

# REPORT ON CAMPUS DIVERSITY INITIATIVES

---

To ensure Texas A&M University's place among the premier universities in the world, diversity will have to be an imperative in which the university excels. This sentiment has been articulated in Vision 2020, and in other important university documents. This visible commitment to diversity is a commitment to the success of all people who work and learn at Texas A&M University. To be sure, there are legally protected groups such as race and ethnicity, gender, age, religion, nationality, physical ability, and veteran status. But diversity for Texas A&M University must capture more than just the legally protected groups: there must be attention to individuals from low socio-economic backgrounds, to individuals and their sexual orientation and gender identification, and to first generation college students, just to name a few additional groups. For the purposes of this report, diversity encompasses all people, but special attention is paid to those who may face a structural or institutional barrier to succeeding at Texas A&M University as a student, faculty, or staff member.

To create an environment that supports diversity, there are several possible initiatives which can be undertaken. The landscape of higher education provides plenty of evidence to support this claim with several programs, events, demonstrations, offices, staff, budgets, and research dollars all in support of diversity. Texas A&M University is no exception with many well-functioning diversity initiatives in place. However, while the number of initiatives currently ongoing at Texas A&M is indeed important and impressive, to date, there has not been a systematic examination of the breadth and depth of initiatives. An examination of the existing diversity initiatives can serve a number of ends. First, to improve with regard to creating an environment that supports diversity, it is essential that we know exactly what we *currently do* to support diversity. Further, it is important to know if what we currently do is actually successful in creating the desired outcome, so that successful practices and strategies can be replicated in other units.

Second, by understanding the breadth and effect of diversity initiatives, there is an opportunity to collaborate and cooperate among units that are seeking similar outcomes. However, to date there are not many examples of cooperation and collaboration, largely because most units are unaware of the diversity initiatives that occur in other units or on other parts of campus. This phenomenon is not new, and continues to plague higher education in many ways beyond just diversity work. George Kuh (1996) referred to this problem as a *functional silo*, which refers to how most institutions in higher education operate in a way which creates vertical structures that prevent sharing widely across units and colleges. Many such silos currently exist at Texas A&M University. Working to minimize functional silos can have a profound effect on our campus by opening doors for new avenues of collaboration and cooperation in support of diversity. Rather than each unit reinventing their own wheel, we can all benefit from the unit that has already invented an effective wheel.

To address this need for a comprehensive understanding of the existing diversity initiatives, the Office of the Vice President and Associate Provost for Diversity has undertaken an effort to understand and document each diversity initiative that occurs at

Texas A&M University. Having documented all of the diversity initiatives<sup>1</sup>, we are in a unique position to begin a much-needed, university-wide conversation regarding the impact and efficacy of our investments in diversity and how our efforts elevate our broader goals.

To fully appreciate the breadth and scope of the diversity initiatives occurring, we have met with all the people who coordinate diversity initiatives to learn: what their initiative seeks to accomplish, how they judge the efficacy of the initiative, and what possibilities exist for collaboration or replication of the initiative. Following these meetings, a thematic analysis of the initiatives was conducted to understand and synthesize efforts.

As will be evident below, there was an emphasis on not only understanding the specifics of the initiatives, but also understanding if and how initiatives are assessed. Assessment is critical, as this provides data to demonstrate the efficacy of an initiative. “Data can identify underlying problems and help change common misconceptions, [and] add legitimacy to diversity initiatives across campus...” (Kezar & Eckel, 2005, p. 16). Put another way, to realize our diversity goals, we must *measure what we value, and value what we measure*.

### **Observations**

First, students appear to have the most frequent opportunities for learning about diversity and difference in multiple venues. Unfortunately, faculty and staff appear to have far fewer opportunities to learn and engage around diversity issues. Further, among those opportunities for faculty and staff, there are very few that are institutionalized through daily practice. Rather, many of these opportunities exist as network groups, which have a varied impact since these opportunities are largely coordinated by volunteers who have other full time responsibilities.

