow-up with actions and updates to the campus community; recognize and reward commitment and progress towards diversity and inclusion; and ensure that policies, operations, procedures, and plans are pursued with careful attention to their impact on diversity, inclusion, campus climate, and equity.

Participating in Campus Forums and Seminars

Since 2011, the Office for Diversity has collaborated with the Division of Student Affairs, Office of the Dean of Faculties, Office of Graduate and Professional Studies, and the Division of Human Resources & Organizational Effectiveness to present campus climate survey results to the community every four years. The President, Provost, Deans, and Vice Presidents attended the sessions, provided introductions and data, and participated in small group activities.

In 2014, approximately 90 students, faculty, and staff worked in small groups to generate recommendations for challenges from faculty, staff, undergraduate, and LGBTQ assessment data. In 2011, then-Provost Karan Watson provided opening remarks and several deans and vice-presidents participated in the small group discussions.

The third campus-wide, campus climate session was held on April 20, 2017. Then-Provost Watson opened the forum, which was attended by approximately 180 students, faculty, and staff. The campus climate forums provide opportunities for leaders from the Division of Student Affairs, Dean of Faculties, the Division of Academic Affairs, and Human Resources to share climate assessment
data, engage in campus climate improvement, and participate in critical dialogues about diversity and inclusion.

In addition to having campus leaders participate in the campus-wide, campus climate forums, the campus community appreciated seeing leadership engage in conversations about races and racism. For example, on February 29, 2016, the Office for Diversity hosted Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum, President Emerita of Spelman College to engage the campus community on the topic, *Can We Talk about Race?* President Michael K. Young joined Dr. Tatum on stage in a conversation moderated by then-Vice President and Associate Provost for Diversity, Dr. Christine A. Stanley. During this dialogue, topics ranged from racial identity development to leadership in higher education.

Of the participants that completed the session evaluation, 86% agreed that the ensuing conversations addressed an important topic for Texas A&M University. Additionally, the majority of students, faculty, and staff in attendance expressed appreciation for the university leadership engaging in dialogue around diversity and inclusion. For example, some of the respondents noted/pointed out:

- *Having both the president of the university and a leading scholar on issues of diversity sit together and talk was exciting. ... They modeled how the challenges can be met with integrity and scholarship while also demonstrating the passion that is important to the conversations.*

- *This presentation expressed the importance of conversations related to issues of diversity and addressed why they might be difficult conversations to have.*

- *In this racially-divisive climate, any positive opportunity to dialogue and present information is a plus. I also was pleased that our TAMU President was there to present his viewpoints.*

Texas A&M’s campus community has been positively impacted by campus leaders engaging in substantive conversations about diversity and inclusion. On March 17, 2020, the Office for Diversity planned to host the forum *Making Texas Better: Racial Profiling and Human Rights* featuring presentations and a panel discussion with Texas A&M President Michael K. Young, Prairie View A&M President Ruth Simmons, Professor Fatma Marouf from Texas A&M’s School of Law, moderated by Dr. Robin Means Coleman, Vice President and Associate Provost for Diversity. While the March 2020 event was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, university leadership remains committed to the event and plans are underway to hold the forum.

**President’s Council on Climate and Diversity (PCCD)**

One noteworthy example of engaged leadership is the President’s Council on Climate and Diversity (PCCD). The PCCD is composed of current and former students, faculty, staff, administrators, and community members who represent different constituencies in the campus and community. The PCCD is charged with providing counsel to the President and the Provost; to strengthen, sustain, and promote diversity efforts; and to identify and assess the efficacy of strategies for attracting and retaining diverse students, faculty, and staff. The PCCD’s duties include advising the Vice President and Associate Provost for Diversity (VPAPD) in planning the appropriate assessment and evaluation of units. To fulfill the charge to provide counsel and guidance in diversity, equity and inclusion, every year the PCCD members read all of the units’ *Diversity Plan Accountability Reports* and provide feedback to the leadership of the colleges and administrative units to improve future diversity and inclusion strategies.

Since 2010, on alternating years, university leadership, deans, and vice presidents present summaries of their unit’s *Diversity Plan Accountability Reports* to the PCCD, the University President, the
Provost, and the Vice President and Associate Provost for Diversity. In 2017, the Office for Diversity staff used participant observation and identified four themes that emerged from the 2017 PCCD presentations (Reyes & Varela, 2017):

**Theme 1 — Interactions between the presenters (Deans & Vice-Presidents) and the unit-level diversity leaders or Diversity Operation Committee (DOC) representatives.** Several deans and vice-presidents were accompanied by their unit’s diversity-titled leaders or their DOC representatives during their presentations. Frequently, questions asked of presenters were deferred to the units’ diversity-titled leaders or to the DOC representatives.

While the presence of diversity-titled leaders and DOC representatives from the colleges and administrative units are indications of institutional progress, the Office for Diversity staff had some reservations about the emotional labor and occupational burdens placed on the diversity-titled leaders and DOC representatives. In some cases, when the unit dean or vice president deferred questions to the DOC representative or diversity-titled leaders, it seemed as if the unit leaders were detached, not familiar with, or not engaged in the diversity and inclusion work of their units. Some examples of the deans and vice-presidents sharing or shifting responsibility included:

- Acknowledging that the graduate student that accompanied them for their presentation is “our mentor on all things diversity.”
- Crediting their diversity-titled unit leader or DOC representative as a major reason for the state of diversity within the college.

In an effort to better understand the invisible and emotional labor involved with the *Diversity Plan Accountability Reports* and PCCD presentations, Dr. Robin Means Coleman, Vice President and Associate Provost for Diversity, implemented a question on the annual reports about the process for writing and reviewing them.

**Theme 2 — Moving Beyond Racial and Ethnic Diversity.** Several presenters demonstrated that they are becoming more sophisticated in their understanding of diversity and inclusion by addressing diversity beyond demographic data. For example:

- Creating prayer and meditation rooms.
- Developing initiatives for students who have disabilities; LGBTQ students; students who are parents; and students who have limited financial resources.
- Demonstrating the integration of diversity and academic excellence by encouraging publishing on topics relating to diversity in their disciplines.
- Acknowledging the financial constraints and hardships many students manage and the effects of finances on retention and graduation.
- Implementing a loan repayment program for students once they graduate.

**Theme 3 — Overlooking Staff.** While many units went into great detail to explain the state of diversity as it related to students and faculty, staff were often overlooked. Frequently, presentations lacked staff demographics and/or had a limited number of initiatives designed to increase diversity among staff in recruitment, retention, climate, and equity. For example:
• When questioned about staff demographics in the unit, one presenter asserted that he “will know them next year.”

• One presenter stated that they “tend to ignore staff.”

• Another presenter noted that they do have some programs available for staff, but will now promote improving climate for staff.

Theme 4 — Using Peer Comparison Data. The 2010 University Diversity Plan requires units to collect peer comparison data. Some presenters demonstrated that they are knowledgeable about the demographic data at their peer institutions, but it is unclear if they use these data to improve diversity in recruitment, retention, campus climate, and equity within their units. Some presenters noted that they found it difficult to attain peer comparison data due to the uniqueness of their units. Other presenters extensively considered data from their peer institutions and from national, discipline-specific organizations. After reviewing peer comparison data, several presenters noted that they are national leaders in demographic diversity within their fields in the following areas:

• Integrating cultural competence into their curriculum.

• Recruiting and retaining racial/ethnic diversity in students and faculty.

• Developing and graduating professionals from historically underrepresented groups who will practice in their fields.

The review of the 2017 PCCD presentations resulted in the following recommendations:

• Collecting peer-comparison data needs to be more nuanced than simply demographic data: Unit leaders are being asked to discuss student, faculty, and staff recruiting and retention strategies; campus climate survey results; equity studies; and strategies to address climate, equity, and inclusion with their colleagues at other institutions.

• Collecting data AND using data: Expectations for assessing the impact of diversity-related strategies are becoming more explicit and are being addressed in strategic plans, assessment plans, and student learning outcomes.

• Engaging everyone in diversity and inclusion: Accountability for campus climate, equity, and inclusion is everyone’s responsibility, not just the Office for Diversity, the unit-level diversity leaders, or the representatives on diversity councils and committees. Accountability for diversity, climate, equity, and inclusion should be integrated into annual reviews and performance evaluations.

In 2017, the Office for Diversity implemented all of the recommendations to improve the process and the quality of the Diversity Plan Accountability Reports.

In 2018, the PCCD members elevated the idea that the colleges and administrative units need to use the Diversity Plan Accountability Reports to establish compelling cases for diversity and inclusion for their disciplines. Each of the colleges, their disciplines, and the administrative units have unique recruitment and retention challenges and cultures. The Office for Diversity encourages leadership within colleges and administrative units to identify peer institutions that reflect the unique nature, populations, and challenges that their units face and collect peer-benchmarking data to monitor their individual progress.
In 2019, for the first time, the Office for Diversity held a scoring orientation meeting for the PCCD members: 41% (11 out of 27) of the PCCD members participated in person or by Zoom. Additionally, President Michael K. Young required all senior leaders — deans, vice-presidents, associate provosts — to attend the entire day of presentations as they shared and listened to diversity and inclusion strategies from their colleagues across the university. In a message to the campus community, President Young shared that he “was pleased to attend a day of presentations by college deans and unit leaders from across campus which centered on inclusion, diversity, equity, and accountability.” Furthermore, President Young thanked Dr. Jorge A. Vanegas, Dean of the College of Architecture and Chair of the PCCD, and Dr. Robin Means Coleman, Vice President and Associate Vice Provost for Diversity, “…for their dedication to maintaining this critical dialogue. These efforts are in support of Texas A&M’s Diversity Plan and are crucial in creating the type of educational environment in which all of our campus members can thrive” (February 11, 2019, Dedication to Diversity Makes a Difference).

Diversity Operations Committee (DOC)

Since the launch of the 2010 University Diversity Plan, the Diversity Operations Committee (DOC) exemplifies engaged leadership. The DOC is a standing university-wide committee that serves as an advisory group to the Vice President and Associate Provost for Diversity (VPAPD). The DOC is chaired by the VPAPD and is comprised of representatives from each academic and administrative unit as well as people from key councils and associations. DOC meetings focus on the ways in which the university can coordinate and advance diversity, inclusion, equity, campus climate, and accountability in all parts of its mission. DOC representatives are liaisons between the VPAPD and their units. In short, DOC representatives are the Office for Diversity’s best resource for communicating and coordinating diversity and inclusion activities across the campus and community.

Additionally, the DOC representatives often lead their units in contributing to the annual Diversity Plan Accountability Reports that are, in turn, read and scored by the PCCD. In 2018, for the first time, the Office for Diversity held Speed Consultations to support the DOC members in writing the accountability reports. The Speed Consultations were “office hours” for DOC members to meet with the Office for Diversity to review PCCD feedback and provide instruction to improve the quality of their annual reports. In 2018, 19 out of 26 units participated in the Speed Consultations. Because of the positive feedback and participation from DOC representatives, the Office for Diversity held Speed Consultations again in 2019: 22 out of 27 units attended the event.

In addition to the DOC, as of 2019, 26 out of 27 colleges and administrative units have formed unit-level and department-level diversity councils. Furthermore, as of 2020, 11 of the 17 academic colleges have appointed diversity-titled deans or directors who have a seat on the college’s leadership team: College of Agriculture and Life Sciences; College of Architecture; College of Dentistry; College of Education and Human Development; College of Geosciences; College of Liberal Arts; College of Medicine; College of Science; College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences; Mays Business School; and School of Public Health. Additionally, the following administrative units have committees and councils: The Division of Academic Affairs (Academic Affairs Climate and Diversity Committee), Division of Student Affairs (Diversity Strategies in Action 2.0 Committee), the Division of Finance and Operations, the Division of Information Technology, and the Division of Human Resources and Organizational Effectiveness.

One of the challenges facing the Office for Diversity is how to help units share their Diversity Plan Accountability Reports with their stakeholders and the campus communities. In 2020, for the first time, the Office for Diversity hosted the Diversity Gallery. In collaboration with DOC representatives, the Office for Diversity designed posters describing each unit’s goals and progress
related to diversity and inclusion. On February 11, 2020, DOC representatives, PCCD members, and campus leaders had the opportunity to interact and ask questions while reviewing the posters. The Diversity Gallery was a public-forum open to the campus and community. The Office for Diversity marketed the event to engage students, faculty, staff, and the Bryan/College Station community: over 300 people attended the inaugural event.

Engaged Student Leaders
The examples provided in this section are not intended to be an exhaustive or comprehensive list of the efforts of Texas A&M’s student leaders to advance diversity, inclusion, and equity. Only a few examples are included to illustrate some of the compelling work that our student leaders are engaged in to address safety, belonging, and campus climate issues.

In 2018, Texas A&M’s Student Senate reviewed a resolution recognizing Native American/Alaskan Heritage Month (https://senate.tamu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/S.R.-71-12-Recognizing-Native-American_Alaskan-Heritage-Month-Resolution.pdf). The resolution officially recognized November to be Native American Heritage Month and extended support to Texas A&M organizations that promote Native American culture and diversity. In 2019, the Student Senate passed a resolution recognizing Hispanic Heritage Month.

In September 2019, the Student Senate unanimously passed the “Religious Inclusion of the Invocation Act, which amends the Student Government Association code to invite different religious groups to offer a prayer during the meeting … The amendment reads, ‘Arrange for individuals from various faiths, religions, or none at all to present the invocation at all General Assembly Meeting’” (Slusher, 2019).

In 2018, Texas A&M’s Student Government Association (SGA) Diversity Commission hosted candidates for student body president in a panel discussion about diversity and inclusion. Then-Student Body President, Bobby Brooks, summarized his impressions of the discussion:

To be quite honest, we have a lot of work to do… We always do, we know this. This campus does have a very magical thing about it. We have a really good concept of family, when you’re in the family. Sometimes it can be a little difficult to integrate yourself into that family. We’re working on it piece by piece. This isn’t the last conversation that needs to take place. (Fennell, 2018)

Brooks’ comments refer to Texas A&M’s “Aggie Family” and acknowledge that finding a sense of belonging can be challenging for some people, particularly those from groups that have been historically excluded from Texas A&M and marginalized in higher education. The student leaders that participated in the campus forum discussed the need for the campus to be welcoming, safe, and inclusive for the campus community.

In 2018, to be more inclusive of current students, student leaders decided to modify Elephant Walk, a Texas A&M tradition where the senior class visits prominent campus locations to reminisce about their time on campus. In the past, one of the prominent locations was the Sul Ross statue. The Sul Ross statue is the oldest statue on campus, dedicated in 1918 in the likeness of Lawrence Sullivan Ross, a former university president, a governor of the State of Texas, a Texas Ranger, and a Confederate general.

Then-Elephant Walk Director and student leader, Julia Tisch, explained the decision was based on concerns and discomfort about Ross being a Confederate general. Tisch stated:
We really just feel like there are a bunch of students here who are about to graduate and who have still yet to feel like A&M is their home just because of certain traditions that they don’t feel included in or just the way they’ve been treated or viewed by their peers or their professors ... This is a small other way that could help some students feel more welcomed here right before they graduate. (Mahler & Garcia, 2018)

On November 20, 2018, Texas A&M’s student newspaper, The Battalion, published a letter to the editor from the Texas A&M University System’s Chancellor John Sharp, former student of Texas A&M and Class of 1972. Chancellor Sharp described past-President Lawrence Sullivan Ross’ contributions to Texas A&M University, Prairie View A&M, and the State of Texas (Sharp, 11/20/18). On June 17, 2020, Chancellor Sharp issued a statement that said, in part, “While my personal opinion has not changed about the importance of Lawrence Sullivan Ross to Texas A&M, we Aggies must stand united against racism and love one another.” Continued debate about the presence of the Sul Ross statue on Texas A&M’s campus speaks to the great effort many former students, current students, campus leaders, and communities are making to reconcile Confederate memorials and artifacts with institutional missions and values.

Across the state of Texas and the nation, many universities are reconciling the presence of Confederate memorials and artifacts with their institutional missions and values. From the removal of a Confederate plaque in the Texas Capitol to that of statues by many of our Southeastern Conference (SEC) and Association of American Universities (AAU) peers, communities are addressing the impact of racism and symbols of White supremacy on the safety and belonging of Black people, indigenous people, and people of color. For many years, Texas A&M’s students have engaged in petitions and dialogue to address the institution’s legacy of discrimination and racism.

On February 14, 2019, President Young sent a message to the campus community acknowledging Texas A&M’s history: “Years ago in our community and, sadly, on occasion even now, we see the ugly reality of discrimination. When we see it, we do not need to hide from it, but to call it out, to refute it and to stand for respect and love for all” (Acknowledging Parts of Our Past, President Michael K. Young, February 14, 2019). On June 17, 2020, President Young announced the creation of two groups: a task force on race relations and a commission on historic representations to make a recommendation on the Lawrence Sullivan Ross statue. With the leadership of our students, faculty, staff, and administration and examples from our SEC and AAU peers, Texas A&M has an opportunity to meet the challenges of our past and emerge as leaders in inclusion, anti-racism, and belonging.

Responding to Racism, Hate, and Sexual Violence
Over the years, Texas A&M has had numerous occurrences of racist, prejudiced, discriminatory, sexist, and hateful behavior among students, former students, faculty, staff, and the community. Perpetrators of hateful, racist, and bigoted performances are frequently perceived to be protected from disciplinary sanctions or punitive actions by campus policies governing free speech and expressive activity.

Patricia Williams, Professor of Law Emerita at Columbia Law School, has acknowledged the “paradoxical pitting of the first amendment against speaking about other forms of injury – so that the specter of legal censorship actually blocks further discussion of moral censure” (Williams, 1991, p. 112). In 2019, Executive Vice President and Provost Lauren Robel of Indiana University demonstrated balancing First Amendment rights with moral censure. Eric Rasmusen, Professor of Business Economics & Public Policy at Indiana University, expressed virulently racist and sexist sentiments on his private social media account. Provost Robel determined that:
Students who are women, gay, or of color could reasonably be concerned that someone with Professor Rasmusen’s expressed prejudices and biases would not give them a fair shake in his classes, and that his expressed biases would infect his perceptions of their work. Given the strength and longstanding nature of his views, these concerns are reasonable.

Therefore, the Kelley School is taking a number of steps to ensure that students not add the baggage of bigotry to their learning experience:

- No student will be forced to take a class from Professor Rasmusen. The Kelley School will provide alternatives to Professor Rasmusen’s classes;

- Professor Rasmusen will use double-blind grading on assignments; if there are components of grading that cannot be subject to a double-blind procedure, the Kelley School will have another faculty member ensure that the grades are not subject to Professor Rasmusen’s prejudices.

If other steps are needed to protect our students or colleagues from bigoted actions, Indiana University will take them. (On the First Amendment, November 20, 2019, https://provost.indiana.edu/statements/index.html)

Provost Robel’s statement and actions acknowledge the right to free speech while taking measures to mitigate the impact of a professor’s bigotry on student success and the campus community. By limiting the authority and influence that perpetrators of hate and bias have over others, upholding the right to free speech, and protecting the campus community, Provost Robel’s demonstration of moral censure may generalize to student leaders, staff, and administrators.

In 2018, several current and former Texas A&M students used social media to express frustration and demand that Texas A&M revisit Title IX policies and procedures for handling sexual abuse cases. In June 2018, President Young ordered internal and external reviews to “test every step of our processes for safety, support, sensitivity, timeliness, and fairness to all involved that meets the highest standards” (Message to the Aggie Community, June 15, 2018, https://president.tamu.edu/messages/message-to-the-aggie-community.html).

The reviews included interviews with students, staff, faculty, administrators, and members of the Aggie-led group advocating for improvements at the university. The internal review navigated the steps of filing a complaint which helped the committee understand the strengths and weaknesses of the process. Committee co-chairs Dr. Robin Means Coleman, Vice President and Associate Provost for Diversity and Professor of Communication, and Mr. Kevin McGinnis, Chief Risk, Ethics, and Compliance Officer, conducted a mock process of the steps that a student might go through when considering and/or filing a complaint for sexual misconduct (https://www.tamu.edu/statements/Title_IX_Internal_Review_Report_August_2018.pdf?_ga=2.89055955.950874811.1561312815-1534201453.1544799639).

The external review included benchmarking key components of Texas A&M’s policies in comparison to 14 peer institutions: University of Florida, University of Georgia, University of Michigan, University of Minnesota, Purdue University, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, University of Texas at Austin, Indiana University, University of Illinois, University of Maryland, University of California Los Angeles, University of Washington, Arizona State University, and University of Virginia (https://www.tamu.edu/statements/HB-TAMU-Title-IX-Report.pdf?_ga=2.77531997.950874811.1561312815-1534201453.1544799639).
University leadership from across the institution were engaged in the internal and external reviews and were responsive and transparent in their communication with the public and the campus community. Many of the recommendations from reviews have resulted in Texas A&M emerging as a national leader for establishing policies and procedures that bring fairness for both the respondents and complainants. For example, a Title IX sanctioning matrix has been developed and implemented and is publicly available on the website of Texas A&M’s Department of Civil Rights & Equity Investigations (https://titleix.tamu.edu/sanctioning-matrix/).

One common thread across racist performances, hate speech, and the Title IX investigations is the perception that there is little accountability from university leadership to the campus community. For example, because of confidentiality and federal laws, many times the message “not consistent with Aggie Core Values and not welcome in our community” can be perceived as a disproportionate, underwhelming response to hate, racism, and sexual violence. Many in the campus community have been dissatisfied and disillusioned with Texas A&M’s commitment to diversity and inclusion. Additionally, when leadership addresses hate, discrimination, and racism as isolated incidents, as opposed to trends and patterns in the campus community, administrative responses seem reactive as opposed to intentional, coordinated, and strategic. Additionally, some in the student body and the campus community perceive a lack of transparency in administrative responses.

Texas A&M’s students have responded to racist performances in the campus community by petitioning the administration for support and resources. A 2019 student-led petition called for: all students to sign the Aggie Honor Code; a sanctions matrix for racist behavior similar to the Title IX matrix; a campaign for bystander intervention to teach people how to interrupt bigotry, racism, and hate; and transparency regarding how the administration handles incidents (Allen, 2019). In 2020, the calls for these interventions continued. Additionally, in 2020, Texas A&M students petitioned to create a Latinx Center to alleviate some of the safety, belonging, and isolation Latinx students experience on campus (Flores, 2020).