Second, all of the diversity initiatives that occur are well intentioned and cover content which appears to be important to supporting/educating around areas of diversity. However, examples of assessments which demonstrate the efficacy and value of the initiatives is lacking. Much of the data gathered regarding initiatives are “dashboard indicators” (such as attendance, yield, or budget, which do not uncover the most important information regarding the success of an initiative, but rather are descriptive data about the initiative) or are anecdotal data (based on the opinion of the person coordinating the initiative with information gathered through informal, unstructured conversations with participants). Further, few records or reports are written regarding the initiatives, the success of the initiative, and suggested improvements. Taken together, there are too few examples of initiatives that have gathered meaningful data and made appropriate changes to improve the initiative, and documented this process. Given this, it is difficult for the Office of the Vice President and Associate Provost for Diversity to speak cogently and comprehensively about how our many efforts advance our diversity interests.

---

<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that while we have attempted to capture all of the diversity initiatives at Texas A&M University, there are likely some we have missed, so we call on the campus community to help us fill-in any gaps that may appear. Please email us at [diversity@tamu.edu](mailto:diversity@tamu.edu).

Third, most all of the diversity initiatives have a desired outcome, or reason that they exist. Based on our analysis, there were six themes that emerged to characterize these initiatives: *recruitment*, which are activities that occur to increase the presence of diversity at TAMU for students, faculty, and staff; *retention*, which are activities that occur to assist in maintaining a diverse student, faculty, and staff; *awareness*, which are activities that seek to create or raise the consciousness about diversity issues; *skill building*, which are activities that seek to provide participants practical skills; *climate enhancement*, which are administrative processes that are in place to enhance the environment of a particular unit to foster inclusion or elevate diversity as a priority; and *outreach*, which are activities that attempt provide a service or an educational exercise that reaches beyond Texas A&M University to the broader community. Based upon the current documented initiatives, there are 55 recruitment activities, 37 retention activities, 37 awareness activities, 48 skill building activities, 14 climate enhancement activities, and 30 outreach activities. While we appear to have many strong recruitment activities, our climate enhancement activities are noticeably lacking and present themselves as an area for growth as we continue to pursue our commitment to diversity.

Fourth, there are many different types of initiatives and interactions that support diversity at Texas A&M University. Indeed, activities ranging from a conversation between a Resident Advisor and a first-year student about diversity, to formal reports generated regarding the presence of people of color and women at the university, we run the gamut of possible initiatives. However, in documenting these initiatives it became clear that the most important types of initiatives to investigate and document are those initiatives which are institutionalized. For our purposes, institutionalized initiatives can be understood as those “*that integrate diversity into the structure, culture, and fabric of the institution,*” (Kezar, 2007, p. 413). These initiatives effect how daily business is conducted. These initiatives are of particular interest since these are the programs which are sustainable and can effect an organization on a larger scale than perhaps an episodic event or program. From our analysis, we uncovered seven themes which emerged as important for diversity initiatives to be institutionalized. This does not mean that all initiatives succeed in encompassing each of these seven areas, but rather these different practices emerged from particularly impactful initiatives.

1. A clear focus on a set of intended outcomes
2. A concrete method for delivery of intended outcomes
3. The initiative is focused on a clearly defined audience
4. The methods of delivery are examined to ensure that they are successfully producing the desired outcomes
5. The initiatives take advantage of opportunities for collaboration across the university
6. There is clear and consistent support from the leadership of the organization
7. Able to secure continuous funding for the initiative or successful in obtaining external funding

Taken together, these themes constitute the important criteria that exemplars utilize to institutionalize diversity. To make each of these areas more accessible, a brief example of each will be shared, based on the data gathered through interviews conducted.