Texas A&M’s leadership needs to “engage in a much more direct and frank dialogue, including with all campus members, about the underlying historical and social contexts that give rise to what are likely numerous (known and unrecognized) racist incidents on their campuses” (Chun & Feagin, 2020). Since 2008, Texas A&M’s colleges and administrative units have made a commitment to developing the capacity for students, faculty, and staff to engage in critical dialogues about racism and discrimination such as mediation training and discussions about campus race relations. To assess the influence of difficult dialogues and mediation training, the staff in the Office for Diversity administered a web-based survey to 48 people who completed the training from 2008 to 2014: 28 people returned the survey. The majority of respondents reported that they had developed and applied skills such as active listening and guiding others through strategies for discussing conflict; and disclosed increased self-awareness, personal growth, and self-confidence in the workplace and in their personal lives (Stanley, Reyes, & Varela, 2015).

In 2016, Dr. Srividya Ramasubramanian, Professor of Communication and Director of the Difficult Dialogues on Campus Race Relations at Texas A&M University, co-founded Difficult Dialogues on Campus Race Relations. The program provides students with an opportunity to discuss race-related issues and brainstorm ideas and solutions to make the campus more welcoming for all. In 2016, 60 students attended the inaugural session and another 50 were wait-listed (Palacios, 2016). In 2019, the 19th session of Difficult Dialogues and Campus Race Relations, 70 students attended with 15 people on the waitlist (Estrada, 2019), which indicates the campus community’s interest in participating in conversations about race-related issues and solutions at Texas A&M.
Preliminary findings from Dr. Ramasubramanian’s research on the impact of *Difficult Dialogues on Campus Race Relations* reveal that participants shared that they were confronted with issues of campus racism. Additionally, participants reported that after attending the sessions, they were more confident in the resources available to combat racism. Some of the students of color who attended the seminars shared that while they were not surprised with the content, they wanted to know what more could be done to stop racism. In 2018, the Office for Diversity awarded Dr. Ramasubramanian a Diversity Matters Seed Grant to support continued assessment and research on the impact of *Difficult Dialogues in Campus Race Relations*.

**Recognizing and Rewarding Commitment & Progress**

One of the defining characteristics of Texas A&M’s *2010 University Diversity Plan* is the commitment to “reward units and individuals for demonstrating their current standing, plans, and progress in creating an environment where individuals are treated equitably in a climate that fosters success and achievement” (From the *2010 University Diversity Plan*, p. 2). Recognizing and rewarding progress for diversity and inclusion at Texas A&M requires candidness and transparency. While we celebrate commitment, we have to acknowledge our history of exclusion and discrimination; our slow progress towards structural diversity representative of the State of Texas; and a campus climate that has pervasive safety and belonging challenges.

In 2018, Texas A&M’s Office of Sustainability launched the institution’s *Sustainability Master Plan*. The comprehensive plan integrated diversity, inclusion, campus climate, and social justice throughout topic areas and goals embedded in social sustainability. *Social sustainability* encompasses four topics: Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion; Health and Wellness; Voice and Influence; and External Engagement. With the leadership of the Office for Sustainability, from 2017-2019, Texas A&M University received a Gold rating from the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE). Additionally, from 2016-2019, the Office of Sustainability has recognized the Office for Diversity as a STARS Overall Top Performer for earning the highest percentage of available points for stakeholders with multiple credits on the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment, and Rating System (STARS) application.

Stewart and Valian (2018) explain that sometimes the “implication is that the slow rate of change is the result of deficiencies in those most subject to exclusion rather than due to institutional features that discourage and devalue those individuals. As such, talk of ‘slow progress’ can demoralize the very people who already feel marginal at the institution” (p. 19). Allies and antagonists alike are critical of progress — allies because progress has taken too long and is not enough, while antagonists express undemocratic and demonstrably untrue sentiments about diversity and inclusion damaging the university’s reputation and compromising the quality of education. Texas A&M University’s commitment to diversity and inclusion is the product of countless current and former students, faculty, and staff who have been engaged in making the campus a community where everyone shares a sense of safety and belonging. We celebrate Texas A&M’s commitment to diversity and inclusion and recognize students, faculty, and staff, past and present, who have advanced Texas A&M’s mission and Core Values through their unrelenting optimism and commitment.

The primary method for recognizing and rewarding the colleges and administrative units is the annual *Diversity Plan Accountability Reports*. The *Diversity Plan Accountability Reports* are reviewed and scored by the President’s Council on Climate and Diversity (PCCD). In 2019, the Office for Diversity and the Office of the Provost used the PCCD feedback and scores to distribute an all-time high of 1.5 million dollars to 27 units. In summary, PCCD feedback and scores guide campus leadership to ensure that policies, operations, procedures, and plans are pursued with careful attention to their impact on our diversity, inclusion, campus climate, and equity.
In 2019, for the third consecutive year, Texas A&M’s College of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences (CVM) received a Health Professions Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (HEED) Award. In 2019, the Office for Diversity applied on behalf of Texas A&M, and won, the HEED Award. To celebrate the HEED Awards and recognize the CVM and the campus community, the Office for Diversity hosted a reception for the DOC, PCCD, and our campus and community partners on December 5, 2019. Holly Mendelsohn, co-owner and co-publisher of INSIGHT into Diversity, presented the awards to Texas A&M leadership. Texas A&M’s President Michael K. Young and Provost Carol Fierke made remarks recognizing the significance of diversity and inclusion for the campus and community. Additionally, to recognize the work of the DOC and our campus partners, the Office for Diversity provided certificates of the HEED Award and Diversity Champion designation to all of our DOC representatives.

In 2018-2019, Dr. Robin Means Coleman, Vice President and Associate Provost for Diversity, led the Office for Diversity in pursuing awards and recognition on behalf of Texas A&M students, faculty, and staff who have demonstrated a commitment to diversity, inclusion, and institutional excellence. For example, Dr. Means Coleman nominated Dr. Christine Stanley, Vice President and Associate Provost Emerita, for the National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education (NADOHE) Frank W. Hale Jr. Award. Dr. Stanley received the NADOHE Award at the national conference in Philadelphia in March, 2019. Additionally, two current Office for Diversity staff received awards from Texas A&M and served on the award review committees in the Division of Student Affairs and the Division of Finance and Operations. In 2020, the Office for Diversity nominated a student employee for Texas A&M’s Student Employee of the Year award.

In summary, campus leadership must continue to be committed, in practice and publicly, to proactively promoting and advancing diversity, inclusion, and equity. Engaged leaders are accountable to the campus community, as evidenced by their participation in campus forums and seminars; engaging the relevant scholarly literature; promptly and candidly responding to occurrences of racism and intolerance and following-up with the campus community; recognizing and rewarding commitment and progress towards diversity and inclusion; and ensuring that policies, operations, procedures, and plans are pursued with careful attention to their impact on diversity, inclusion, campus climate, and equity.
Campus Climate

Campus climate is how students, faculty, and staff feel and experience the campus environment. After nearly 20 years of campus climate assessment of students, faculty, and staff, Texas A&M’s longitudinal campus climate results consistently find that many people from historically underrepresented groups, particularly students, faculty, and staff who are African American/Black, Hispanic/Latinx, and Asian, have sharply different experiences with the overall campus climate than do majority group members. Texas A&M University’s primary concern must be the physical and psychological well-being of current students, faculty, and staff. Enduring racism, bias, discrimination, isolation, and hate takes a toll on mental and physical health. Through the improvement of campus climate, accessibility, and equity, Texas A&M can provide our students, faculty and staff with a safe, inclusive, and diverse environment in which to study and work.

Campus Climate Assessment

Hurtado et al. (1998) describe an institution’s campus climate as the product of the institution’s historical legacy of inclusion or exclusion of various racial or ethnic groups, the psychological climate including perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes about diversity, the behavioral climate describing how different groups interact on campus, and structural diversity, the numerical and proportional representation of diverse groups on campus. In 1998, Texas A&M adopted Hurtado et al. (1998) as the model to assess campus climate. Over the last 20 years, the institution has developed a commitment to campus climate assessment which has provided a foundation for many of the strategic plans, assessment practices, and diversity and inclusion strategies that are in effect in 2020.

In 2010, the University Diversity Plan called for university-wide campus climate assessments to be repeated in three-year cycles. Additionally, from the Diversity Plan, units were expected “to implement programs and interventions informed by data from recent university-level climate assessments and/or climate assessments that were designed at the unit level” (p. 8). To clarify, units could use the university-wide campus climate surveys to inform planning; however, “when the University data [could not] be disaggregated to reflect the specific unit, they [were] advised to probe carefully to ensure the unit’s climate [was] well understood” (p. 8). As a result, many units, and even departments, began implementing their own campus climate surveys.

In 2018, the Office for Diversity, in collaboration with the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies (OGAPS), Dean of Faculties (DOF), Office of Institutional Evaluation and Effectiveness (OIE&E), the Department of Student Life Studies (SLS), and Human Resources and Organizational Effectiveness (HROE), determined that the three-year survey cycle had not permitted sufficient time for the units or the institution to implement strategies, assess effectiveness, and reflect on progress. With the support of Provost Fierke, Texas A&M thus transitioned to a four-year cycle for the institutional-wide campus climate surveys for students, faculty, and staff.

In 2021, the plan is to administer the campus-wide, campus climate surveys through a collaboration with the OIE&E, SLS, and the Office for Diversity. For the first time, the surveys will be
coordinated with the undergraduate, graduate, and professional student SERUs. To facilitate marketing and subsequently increase response rates, the student, faculty, and staff surveys will run simultaneously. To a great extent, a common set of items is being used across the faculty and staff surveys and these are closely aligned with the items and scales of the SERUs for undergraduate, graduate, and professional students. The Diversity Operations Committee (DOC) has been extremely involved in developing and reviewing items to ensure that the survey results will be meaningful and useful to the colleges and administrative units.

Collecting data that are meaningful and useful is critical to sustaining Texas A&M’s commitment to diversity and inclusion. Advisory groups such as the DOC, PCCD, and campus leadership have become more sophisticated about measuring progress and change, and the ways in which they use and collect data have become more nuanced. For example, in the early years of the Diversity Plan Accountability Reports, peer-comparison data were limited to tables of demographic data. Since 2017, unit leaders have contacted their colleagues at other institutions to collect information about student, faculty, and staff recruiting and retention strategies; campus climate survey results; and equity studies.

In 2020, the Office for Diversity plans to contact Texas A&M’s Southeastern Conference (SEC) peers and selected Association of American Universities (AAU) peers to collect peer-comparison data about the prevalence and nature of campus incidents reports on their campuses, analogous to Texas A&M’s Stop Hate reports. Stop Hate is Texas A&M’s online reporting system to provide the campus community with the opportunity to report hate/bias occurrences. Stop Hate reports may be submitted anonymously or with as much information as the individual wishes to provide. Once a report is submitted, it is disseminated for review and action to a team of staff and administrators from the Division of Student Affairs, the Division of Human Resources and Organizational Effectiveness, the Office of the Dean of Faculties, and the Office for Diversity. Collecting incident-report data from peer institutions will provide a deeper understanding of Texas A&M’s campus climate and inform decisions and strategies to improve safety and belonging.

Analyzing peer-comparison data provided the foundation for Provost Carol Fierke’s 2018 Student Success Initiative. In 2017, Dr. Kenneth Meier, then-Director of the Carlos Cantu Hispanic Education and Opportunity Endowment and distinguished professor in Political Science, analyzed graduation rates for Black/African American and Hispanic/Latinx undergraduates from universities across the country. Dr. Meier’s analyses identified six institutions that were similar to Texas A&M in terms of student body and function and doing an exceptional job in terms of student success: Florida State University, The Ohio State University, University of Georgia, University of Florida, The University of California – Los Angeles, and University of Michigan.

Dr. Meier proposed that Texas A&M host a conference to bring together faculty, staff, and administrators working on retention and graduation rates. On February 20, 2018, administrators, chief diversity officers, and institutional researchers from The Ohio State University, the University of California – Los Angeles, University of Florida, and Texas A&M participated in the one-day conference: 161 faculty and staff from Texas A&M attended the session. In addition to exploring practices and strategies for student success, the goals of the conference included engaging the campus community in small group work and providing participants with networking opportunities.

After the conference, an evaluation was sent to participants, and 65 out of 161 (40%) attendants completed it. Over 90% of the respondents agreed that the small group work had resulted in identifying opportunities to support student success and that they had engaged with colleagues from across the institutions. One of the respondents explained, “The Ohio State said it best, ‘no one owns success, it has to be institutional.’ TAMU is doing a much better job of bringing the right people to the table in terms of helping students succeed, but there is always room for improvement.”
strategies generated from the small group work were later used to develop the Student Success Initiative which, in part, seeks to close the gap as it pertains to achievement disparities.

It is important to note that depending entirely on institutional data and trends may limit opportunities to address campus climate issues. For example, in 2018, Dr. Means Coleman, Vice President and Associate Provost for Diversity, framed neurodiversity in the context of accessibility and equity and elevated neurodiversity to a strategic priority for the Office for Diversity. Neurodiversity is the recognition of neurological differences in human behavior and brain functionality that is the result of natural human variation. These differences include, but are not limited to, Autism Spectrum Disorders, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Dyslexia, and Tourette Syndrome. This movement challenges the pathological view of learning differences by considering diverse learners an asset, rather than a deficit. Neurodiversity recognizes that neurological differences are normal and natural variations in the human functioning and are not a deficit or disadvantage, but an asset to the individual (Elliott, 2018).

Several departments and student organizations have been leading the neurodiversity initiative on campus to make Texas A&M more accessible to students with neurological differences. For example, the Spectrum Living Learning Community (LLC) is an inclusive, accessible, and neurodiverse environment that welcomes all students with a connection to the Autism community. Students in the LLC participate in academic and social programming that facilitate their success through engagement with staff mentors and like-minded peers with and without autism. Aggie ACHIEVE (Academic Courses in Higher Inclusive Education and Vocational Experiences) is a four-year inclusive and immersive post-secondary education for young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Students in this program participate in coursework and extracurricular activities designed to prepare them for employment in the community. Texas A&M’s neurodiversity strategies are intended to make the campus and community more accessible to and equitable for students with neurological differences.

2015-2016 Campus Climate Findings
The 2015 undergraduate campus climate assessment used Student Experience in Research University (SERU) survey data collected in Spring 2015 by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness & Evaluation. The SERU items related to campus climate were analyzed and presented by the Department of Student Life Studies in the Division of Student Affairs.

The 2015 SERU quantitative and qualitative data revealed that students from historically underrepresented groups did not think the campus climate was inclusive and welcoming for people like them. For example, results from the 2015 SERU revealed that students from historically underrepresented groups valued diversity more than students from majority groups. In response to the item, “Diversity is important to me,” 60% of the White respondents agreed-strongly agreed, compared to 86% of the African American/Black respondents, 71% of the Hispanic/Latinx respondents, and 75% of the Asian respondents.

In the 2016 graduate and professional student campus climate assessment, graduate students shared that a diverse student body, open communication among faculty and students, and welcoming colleges/departments contributed to a positive campus climate. Historically underrepresented graduate students reported experiencing the campus climate as less welcoming than other groups. Graduate students also reported experiencing or observing inappropriate comments or behaviors related to race/ethnicity/nationality, language proficiency, political/religious beliefs, and sexual orientation, mostly from fellow students.

In the 2015 faculty campus climate assessment, 69% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with their jobs, whereas 15% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Female faculty
members no longer reported systematically lower levels of overall job satisfaction than did male faculty members; however, female faculty members did report higher levels of burnout and lower levels of career satisfaction than their male colleagues.

The 2016 staff campus climate assessment revealed that overall job satisfaction had declined for Texas A&M staff. Additionally, intentions to resign or move to another department were higher for African American/Black and Asian respondents than they were for White or Hispanic/Latinx respondents.

**History of Inclusion and Exclusion**

To understand Texas A&M’s current campus climate and challenges, it is imperative that we continuously assess Texas A&M’s historical legacy of inclusion or exclusion of groups of people based on their race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and other minoritized identities. Texas A&M’s history of inclusion and exclusion is framed by the willingness and ability of many people who have dismantled racist and discriminatory practices. For example, in 1963, then-President General James Earl Rudder eliminated some racist and sexist admissions policies and admitted African-Americans and women to Texas A&M.

In 2004, then-President Robert Gates eliminated the use of legacy in admissions. Using legacy in admissions provided preferential treatment for children, grandchildren, or siblings of alumni. Because Texas A&M excluded African Americans from admission until 1963, using legacy in admissions privileged White people for many years. For example, in 2004, the institution’s undergraduate student body was 2.3% African American/Black, 3.3% Asian-American, 9% Hispanic/Latinx, and 81.7% White. Fifteen years later, in 2019, Texas A&M’s undergraduate students are 3.2% African American/Black, 8.7% Asian-American, 24.8% Hispanic/Latinx, and 58.8% White.

In 1977, Texas A&M’s Gay Student Services filed a lawsuit to be recognized as a student organization. In 2008, Texas A&M renamed their Gender Issues and Education Center the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Resource Center. In 2013, student senators brought a proposal to the Student Senate, and called on the Texas A&M administration, to allow students “who object, for religious purposes, to the use of their student fees and tuition to fund this center to opt out of paying an amount equal to their share of the Center’s funding from their fee and tuition bills.” Student Senate passed the bill, but it was later vetoed by the student body president. Four years later, in 2017, Texas A&M’s student body elected Bobby Brooks, their first openly-gay student body president. In 2020, Texas A&M’s GLBT Resource Center was renamed the LGBTQ+ Pride Center.

In 2011, Texas A&M hired Kevin Sumlin as the head football coach. Coach Sumlin, Texas A&M’s first African American head football coach, led the football team’s successful transition to the nation’s premier conference, the Southeastern Conference (SEC), and achieved Texas A&M’s “most successful five-year span in nearly two decades” (https://12thman.com/sports/football/roster/coaches/kevin-sumlin/406).

From 2011 to 2017, Dr. Karan Watson served as the Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs becoming Texas A&M’s first female provost at A&M. In 2012, Dr. M. Katherine Banks was named Dean of the College of Engineering, the first woman to hold this position. She also serves as vice chancellor for engineering for The Texas A&M University System. In 2016, all of the deans of the science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) colleges—Engineering, Sciences, and Geosciences—were women: Dr. M. Katherine Banks, Dr. Meigan Aronson, and Dr. Debbie Thomas, respectively. Additionally, in 2016, Dr. Carrie Byington was hired as Vice Chancellor for Health Services, Dean of the College of Medicine, and Senior Vice President of the Health Science Center. Dr. Byington was the first Mexican-American woman to serve as the dean and senior vice
In 2020, white women comprise seven of the seventeen deans of the academic colleges of Texas A&M.

In 2015, Dr. Eli Jones was appointed as Dean of Mays Business School: Dr. Jones is the first African American Dean of Mays. In May, 2019, Dr. Mackenzie Alston was the first African American woman to receive a doctorate from the Department of Economics at Texas A&M University. Reflecting on her academic experience, Dr. Alston explained, “I never had a Black economics professor, so if I can get one student of color—or a female—to go into economics, then it will have all been worth it” (https://liberalarts.tamu.edu/blog/2019/05/09/first-african-american-woman-to-receive-ph-d-in-economics-this-may/). Even today, African American students, faculty, staff, and administrators are frequently “firsts” on Texas A&M’s campus, integrating spaces where they are the only one or one of a few.

**Safety and Belonging**

One of Texas A&M’s deepest traditions are its Aggie Core Values of respect, excellence, leadership, loyalty, integrity, and selfless service. Aggies want to be known for their commitment to the success of each other and their strong desire to serve. In 2016, President Michael K. Young explicitly defined the relationship between Texas A&M’s Core Values and diversity and inclusion:

> Our Core Values—especially those of respect and leadership—ask of us to rise above our differences, allow for a variety of voices in the conversation, and recognize that genuine respect for one another is essential not just for our personal lives but for our ability to work together effectively. No one in our university community should ever feel disrespected. Let us be the model for active and constructive dialogue. Aggies must lead the way. Teamwork, no matter the size of the team, is hard work. Though the path to cooperation may not always be smooth, we must listen to each other, value each other’s perspectives, and above all respect each other with dignity and honor. (Living Our Core Values, November 10, 2016, http://president.tamu.edu/messages/living-our-core-values.html)

In 2017, in response to one of the federal executive order travel bans, President Young acknowledged the concerns of the campus community regarding how the ban impacted students, faculty, and staff from around the world and provided university resources and support. In closing, President Young said:

> Finally, and most importantly, we are Aggies united—inclusive of nationality, cultural identity, age, gender identity or expression, physical ability, political ideology, racial and ethnic identity, religious and spiritual identity, sexual orientation, and social and economic status—so please respect each other, stay informed, and support each other as Aggies do! (Response to White House Executive Order Travel Ban, January 30, 2017, https://president.tamu.edu/messages/response-to-white-house-executive-order-travel-ban.html)

However, too often, the lived reality of students, faculty, and staff from historically underrepresented groups contrasts starkly with Texas A&M’s Core Values. Hate, bigotry, and sexism can permeate our campus community and damage the sense of safety and belonging for historically excluded and underrepresented people at Texas A&M.

For example, the 2017-2019 Graduating Senior Survey results from the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Evaluation revealed that 55% of Black/African American respondents, 76% of Hispanic/Latinx respondents, and 83% of White respondents agreed/strongly agreed with the statement: “I feel like I belong at Texas A&M.” For the statement, “Texas A&M is a safe and secure
campus” 47% Black/African American respondents, 65% of Hispanic/Latinx respondents, and 74% of White respondents agreed/strongly agreed. The marked differences by race/ethnicity in the student responses are consistent with trends across faculty and staff responses over many years of campus climate assessments.

Additionally, the Office for Diversity completed an analysis of Texas A&M’s Stop Hate reports to develop a comprehensive understanding of the campus occurrences that impact safety and belonging. In 2016, 34 distinct reports were submitted. The most common types of occurrences reported were related to campus speakers and racism. In 2018, 29 distinct reports were filed addressing: white supremacy such as flyers on campus and a swastika mark in a men’s restroom (10 reports); racism (8 reports); homophobia (6 reports); sexual misconduct such as non-consensual touching and comments on a banner (3 reports); and religious intolerance such as anti-Semitic and anti-Catholic sentiment (2 reports). Throughout the Stop Hate reports, Texas A&M’s commitment to diversity, inclusion, and Core Values was referenced when incidents at odds with the Texas A&M’s goals and Core Values were reported. In recent years, several highly publicized examples illustrate how racism and hate impact the safety and belonging of students, faculty, and staff in the campus community. (Note: The highly publicized examples were selected to protect the confidentiality of current students, faculty, and staff.)