### **A clear focus on a set of intended outcomes**

*Clues Learning Community, Department of Multicultural Services*

The CLUES learning community is a sophomore learning community which collaborates with the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences to create a student learning experience focused on leadership, diversity/sensitivity, and multiculturalism. Each Fall, there is a course called Diverse Leadership and Cultural Exploration (combined with a lab) wherein students learn theoretical concepts of diversity and leadership, and are given the opportunity for interactive exploration and self reflection regarding diversity. In the Spring, the course (Practicing Diverse Leadership and Cultural Exploration) focuses more heavily on employing the theories learned in the Fall. There are several out-of-the-classroom learning experiences built into this learning community and formal assessments are conducted at different times to ensure that the community is meeting the needs of students and that students are growing and learning. The specific outcomes for this community are:

*The students will:*

1. Explore the complex ways in which culture impacts leadership and examine how this complexity is reflected in our own stories.
2. Analyze the effects that racism, sexism, privilege, ethnocentrism, and other biases have on access to leadership opportunities.
3. Appreciate cross-cultural differences, enhancing their capacity for healthy relationships.
4. Develop an understanding of basic leadership theories and development.
5. Apply leadership and professional development competencies.
6. Feel enabled through peer and administrative support systems impacting matriculation and graduation from Texas A&M University.
7. Create a blueprint enabling them to establish and progress towards their personal and professional goals.

Outcomes represent a critical step in demonstrating the efficacy of any initiative, but in particular a diversity initiative. Diversity can mean many things to different people, so it is important that an initiative be tightly focused on intended outcomes, so that the purpose and impact do not become diluted by trying to be all things to all people. Diversity is institutionalized in this way because all people within an organization or unit are focused on the same outcomes.

### **A concrete method for delivery of intended outcomes**

*The Center for Disability and Development, College of Education*

The Center is focused on improving education services and outcomes as well as enhancing community quality of life for individuals with disabilities and their families through research, education, and service. The Center has identified as its focus:

1. Providing *community services and outreach* for individuals with disabilities and their families, and those who support them.

2. Conducting *research and evaluation* to improve school services and outcomes and increase the quality of community living for people with disabilities.
3. Developing tools for better *information dissemination* to people with disabilities.
4. Offering disability-related *graduate studies and interdisciplinary training*.

Importantly, for each of these focus areas there are specific initiatives which are designed to accomplish these goals. For example, within the community service and outreach focus area there are four initiatives: 1. Camp LIFE, which is a camp for children with disabilities, where university students are counselors. This camp brings the community to Texas A&M campus which serves to solidify the bond between the community and the university. 2. Family Support Network (FSN), which is a resource network for families with a family member who has a disability. The FSN also provides monthly informational meetings and a Disability Resource Fair. Again, members of the community are brought to the campus community for these events. 3. Texas Statewide Leadership Forum, which is an opportunity for young people with disabilities to receive leadership training and advocacy skills. The students are impacted by not only the training, but the ability to meet with legislators, create an action plan, and interact with a mentor who helps keep the student on task to accomplish their goals. 4. Gear-Up, which is a six year funded project with Bryan ISD, where a partnership was created with a number of community entities and the schools to assist students (in particular those who would be first generation to college, students of color, or students with disabilities). The goal is to study whether students who have a community connection and a strong support group are more likely to enroll in post-secondary institutions and are retained in school. This is another example of the partnership between the university and the community.

By ensuring clear avenues for content delivery or accomplishment, a commitment to diversity is realized in thought and practice. Establishing multiple practices to support a goal serves to more fully institutionalize diversity into an organization or unit.

### **The initiative is focused on a clearly defined audience**

#### *100% Targeted Initiatives, College of Engineering*

The College of Engineering has designed several student initiatives around the themes of recruitment, retention, and outreach. The College of Engineering has demonstrated how initiatives which focus on providing opportunities for underserved populations (racial, socio-economic, gender, etc.) are an important part of the daily work of the college.