In 2016, Texas A&M’s NAACP Chapter created the hashtag, #RacismAtTAMUFeelsLike. The hashtag garnered thousands of responses expressing safety concerns, challenges to belonging at A&M, and managing racial slurs, stereotypes, and hateful comments. In 2016, then-Vice-President and Associate Provost for Diversity, Dr. Christine Stanley, responded:

We value and welcome student dialogue about their experiences on campus, and the student NAACP campaign this week is a reminder that we have work to do, to make Texas A&M a place where all Aggies can fully thrive. ... Our president, provost and campus community take seriously our commitment to diversity and inclusion, and we will continue our Diversity Plan efforts to be more accountable, so we can model a campus environment that is welcoming and richer from the diversity among our student body. (Kuhlman, 2016)

Another campus leader, Dr. Daniel Pugh, Vice President for Student Affairs, encouraged students to report any occurrences of discrimination on campus using Stop Hate, and stated that he appreciated the leadership of the A&M chapter of the NAACP (Pryce, 2016). Regarding the content of #RacismAtTAMUFeelsLike, Dr. Pugh said, “There’s always an initial shock, and there’s a bit of a gut punch because one has different expectations and higher expectations for our students here. But then the reality sets in ... There’s part of me that’s tremendously saddened by it. It certainly impacts me professionally speaking as well” (Pryce, 2016).

As recently as this year (2020), the social media discussion was still active with some sharing daily occurrences and experiences with racism while others dismissed, criticized, or denied the stories about racism and discrimination occurring in the campus community. In reading the social media posts about racist experiences, Chancellor Sharp issued a statement that read, in part, “I have spent the last few nights reading on social media about the experiences of minority students and their families with racism in our community. It is heartbreaking – and unacceptable.” (Sharp, 2020)

Relatedly, on June 15, 2020, President Young announced a 10-point action plan to address campus climate.

In 2017, Bobby Brooks was elected Texas A&M’s first openly-gay student body president. His election came after the disqualification of his competitor, Robert McIntosh, for failure to disclose financial information. Rick Perry, ’72, the 14th Secretary of Energy and former Texas governor,
wrote a lengthy commentary to the Houston Chronicle expressing his disdain over Brooks’ victory. In his letter, Perry pressed the university to explain why Texas A&M remained “passive while equal treatment was mocked in the name of diversity” (Perry, 2017). Many people, both inside and outside of Texas A&M, found Perry’s commentary astounding. Mark Jones, a Rice University political science professor, remarked that College Station campus politics “is certainly not something you expect a cabinet secretary to weigh in on — actually, probably not even a governor” (Ellis & Ward, 2017).

In 2017, Charlene Sumlin, the wife of former football coach Keven Sumlin, posted on Twitter the racist hate mail and death threats that had been sent to their family home. One letter threatened Coach Sumlin to “Please get lost! or else” (Franco, 2017). In a later response, Sumlin revealed that he received “all kinds of mail,” causing his family to feel unsafe in their own home (Franco, 2017). Coach Sumlin, Texas A&M’s first African American head football coach, and his family left the campus community in 2017.

In 2017, Dr. Tommy Curry, then-Associate Professor of Philosophy at Texas A&M, an African American, and “one of the nation’s most prolific philosophers of race, whose research focuses on the Black male experience” (Watson, 2019) received death threats and hate mail after misconstrued comments about interracial violence were taken out of context and reproduced in a conservative news outlet. President Young, in his communication to the campus community, accepted the misconstrued comments and criticized Dr. Curry.

Many Texas A&M students and faculty supported and defended Dr. Curry and criticized President Young and Texas A&M for failing to support Dr. Curry and defend academic freedom (Flaherty, 2017). In 2019, Dr. Curry left Texas A&M. He is the Chair of Africana Philosophy and Black Male Studies at the University of Edinburgh. Dr. Curry explained, “The political climate in the United States has made the study of racism a dangerous option for Black scholars. … Identifying the violence of White supremacy has now become equated to anti-Whiteness” (Watson, 2019).

Students, faculty, staff, and administrators in Texas A&M’s campus community have endured hate-filled videos featuring Texas A&M students, racist performances, homophobic remarks, and social media posts, emails, and letters threatening violence and death. Dr. Joe Feagin, Distinguished Professor in Sociology at Texas A&M, explained why people from majority groups sometimes dismiss, deny, or minimize the intent and impact of hate and racist performances:

Such actions tend to be viewed as harmless and ‘no big deal,’ indeed often just good interactive ‘fun.’ This no-big-deal viewpoint prevents most from perceiving how such racialized performances cause substantial harm, and it also links to a common defensiveness. … When challenged, most [white people] will feel defensive and assert their virtuousness. … For most [white people], at least some white-racist commentaries and performance are just part of the normality of U.S. society. For that reason, most people do not reflect much on them. (Feagin, 2010, p. 129)

At a predominantly and historically white institution like Texas A&M, the reluctance of some students, faculty, and staff to acknowledge and address racism, discrimination, prejudice, and bigotry perpetuates a campus climate where many people experience isolation, alienation, invisibility, tokenization, silence, and marginalization.

**Educational Mission**

As an institution of higher learning, what Texas A&M does best is work to inform people’s thinking. In this context, pedagogy is one of the most powerful and effective forms of activism. To better prepare our students, faculty, and staff to assume roles of leadership and service, we need to do
better to ensure that everyone in the campus community acquires the knowledge and skills necessary to demonstrate social, cultural, and global competence. Baldwin, Means Coleman, Gonzalez, and Shenoy (2014) explained that “a culturally competent person is able to grasp, identify, and understand the cultural nuances, values, attitudes, and behaviors that a person embodies and is thereby able to make more informed cross-cultural communication choices based on their understanding of those cultural subtleties” (p. 317). To encourage everyone in our campus community to develop cultural competency, Texas A&M has made a substantial commitment to providing trainings, seminars, and courses to students, faculty, and staff.

For example, Green Dot bystander intervention training teaches skills for interrupting and preventing personal violence. Additionally, in 2020, the Office for Diversity is introducing anti-discrimination centered bystander intervention training. When this bystander training is available, announcements will be sent to the campus community.

Required training for all Texas A&M employees and student workers includes: Creating a Discrimination Free Workplace/Equal Employment Opportunity (every two years); Ethics (every two years); Reporting Fraud, Waste, and Abuse (every four years), and Information Security Awareness (every year). Additionally, for staff and faculty, Human Resources and Organizational Effectiveness (HROE) provides certification in the “Diversity and Inclusion in the Workplace Program” and “Constructive Communication in the Workplace.” To advance diversity and inclusion, HROE provides instructor-led training, online training, and special request training about developing cultural competence, interpersonal communication skills, preventing sexual harassment, and reducing stereotype threat.

Since 2017, Texas A&M University has been a major sponsor of the National Conference on Race and Ethnicity (NCORE) and plans to continue to provide substantive support to this important venue. NCORE constitutes the leading, and most comprehensive, national forum on issues of race and ethnicity in American higher education. The conference focuses on the complex task of creating and sustaining comprehensive institutional change designed to improve racial and ethnic relations on campus and to expand opportunities for educational access and success by culturally diverse, traditionally underrepresented populations. At NCORE 2017, over 120 Texas A&M student leaders, faculty, and administrators attended the conference with several leading conference and poster sessions on topics related to accountability, campus climate, and equity. Beginning with NCORE 2017, the Office for Diversity and the Academic Affairs Climate and Diversity Committee (AACDC) implemented a series of campus sessions to bring NCORE presentations back to campus.

In 2019, the Office for Diversity participated in the NCORE 2020 Program Planning Retreat and reviewed conference proposals as well.

The 2019 Enhancing Diversity Seminar Series was designed to engage the campus community in dialogue around topics and issues related to diversity, campus climate, equity, and inclusion. The Office for Diversity invited Texas A&M students, faculty, and staff to present their research to the campus community. Presentations were structured to encourage participants to engage in self-reflection and to interact with peers and the presenter(s). Participants were encouraged to check with their supervisor to determine whether any presentations counted towards specific training and professional development requirements.

The First-Year seminars were piloted in Fall 2019 and are being implemented as zero-credit hour courses that meet weekly with a designated leader who is staff or faculty and a peer mentor. For first-time college students, first-year university-wide experiences are intended to improve retention by increasing each student’s sense of belonging on campus. For Texas A&M students, as a result of participating in First Year Seminars, students will: (1) have an increased awareness of campus
resources; (2) develop the skills to achieve personal and academic goals; and (3) contribute to a diverse and inclusive environment.

To create a university-wide experience, all seminars address eight themes: physical and mental well-being; alcohol and other drugs; academic success strategies and resources; healthy relationships and bystander interventions; diversity/cultural competence; social and financial well-being; self-awareness/resilience/goal-setting; and career/major exploration. Faculty, staff, and peer mentors deliver the content after being trained by the content development teams and the Office for Student Success.

The College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences (CVM) provides examples of how training is integrated in student learning. Education and training in inclusion, diversity, and professionalism happens in the undergraduate biomedical sciences program (BIMS) and graduate level new student orientations. The BIMS program also offers an International Certificate in Cultural Competency and Communication in Spanish.

The College of Liberal Arts, College of Architecture and Department of Multicultural Services created a Diversity Certificate Program for Texas A&M University. Drawing from existing courses, programs and associations within the university, the Diversity Certificate Program enables its students to create, synthesize, and integrate academic coursework, co-curricular experience, and service-learning engagement in order to demonstrate their preparedness for participation in the modern global economy.

In 2018, the Department of Multicultural Services in the Division of Student Affair hosted the first TAMU Race, Identity & Social Equity Conference (TAMU RISE). Modeled after the Iowa State Conference on Race & Ethnicity (ISCORE), the Texas A&M’s Race, Identity & Social Equity (RISE) Initiative is a year-long program that provides students with a better understanding of race, identity, and social equity in higher education. RISE includes an annual conference, and a fellowship opportunity which allows selected student leaders to attend the National Conference on Race and Ethnicity (NCORE), conduct research during the fall semester, and present findings to the campus community at the RISE Conference.

In summary, Texas A&M University's primary concern must be for the physical and psychological well-being of current students, faculty, and staff. Dealing with bias, discrimination, isolation, and hate takes a toll on mental, emotional, and physical health. Especially in recent times, the State of Texas and the nation have experienced mass shootings spurred on by racism, police violence (resulting in a global social movement for change) hate, and white supremacy, and many members of our community have felt concern for their well-being. Through the improvement of campus climate, accessibility, and equity, Texas A&M can provide our students, faculty, and staff with an inclusive, equitable, and diverse environment in which to study and work. It is imperative for the safety and welfare of our campus community that Texas A&M recognize that racism and hate are current, systemic issues and not isolated incidents attributable to a few individuals.
Equity

**Equity**: Articulate procedures to ensure that students, staff, and faculty, regardless of identity, are treated equitably. (From the 2010 University Diversity Plan, Page 2)

The 2010 University Diversity Plan charged the Office for Diversity to collaborate with Human Resources and Organizational Effectiveness, the Office of the Dean of Faculties, the Division of Student Affairs, and the colleges and administrative units to identify and eliminate evidence-supported patterns of inequity. Specifically, units were asked to identify processes, policies, and procedures that may prevent achievement for certain groups with special attention to the retention, compensation, award and reward trends, performance measures, and advancement of women and ethnic/racial minorities.

One persistent challenge in assessing equity has been in expanding the scope of equity beyond faculty and staff salaries. The annual Diversity Plan Accountability Reports prompted units to address a range of equity issues, including advancement, promotion, professional development, salary, access to training and development, student leadership development, start-up packages, leadership succession planning, and professional visibility. For example, Vaid and Geraci (2016) undertook a detailed analysis of women’s professional visibility in psychology and found that inequity in markers of visibility were evident, particularly in the senior faculty ranks. Similarly, Bazner, Vaid, and Stanley (2017) have examined how race is marked in the social construction of named awards of professional societies in higher education. Specifically, in the field of education, most of the named awards across four major professional societies are named after white men, with only a handful named after minoritized individuals (Bazner et al., 2017).

Improving the structural diversity of Texas A&M is imperative to addressing equity issues and advancing our institutional mission. As a land-grant university, Texas A&M’s students, faculty, and staff should be representative of the demographic diversity of the State of Texas. To be representative of Texas’ population by race/ethnicity, Texas A&M’s population would need to be at least 13% Black/African American as opposed to its current 3% Black/African American and 49% Hispanic/Latinx as opposed to its current 24% Hispanic/Latinx. Furthermore, to be designated as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI), Texas A&M must meet and maintain an enrollment of at least 25%, full-time undergraduate students who are Hispanic/Latinx.

In 2019, Provost Carol Fierke increased first-year retention goals from 92% to 95%; four-year graduation rate goals from 56% to 65%; and six-year graduate rate goals from 82% to 85%. To address the disparities in our student success rate so that persistence and graduation are realistic goals for every student, Texas A&M is working to decrease achievement disparities across ethnicity, first-generation college student status, gender, and socioeconomic status.

**Structural Diversity**
Texas A&M University’s mission is to welcome and serve people “of all racial, ethnic and geographic groups as it addresses the needs of an increasingly diverse population and a global economy” (http://www.tamu.edu/statements/mission.html). As a land-grant university, Texas A&M’s students, faculty, and staff should be representative of the demographic diversity of the State of Texas.
Table 2 illustrates that, over the years, there have been increases in the numbers of students from some historically underrepresented groups. However, Table 3 shows that, in 2018, the numbers of historically underrepresented students and faculty continued to be small and not representative of high school graduates of the State of Texas. Note: The columns in Tables 2 and 3 do not equal 100% due to missing data.

Table 2. Fall 2015-2019 Demographics for Graduate, Undergraduate, and Professional Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black, African American, Multi-racial with Black</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latinx</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>64,436</td>
<td>66,323</td>
<td>68,603</td>
<td>69,367</td>
<td>69,465</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data sources: Texas A&M student data were retrieved on 01/11/20 from the Accountability website (accountability.tamu.edu).

Using Texas A&M’s institutional demographic data for international students, faculty, and staff in a meaningful way proves to be complicated. For example, international faculty are reported in the race/ethnicity categories: Asian, Black, Hispanic, White, etc. For students, all international students are included in the single category ‘International,’ thereby making it challenging to interpret data about their experiences at Texas A&M. To better understand the experiences of international students, faculty, and staff, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness & Evaluation (OIE&E), the Department of Student Life Studies, and the Office for Diversity are experimenting with using variables such as country of origin on the 2020 campus climate assessments.

Table 3. Fall 2018 Demographics by Ethnicity/Race for Faculty and Students Compared to 2017 Texas High School Graduates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/ethnicity</th>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Undergraduate Students</th>
<th>Graduate Students</th>
<th>Professional Students</th>
<th>Texas High School Graduates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latinx</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3,235</td>
<td>54,369</td>
<td>12,364</td>
<td>2,537</td>
<td>323,373</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data sources: Texas A&M student data were retrieved on 05/19/19 from the Accountability website (accountability.tamu.edu). Faculty data were retrieved on 04/14/19 from Business Objects Warehouse. The Four-Year Longitudinal Graduation and Dropout Rates by Race/Ethnicity for Texas Public Schools, Class of 2017, was retrieved on 05/19/19 from the Texas Education Agency website (https://rptsrv1.tea.texas.gov/acctres/completion/2017/state_demo.html).
Additionally, Texas A&M’s colleges and administrative units have reported persistent challenges and disparities in recruiting and retaining historically underrepresented student groups. Table 4 illustrates the gaps in our student success rate. Texas A&M is committed to closing the gaps in our student success rate so that academic success and graduation are realistic goals for every student.

Table 4. University-wide Retention and Graduation Data for Undergraduate Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/ethnicity</th>
<th>Retention</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>Headcount</td>
<td>664</td>
<td>893</td>
<td>868</td>
<td>969</td>
<td>1,170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st year retention</td>
<td></td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-year graduation</td>
<td></td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black, African American, Multi-racial with Black</td>
<td>Headcount</td>
<td>459</td>
<td>517</td>
<td>530</td>
<td>528</td>
<td>490</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st year retention</td>
<td></td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-year graduation</td>
<td></td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latinx</td>
<td>Headcount</td>
<td>2,873</td>
<td>3,804</td>
<td>3,246</td>
<td>3,176</td>
<td>3,117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st year retention</td>
<td></td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-year graduation</td>
<td></td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>Headcount</td>
<td>9,276</td>
<td>8,595</td>
<td>8,300</td>
<td>8,652</td>
<td>8,367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st year retention</td>
<td></td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-year graduation</td>
<td></td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data source: Texas A&M student retention and graduation data were retrieved on 05/19/19 from the Accountability website (accountability.tamu.edu).

Texas A&M’s disparities in student success and representation of historically underrepresented groups of students, faculty, and staff may be attributable to systemic, racist, and discriminatory practices in higher education and society. Harper and Simmons (2019) posit:

Inequities are not fully explained by forces external to a college campus. There are numerous factors and conditions within it that determine who gets admitted, how they are treated once they matriculate, the inclusiveness of their learning environments, the cultural relevance of what they are taught, the racial diversity of their professors, and their likelihood for personal wellness and academic success. ... faculty members and leaders on too many campuses are bad stewards of the public good, at least as it pertains to Black students. Instead of asking, ‘why are Black undergraduates doing so poorly at public institutions,’ we encourage readers to question why public colleges and universities do so poorly at enrolling and graduating Black students; ensuring gender equity among them; and affording them greater, more reasonable access to same-race faculty members. (p. 6)

Campus climate, safety, and belonging impact student, faculty, and staff recruiting, retention, and success. Existing literature demonstrates that increasing the demographic diversity of predominantly white universities is an important step toward improving the overall campus climate. Increasing diversity is a tangible representation of the level of institutional commitment to diversity and directly influences a sense of belonging among historically underrepresented students and faculty (Hernandez & Lopez, 2004; Johnson et al., 2007).
Student Recruitment and Retention
To recruit students, examples of national strategic partnerships and economic-conscious scholarships include Texas A&M University’s partnership with the Gates and Gates Millennium Scholars. Texas A&M has a pool of scholarships. For example, the Century Scholars Program is a partnership between Texas A&M University and 110 Texas high schools to enroll and retain top students from each school. This program provides both scholarship funds and access to a four-year learning community which strives to help students develop during their time in college. Each scholarship includes a one-time $1000 scholarship to be used for a Texas A&M approved study abroad experience. In 2019, Texas A&M discontinued the partnership with POSSE Atlanta and launched a partnership with POSSE Houston. POSSE is a highly competitive national scholarship that facilitates individual and community development through faculty mentoring and small group interactions.

Many of the colleges have memoranda of understanding (MOU) with partner system institutions with underrepresented and/or first-generation student populations with geographic diversity. For example, the College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences (CVM) is one of only two Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM) programs in the country offering undergraduate, graduate, and professional (DVM) degrees. The Biomedical Sciences (BIMS) undergraduate program is the largest degree-granting undergraduate program at the university. BIMS added new 2+2 community college agreements in 2018 (current total of 15) to increase the pipeline of URM and first-generation students, as well as two more agreements in 2019.

The College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (COALS) has three full-time undergraduate recruiters covering the cities yielding most of our students: Houston/College Station, Dallas/Ft. Worth, and San Antonio/Austin. The objective behind the selection of these metropolitan areas and the facilitation of strategic recruiting programs is to show urban high school students that the College offers majors that serve more than just rural students who have been active in traditional agricultural programs such as 4-H and Future Farmers of American (FFA). Innovative recruiting programs for high school students like Summer Training in Agriculture and Related Sciences (STARS), Hunger Summits, and World Food Prize Youth Institute are purposely held at high schools that are not thought of as traditional pipelines for the College. Additionally, the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences increased scholarship funding by 23% in FY18 and 12% in FY19 (over FY17 levels) for undergraduate students and is expected to allow more first-generation students and students of low socio-economic status to receive funding through degree completion.

The College of Architecture’s Office of Student Services houses academic advisors, recruiting staff, and administrative staff. Recruiting staff has visited the Rio Grande Valley, major Texas cities, Baltimore-MD, Atlanta-GA, and Washington-DC. Recruiting staff also work with A&M Prospective Students Centers and are joined by staff and/or faculty from the College’s departments. For example, the Department of Construction Science (COSC) has hosted a series of six five-day Construction Management Academy Career Exploration Programs for high school students from five strategically chosen Texas locations. The COSC Industry Advisory Council has offered first-generation students a scholarship as a recruitment incentive. The Department of Visualization (VIZ) also hosts summer camps with scholarships for historically underrepresented people to attract qualified high school students.

The College of Medicine (COM), the College of Nursing, and the College of Pharmacy all use holistic review in admissions to increase the number of underrepresented in medicine (URM) students. COM also has multiple pipeline programs that serve students from historically underrepresented backgrounds. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board recently funded a $150,000 grant to establish a program called the Aggie Doctor Initiative which creates two new pipeline programs for African American/Black and Hispanic/Latinx students from Texas A&M to become part of COM.
The College of Geosciences flagship program for recruiting undergraduates is GeoX. GeoX is an intensive, on-campus experience intended to build awareness and interest in the geosciences. In 2018, Geosciences doubled the number of participants from 30 to 60, something they plan to continue in 2019. Over the past two years, at least a quarter of the students have self-identify as underrepresented minorities (URM) and half are women. The success of this program is evinced by the high rates of application to Geosciences.

The College of Liberal Arts is offering 100% need-based scholarships to undergraduate students to support those from lower income groups who would like to attend college.

The College of Engineering is actively working towards its goals through significant investments in student support programs such as Women in Engineering and First-Generation Student Mentors, Engineering Honors, and the Engineering Village Living Learning Community. Academic services that include supplemental instruction, peer tutoring, and peer teachers have also been expanded. Furthermore, first year engineering students reside in the Engineering Living and Learning Community (ELLC). The students in the ELLC program have obtained 81% first year retention overall, including 76% for women and 78% for Hispanic/Latinx and African American students. Undergraduate retention continues to be a high priority for the College of Engineering. The college is working towards retention and graduation goals of 90% of the students retained in engineering after year one, and 82% of students retained in engineering after year two. Based on analyses of retention data for entry cohorts between 2007 and 2017 disaggregated by race/ethnicity, gender, and first-generation status, progress is being made; first-year retention is 84%, up from 73%, and second-year retention is 71%, up from 64%.

The Office of Graduate and Professional Studies (OGAPS) offers Graduate Diversity Fellowships to prepare students from historically underrepresented groups for careers as faculty members. OGAPS supports the development of high-achieving scholars who show promise for distinguished careers; whose life, research experiences, and/or employment background will significantly contribute to academic excellence at Texas A&M; and who will maximize the educational benefits of diversity for all students. The evaluation criteria for receiving a fellowship include, but are not limited to the following: “A nominee may be from minority groups that historically have been underrepresented at Texas A&M and/or in their profession; may be first generation college graduates (neither parent earned a bachelor’s degree); or may be persons with disabilities or veterans. This list is not meant to be exhaustive” (http://ogaps.tamu.edu/Buttons/Funding-opportunities/Graduate-Diversity-Fellowships.aspx).