For example, the recruitment initiatives alone place the College of Engineering among the campus leaders because of the focus on specific audiences. Their activities include:

1. There is a comprehensive Engineering 12 (E12) program which targets students from 12 high schools that have a reputation for producing academically well-prepared students as well as a high percentage of students from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds (racial and socio-economic). There are several initiatives that occur with the E12 institutions, which include campus visits, regional receptions, and summer camps, each of which is designed to assist students and showcase Texas A&M as an avenue for college.
2. The Women Exploring Engineering Summer Camp, is camp targeted specifically for high school women who are juniors and seniors with an interest in math, science, or engineering. The camp helps to introduce the possibility of engineering as a career, the possibility of attending Texas A&M, and includes hands-on learning experiences and sessions on work/life balance and a history of women in engineering.
3. There is a collaborative program with TAMU-International, which assists TAMUI students who are enrolled in their pre-engineering program to complete an engineering degree at TAMU by transferring to College Station to finish the program. Each summer the College of Engineering hosts 25 TAMUI students for a two week camp to participate in engineering projects and competitions, as well as to generate interest in coming to TAMU to complete their degree.
4. To assist the College of Engineering in the recruitment of well prepared students (students from the National Achievement Scholars and the National Hispanic Scholars), there is an Engineering Advisory Council (EAC) which is comprised of CEOs and other invested constituents who work closely with the college. Each member of the EAC is given the names of two students (from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds) to make personal contact and talk about the possibilities that exist at Texas A&M University.
5. Within the College of Engineering, there are several student organizations which assist the college with the recruitment efforts by sitting on student panels, staffing resources tables, attending conferences, meeting with perspective students, and calling students directly. These initiatives focus on encouraging students to consider Texas A&M. Each of these student organizations receives support from the college.
6. The College of Engineering takes advantage of the many scholarships to recruit underrepresented students including: CONNECTS, which is a scholarship for those with demonstrated potential; the Foundation Excellence Awards; the Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation; the Strategic Recruitment Fund; and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board Scholarship for Engineers. Once students receive a scholarship they are required to reside in a living-learning community, which for Engineering is Mosher Hall.

Each of these initiatives is not only impressive because of the strong focus on underrepresented populations, but also because of the time, energy, and

resources spent in support of diversity. In this way, diversity appears to truly be sewn into the fabric of the College of Engineering.

**The methods of delivery are examined to ensure that they are successfully producing the desired outcomes**

*A Community of Respect program, International Programs Office*

This is a training program designed to serve in-house practitioners who are responsible for presenting diversity training (and improving cross-cultural communication) for their units. This program is designed as a train-the-trainer program.

This two-day program (interactive and lecture) is designed to teach trainers skills for facilitating potentially difficult conversations, the role of values and how values influence how people interpret the behaviors of others, and dealing with potential misunderstanding. Each training session is specifically tailored to meet the needs of the unique audience being trained.

To best understand what is needed out of a training, and what value is added for the trainers, there is a pre-training assessment, post-training assessment, and a follow-up post-training assessment (that occurs about 2-3 months following the session). The pre-training assessment helps to determine the content that will need to be covered in the training to best meet the needs of the group. The first post-training assessment focuses on the skills and content that was covered in the training, to ensure that the needs of the group were met. The second post-training assessment focuses on follow-up and how the facilitators have been able to utilize the content. Each of these assessments provides information to help refine the program to make the information as accessible as possible for practitioners.

The Community of Respect program has identified several outcomes for their training, and each of these outcomes is assessed through the three assessment mechanisms.

**The initiatives take advantage of opportunities for collaboration across the university**

*The Recruitment Coordination Team, Office of Admissions and Records*

The Recruitment Coordination Team (RCT) is the group that brings together the diverse mix of constituents for communication and collaboration regarding recruiting students. In an effort to provide a comprehensive, well-coordinated effort, Admissions and Records and the Perspective Student Centers, the Corps of Cadets, Financial Aid and Scholarships, the University Honors Program, Student Affairs, and the colleges, all coordinate their recruitment efforts, so that programs and events are seamless and students can have all of their questions and concerns addressed by well-informed staff. RCT provides leadership in coordinating programs such as Perspective Student Visits, Admitted Student Receptions, and the training of Perspective Student Center Employees.

The Recruitment Coordination Team also works with Former Students to help identify and recruit students as well as generate interest about attending Texas A&M. Specifically, this includes the A&M Clubs, the Texas A&M Hispanic Network, and the Black Former Student Network.