**Student Success Initiative**

Texas A&M recognizes the need to close the gaps in our student success rate so that persistence and graduation are realistic goals for every student. In 2019, Provost Carol Fierke increased first-year retention goals from 92% to 95%; four-year graduation rate goals from 56% to 65%; and six-year graduate rate goals from 82% to 85%. Additionally, Texas A&M is working to decrease achievement disparities across ethnicity, first-generation college student status, gender, and socioeconomic status.

Preliminary results for the Student Success Initiative are promising. In an email message on November 13, 2019, Provost Fierke shared that “four-year graduation rate for first-generation students grew by more than four percentage points, from 50.3% to 54.5%, and first-year retention increased from 86% to 88%. The first-year retention rate for students from families earning less than $60,000 annually grew from 86% to 89%, while the four-year graduation rate increased by more than four percentage points, from 50.2% to 54.4%” (Fierke, 2019).
Faculty Recruitment and Retention

One way to decrease achievement disparities and increase student success is to recruit and retain faculty that represent our current and future students. Faculty play a crucial role in academic and personal student success. The positive impacts of consistent student-faculty interactions and faculty mentorship have been well-documented, and can result in higher likelihood of graduation, and higher levels of academic achievement and involvement in campus groups and activities. These impacts are particularly pronounced among demographically similar faculty and students—i.e. racial and ethnic minority faculty and students and female faculty and students (Hernandez & Lopez, 2004).

Carter-Sowell et al. (2019) recognized the impact of student demands for representative faculty and curriculum:

A lack of racial diversity in the professoriate is not new. What is new is that there is increasing pressure on universities to do something about it. College students are increasingly from racially diverse backgrounds and want to see a more representative curriculum and a professoriate that looks more like them. Partly in response to student demands, universities are beginning to institute practices aimed at developing a more diverse pool of faculty applicants. (p. 306)

In 2017, a student-led group called TAMU Anti-Racism asked the institution to offer anti-racism classes. Texas A&M developed 3-hour Cultural Discourse (CD) classes to be implemented in the Fall of 2019 (Snell, 2017). The goals of these classes included: holding respectful discussions on difficult topics; understanding self, including personal bias and prejudices; and understanding how to function effectively in a multicultural and global society.

Additionally, Texas A&M has an International and Cultural Diversity (ICD) course requirement. The learning outcomes of the ICD courses are: Live and work effectively in a diverse and global society; articulate the value of a diverse and global perspective; and recognize diverse opinions and practices and consider different points of view. The CD and ICD classes satisfy a graduation requirement established by Texas A&M’s Faculty Senate. Classes about race, ethnicity, and anti-racism can contribute to a representative and inclusive curriculum, improve the campus climate, help with recruiting and retaining historically underrepresented students and faculty.

In 2018, the Office for Diversity, in partnership with the College of Liberal Arts, launched the Accountability, Climate, Equity, and Scholarship (ACES) Fellows Program. In recognition of Texas A&M University's Diversity Plan, the ACES Fellows Program promotes the research, teaching, and scholarship of early career scholars with strength in, and evidence of, respect for diversity and inclusion. The ACES Fellows are hired for a two-year period as Visiting Assistant Professors with the expectation that they will transition seamlessly into tenure-track positions.

In the Fall of 2018, the pilot year of the program, over 130 applications were submitted by candidates advancing outstanding scholarship with relevant disciplinary units in the College of Liberal Arts. After a rigorous review of the applications by the Office for Diversity and the departments in the College of Liberal Arts, four applicants were selected for campus interviews and offers were extended to all four. All the finalists were hired, and joined the departments of Anthropology, Communication, English, and Sociology in Fall 2019.

In 2019, ACES was expanded to include the College of Education and Human Development, as well as the College of Liberal Arts. Improvements implemented in the second year of the program included the increase of the stipends for the ACES Fellows from $56,000 a year to $60,000, and the opening of the application process in May, to be competitive with other post-doctoral programs at
other institutions. As of December 2019, 435 applications had been submitted to the ACES program proving that Texas A&M can attract promising, diverse early career faculty.

Plans for expanding the ACES Fellows program are being implemented strategically. In 2020, the College of Geosciences and the Bush School of Government and Public Service joined the ACES Program alongside the College of Education and Human Develop and the College of Liberal Arts. Hiring scholars for disciplines such as science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) where start-up and laboratory funding could reasonably exceed the entire budget currently allocated for ACES, is being carefully assessed. Additionally, the program could be expanded to Galveston, Qatar, Kingsville, Dallas, and Ft. Worth; however, the decision was made to initially prioritize the College Station campus to better understand the challenges and implications of the ACES Fellows program.

One notable example of a commitment to addressing equity through developing and retaining faculty was the establishment of Texas A&M’s ADVANCE Center. In 2010, Texas A&M University received a $3.5 million grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF) to establish the ADVANCE Center. Since then, this Center has been dedicated to developing systemic approaches to increase the representation and advancement of women in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields.

From the beginning, the ADVANCE Center has been an interdisciplinary collaboration spanning the colleges of Science, Engineering, Geosciences, Liberal Arts, and the Bush School of Government and Public Service. The goals of the ADVANCE Center have been to double the percentage of tenured women faculty in STEM disciplines at Texas A&M by 2015 and to increase the number and diversity of women STEM faculty at all levels across the university. In 2017, Texas A&M University initiated the process of institutionalizing ADVANCE. From 2017-2019, several programs and activities were continued at Texas A&M, primarily under the direction of the Office of the Dean of Faculties. In 2019, Texas A&M appointed Dr. Cynthia Werner as the Director of ADVANCE. Under her leadership, ADVANCE will remain in the Office for the Dean of Faculties in partnership with the Office for Diversity.

The Strategies and Tactics for Recruiting to Improve Diversity and Excellence (STRIDE) Program provides search committee members with specific strategies intended to reduce implicit bias during faculty searches. STRIDE was developed as a joint effort between the Dean of Faculties Office and ADVANCE. Beginning in 2019, STRIDE workshops are required for all faculty search committee members (with the exception of those individuals who have completed any search committee training program within the past two years). Additionally, ADVANCE has assembled the 2019-2021 STRIDE Committee comprised of 14 faculty representing a wide range of disciplines in colleges.

Since 2012, the Office of the Dean of Faculties and the ADVANCE Center have sponsored annual faculty salary studies. The purpose of these studies is to determine salary differences between male and female tenured and tenure-track faculty. Variables such as rank/title, age, race/ethnicity, and years of service are included. The salary equity studies have been used to determine “whether or not there were any systematic differences by race/ethnicity or national origin, and to identify individuals whose actual salaries were unusually high or unusually low, given the predictions of the salary model” (Taylor & Froyd, 2015). In the annual Diversity Plan Accountability Reports, several colleges and departments reported making salary equity adjustments.

In 2018, the Office for Diversity, Dean of Faculties, and Office of the Provost and Executive Vice President collaborated to secure an institutional subscription to the National Center on Faculty Development & Diversity (NCFDD) (https://www.facultydiversity.org/institutions/tamu). The NCFDD is a service dedicated to faculty reaching their career milestones, and it is designed to help
improve the retention of diverse faculty by providing professional development such as writing support, mediation, and conflict management. Participation in NCFDD is available to Texas A&M graduate students and faculty.

The ADVANCE Scholars Program is a faculty mentoring program designed to promote and advance the success of tenure-track faculty who have been historically underrepresented at Texas A&M University and in higher education. The mentoring team for the ADVANCE Scholars Program is comprised of three members: the ADVANCE Scholar themselves, an Internal Advocate, and an External Mentor.

This Program is anchored in Texas A&M’s Aggie Core Values that continuously challenge the university community to embrace, value, and integrate diversity and inclusion as the roadmap to achieving academic and institutional excellence. As such, the ADVANCE Scholars Program is a key component of the institution’s efforts to support the recruitment, retention, and professional success of its faculty. Through systemic approaches to increasing their professional advancement, this Program contributes to the development of an exceptional and more diverse faculty.

The origins of the ADVANCE Scholars program date back to 2011. In 2011, the purpose of the ADVANCE Scholars Program was to promote and advance the success of Texas A&M University’s women faculty of color in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM). In 2015, the program expanded to include women from non-STEM fields. Since the first cohort in 2011, 40 women faculty of color at Texas A&M have participated in the program. Carter-Sowell, et al. (2019) completed a comprehensive evaluation of the 2011-2017 ADVANCE Scholars Program and concluded that it “was beneficial for early career women faculty of color at the university, providing invaluable support professionally and personally that contributed to a strong record that led to promotion and greater professional visibility” (p. 321).

In 2019, the Office for Diversity re-launched the ADVANCE Scholars Program and included faculty who are in years 1-3 (i.e., prior to third-year review) of their tenure-track position and self-identify as first-generation college graduates and/or early career tenure-track faculty from historically underrepresented groups in academia at Texas A&M University. ADVANCE Scholars have personal access to one-on-one executive coaching with a focus on developing strategies for career success, leadership skills, and the exploration of individual/professional needs for growth in the academic environment. To build a professional network, ADVANCE Scholars engage with their internal advocate and an external eminent scholar mentor.

**Staff Recruiting and Retention**

Since 2016, the Office for Diversity has identified a concerning trend regarding how often Texas A&M staff are excluded or overlooked from recruiting and retention strategies. Frequently, *Diversity Plan Accountability Reports* and presentations are missing staff demographics and/or provide a limited number of initiatives designed to increase diversity among staff in recruitment, retention, climate, and equity. This pattern is particularly troubling considering Texas A&M’s staff are frequently the first people in the Texas A&M community to intervene during crisis, investigate and determine sanctions for student conduct violations, advise students academically and in their student organizations, and supervise students employed on campus.

The Office for Diversity provides one example of how integral staff are to Texas A&M’s academic mission and student success. The staff in the Office for Diversity have taken very seriously the Provost’s remarks that staff are central to student success and have established the Office for Diversity Learning Community (ODLC). The ODLC consists of a cohort of five diverse undergraduate and graduate students. The students’ professional development and undergraduate
research projects are supervised by staff working very closely with the student employees to develop their written and oral communication skills, comportment, work ethic, and networking skills.

Demonstrations of staff recruiting and retention efforts were collected from the 2018 Diversity Plan Accountability Reports from the Division of Finance and Operations (DFO), the Division of Academic Affairs (DAA), the Division of Student Affairs (DSA), and Human Resources and Organizational Effectiveness (HROE). The examples of staff recruiting and retention strategies provided are not intended to be an exhaustive or comprehensive list of the Texas A&M University’s efforts. Only a few examples are included to illustrate some of the compelling work that staff and administrators are engaged in across our campuses, departments, colleges, and administrative units.

For example, the Division of Finance and Operations (DFO) identified two major challenges to staff recruiting and retention:

- Many of our staff have competitive local job markets (police, environmental health and safety, and utilities technicians) that allow them to change employment without relocation.

- In some areas within DFO, the lack of well-defined promotion and career ladders has led to some dissatisfaction and lack of upward mobility. In many areas where these opportunities exist, neither central nor departmental funds are available for monetary recognition.

Additionally, Utilities & Energy Services, one of DFO’s large departments with 209 employees, collaborated with HROE and conducted “Stay Interviews” as a method of identifying favorable aspects of their workplace as well as opportunities for improvement.

The Division of Academic Affairs (DAA) reviewed hiring files from 2013 and determined that 43% of DAA’s notice of vacancies (NOVs) were open for two weeks or less (suggesting internal candidate preference). Hiring supervisors did not regularly identify diversity-focused skills in NOVs or hiring matrices nor ask about such skills/experience in interview/reference check questions. After interventions with supervisors, a second hiring process review using 2016 data noted improvements, and, as a result, the Provost approved centralized screening of future vacancy postings for inclusion of these components and hiring supervisor outreach on these and related issues.

The Division of Student Affairs (DSA) advertises vacant positions in diverse outlets and publications. Funding has been provided to assist departments with advertisement in spaces not traditionally utilized for recruiting diverse applicant pools. To better aid in the recruitment of potential candidates, DSA units adopted new business practices to assist with consistency and intentionality in recruiting diverse applicant pools. In 2018, pre- and post-hiring forms and diversity, equity, and inclusion questions were integrated into the hiring process. Finally, the DSA 2.0 committee is researching the utility of the Strategies and Tactics for Recruiting to Improve Diversity and Excellence (STRIDE) Program and Oregon State’s Search Advocate program for training DSA search committees.

The Division of Human Resources and Organizational Effectiveness (HROE) plays a vital role in acquiring and developing diverse talent across Texas A&M University. In 2018, HROE planned to form an internal task force to research and recommend effective and inclusive hiring practices with the goal of piloting recommendations within HROE. Based on the outcome of the pilot, recommended practices will be shared with the broader University community. In addition, HROE
leadership has been participating in *Workshops for Faculty Recruitment for Diversity and Excellence* offered by the STRIDE Committee as well as the Dean of Faculties Search Committee Workshops in an effort to align staff recruitment information and guidance with that being provided for faculty hiring, as applicable.

HROE depends on the Culture, Awareness, Respect, and Equity (C.A.R.E.) Council to provide educational opportunities to advance the goal of inclusive recruitment. In 2018, HROE identified implicit bias as a potential barrier to diverse and inclusive recruitment outcomes. The group committed to implementing a foundational focus to help Division employees understand what implicit bias is and how it may play a role in decision-making. As a result, the C.A.R.E Council hosted two viewings of a webinar titled, “Identifying and Removing Microaggressions,” offering it at various times/dates to maximize employee participation. They are also evaluating the trainings using pre- and post-event surveys to assess the effectiveness of the trainings.

HROE strives to retain employees within the Division and minimize voluntary departures. In reviewing turnover data for 2017 and 2018, the total number of departures were higher than in the two prior years. The data indicate that 7 of the 11 terminations in 2017 were retirements, likely influenced by the voluntary staff separation program. In 2018, 4 of 9 terminations were retirements. Turnover is not uncommon in the year following a leadership change; however, HROE leadership is cognizant of the turnover totals and is conducting additional analysis of the data by demographics and exploring retention strategies.
We Can Do Better

2020 has emerged as a year of reflection and planning for Texas A&M University. The 2010 Diversity Plan is 10 years old and Vision 2020, Texas A&M’s strategic plan launched in 1999, has matured. Vision 2020 provided Texas A&M with a clear direction for diversity and inclusion. Specifically, Vision 2020 stated that Texas A&M “must be a leader in promoting diversity in its student body, faculty, staff, and intellectual viewpoints. Affording opportunity to all racial and ethnic groups is critical to the future of Texas” (Vision 2020: Creating a Culture of Excellence, p. 43). In 2019, the Office of the Provost held public forums providing students, faculty, and staff the opportunity to contribute to and inform Texas A&M’s next vision statement and strategic plan (Gafford-Gaby, 2019). In academic year 2020-21, with the guidance of the university and community, the Office for Diversity will update the 2010 Diversity Plan and launch Texas A&M’s 2020 University Diversity Plan.

Receiving a 2019 HEED Award holds Texas A&M to a still higher standard of accountability to our campus communities. Completing the HEED Award application provides the institution with an opportunity to further reflect on challenges, identify new goals, and celebrate the institution’s ongoing progress towards diversity and inclusion. While there are measurable benefits when diversity and inclusion advance an institution’s mission and values, there are real consequences for getting diversity and inclusion “wrong,” as it might hurt people and damage enrollment, donor-giving, recruitment, and retention.

Many universities can provide cautionary tales about the consequences of superficial, disproportionate responses to racism, discrimination, and hate. For example, in 2015, University of Missouri student protests citing “official inaction in the face of racial bigotry … forced the university system president and the campus chancellor to resign” (Hartocollis, 2017). Cohen (2015) explained that for students, faculty, and staff at that institution:

The issues of racism are not simply the overt racists who scrawl things on walls in the dead of night or shout epithets from the anonymous safety of a passing car, but the layers of inequities that constitute the hidden, covert, and institutional racism that pile up and get institutionalized in systems and reflected in the clueless reactions and behavior of university administrators like those at Missouri.

Two years after the protests, in 2017, University of Missouri’s freshman enrollment decreased by more than 35%. University leadership attributes the decline in enrollments to the events of 2015.

In November 2019, Syracuse University administrators were criticized for their responses to hate and racism on their campus and the governor of New York stepped in to intervene (Brown, 2019). Current students faulted administration for describing racist graffiti and racial slurs as “bias incidents” as opposed to being explicit that the events were racist and anti-Semitic (Patel, 2019). Syracuse University’s administrators “have simply lost credibility for giving regular lip service about valuing diversity and inclusion while doing little to put those words into tangible action” (Anderson, 2019). Syracuse University’s communications with the campus community have raised concerns about safety and belonging for prospective students and their parents (Patel, 2019).

Additionally, Syracuse University recently scaled back its involvement in POSSE Leadership Scholarship programs, recruiting and retention programs for high-achieving minority students. Reducing engagement with POSSE “left some people with the impression that the university is not...
dedicated to recruiting students from diverse backgrounds.” (Anderson, 2019). Between failing to communicate candidly during a crisis and reducing the institution’s commitment to well-known, established programs for minority students such as the Posse Foundation, some of Syracuse’s donors are deciding to suspend their giving to the university (Anderson, 2019).

Texas A&M shares some similarities with the University of Missouri and Syracuse University. Specifically, in 2019, Texas A&M downsized its partnership with the POSSE Foundation. And, in 2016, historically underrepresented students addressed the Student Senate urging student leadership to engage in resolving racism and campus climate issues (King, 2016). Furthermore, students criticized Texas A&M’s administration for referring to racist acts as incidents. The word incidents is problematic because, as King (2016) explains, “incident implies occasional, it implies the defense of ‘A few bad apples’ mentality. The thing is, the ‘incident’ is really an everyday living reality, social reality for many students of color on campus. These ‘incidents’ happen every day” (King, 2016). Indeed, in 2020, the university was again embroiled in controversy as hate speech offered up by some members of our community surged on social media. Racism, hate speech, safety, and belonging issues are evidence of systemic, cultural problems that are enduring trends at Texas A&M.

Communicating Texas A&M’s commitment to diversity and inclusion needs to be candid, authentic, and action-oriented. In 2018, the institution’s commitment to diversity and inclusion was evident in 48% (13 out of 27) of President Young’s messages to the campus community. The content of the President’s messages included updates on procedures for reporting sexual assault on campus; recognition of student, faculty, and staff accomplishments; and addressing campus occurrences that were racist, sexist, or discriminatory. In 2019, President Young recorded a video for New Student Conferences addressing how diversity and inclusion are embedded in Texas A&M’s Core Values and reinforcing civility and respect in the campus discourse. The first half of 2020 has seen President Young issue statements on the murder of George Floyd, protests regarding the presence of the statue of Lawrence Sullivan Ross, former president of A&M and member of the Confederacy, and on racist behaviors seen on our campus. Authentic, candid, and timely communication, especially during crises, is characterized by the provision of action plans and resources to support the campus community and by the explicitly acknowledgment of the nature of events that are racist and discriminatory.

As a public land-grant university, we have the responsibility to be good stewards of resources. Allocating funding, space, and people to address the following issues has the potential to advance Texas A&M’s 2010 Diversity Plan goals of accountability, campus climate, and equity goals:

1. **Engage campus leadership (accountability):** Campus leadership must be committed, in practice and publicly, to promoting and advancing diversity, inclusion, and equity. Engaged leadership participate in campus forums and seminars; keep abreast of the latest diversity literature; promptly and candidly respond to occurrences of discrimination, harassment, and hate; follow-up with actions and updates to the campus and the community; and recognize and reward commitment and progress towards diversity and inclusion. Additionally, engaged leaders ensure that policies, operations, procedures, and plans are pursued with careful attention to their impact on diversity, inclusion, accessibility, campus climate, and equity.

2. **Address safety, well-being, and sense of belonging (campus climate):** Texas A&M University’s primary concern must be for the physical safety and psychological well-being of current students, faculty, and staff. Enduring racism, bias, discrimination, isolation, and hate takes a toll on mental and physical health. For people from groups who have been historically excluded and marginalized at Texas A&M, a sense of belonging positively impacts achievement, success, and retention (Strayhorn, 2019). By
improving campus climate, accessibility, and equity, Texas A&M can provide our students, faculty and staff with a safe and inclusive environment in which to work and study.

3. **Improve structural diversity (equity):** As a land-grant university, Texas A&M’s students, faculty, and staff should be representative of the demographic diversity of the State of Texas. To be representative of Texas’ population by race/ethnicity, Texas A&M’s population would need to be at least 13% Black/African American as opposed to its current 3% Black/African American and 49% Hispanic/Latinx as opposed to its current 24% Hispanic/Latinx. Furthermore, to be designated as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI), Texas A&M must meet and maintain an enrollment of at least 25%, full-time undergraduate students who are Hispanic/Latinx.

4. **Improve student success (equity):** In 2019, Provost Carol Fierke increased first-year retention goals from 92% to 95%; four-year graduation rate goals from 56% to 65%; and six-year graduate rate goals from 82% to 85%. To address the disparities in our student success rate so that persistence and graduation are realistic goals for every student, Texas A&M is working to decrease achievement disparities across ethnicity, first-generation college student status, gender, and socioeconomic status.

While we advance our diversity and inclusion goals, we need to dismantle systemic racism to advance Texas A&M’s land-grant mission. DiAngelo (2018) explains:

> The default of the current system is the reproduction of racial inequality, our institutions were designed to reproduce racial inequality and they do so with efficiency. Our schools are particularly effective at this task. To continue reproducing racial inequality, the system only needs white people to be really nice and carry on, smile at people of color, be friendly across race, and go to lunch together on occasion. I am not saying that you shouldn’t be nice. I suppose it’s better than being mean. But niceness is not courageous. Niceness will not get racism on the table and will not keep it on the table when everyone wants it off. In fact, bringing racism to white people’s attention is often seen as not nice…. Interrupting racism takes courage and intentionality; the interruption is by definition not passive or complacent. (p. iv)

The Office for Diversity is here to help. On our website, diversity.tamu.edu, we provide programs and resources about how to develop the knowledge and skills to be an effective advocate for diversity and inclusion while resisting racism, discrimination, and hate. Texas A&M’s 2010 University Diversity Plan includes everyone in the shared responsibility of creating a culture where people are treated equitably in a campus climate that fosters success and achievement. By providing students, faculty, and staff with the knowledge and skills to interrupt racism, bigotry, and discrimination, perhaps we can live up to our Core Values of respect, excellence, leadership, loyalty, integrity, and selfless service. As we value respect, we must be certain that our behaviors exemplify respect in every way, all of the time.
References