Aside from recruitment issues, RCT works to ensure that the admissions process is highly coordinated with the academic colleges, so that faculty can discuss expectations of incoming students as well as the prerequisite high school coursework (math and writing) and help the colleges recruit a class that meets their enrollment goals.

The RCT is a great example of how different offices with very different foci can work together in the pursuit of a common goal to recruit the best students.

**There is clear and consistent support from the leadership of the organization, including in areas of funding**

*Dean for the College of Liberal Arts*

Each department within the College of Liberal Arts has a Diversity Committee, with representation on the larger College Diversity Committee. These committees exist to stimulate programs, share successful strategies, and brainstorm new initiatives.

Additionally, the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts (CLA) has established a reward structure based upon the following three criteria: National Prominence, Diversity, and Internationalization. For the Diversity area, several possible initiatives are measured and considered in determining success in Diversity, including: Success in recruiting and mentoring faculty, graduate students, and undergraduate students from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds; the number of speakers, programs, and events which target diversity specifically; number of hosted speakers from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds; departmental successes in adding diversity to the department's curricular offerings; programs to encourage graduate study by TAMU undergraduates from under-represented groups; participation in programs such as *Pathways to the Doctorate* or in programs that encourage undergraduates to consider graduate programs; department participation with Women's Studies, Hispanic Studies, and Africana Studies minor programs; hosting conferences, workshops, or seminars on diversity-related topics; successful department programs to enhance the climate relative to diversity in the department, among the faculty, and in the student body; and faculty or students receiving diversity awards.

Finally, the college has many Interdisciplinary programs such as Africana Studies, Hispanic Studies, and Women's Studies, which offer the possibility for joint appointments in the college and provide an avenue for emphasizing a diverse curriculum in the college.

Each of these diversity-related initiatives have been supported by the Dean in both words and actions, which has provided an example of how diversity can be recognized, measured, and rewarded.

### **Able to secure continuous funding for the initiative or successful in obtaining external funding**

#### *Mays Business School and the College of Science*

There are a number of academic programs that are able to ensure funding from internal and external funding sources. Specifically, two are noteworthy: the College of Science and the Mays Business School. The Mays Business School, in collaboration with Ernst & Young and Boeing, have created a summer experience called BCAP (Business Careers Awareness Program) for high achieving students from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds. These students come to campus for a week to learn valuable lessons about how businesses operate and how business decisions are made. These students are also exposed to the top notch faculty, facilities, and experiences available if they choose to attend Texas A&M University in the future.

Similarly, the College of Science has received National Science Foundation (NSF) funding for a couple of their important initiatives. In particular, the S-STEM (Scholarship in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) program is an opportunity for students from Palo Alto Junior College, which has a high number of racially underrepresented people. This initiative helps those students who are interested in transferring to Texas A&M to pursue a Science degree by funding all of their unmet financial needs. Another NSF-funded initiative is the Summer Scholars REU program, which recruits racially underrepresented students to come to Texas A&M to conduct a summer research project with our faculty. This experience allows students a glimpse into what graduate school will be like, and showcases Texas A&M University as a possible institution for their graduate studies. A third NSF-funded initiative is the GK12 program, which assigns College of Science graduate students to the Bryan ISD schools (those with the greatest need) to assist the teachers. The schools that are typically in greatest need have high numbers of students from low socio-economic backgrounds and from underrepresented racial backgrounds.

Ensuring continuous funding for an initiative is critical to ensuring the future of an initiative. An important consideration for any college or unit is how to spend and leverage their limited resources. These programs are exemplars (along with several others) because of their commitment finding external dollars to help offset the cost of their programs that pursue diversity.

These initiatives are just a few of a great number of important initiatives at Texas A&M University. In the interest of collegiality and ensuring that we are working beyond functional silos, we have compiled a brief synopsis of all the diversity initiatives, so that the entire campus community can benefit from the work of our colleagues. This

information is housed in an online database which can be found on our website:  
<http://diversity.tamu.edu/>.

The intention for this report and database is threefold. First, we would like offices and units to have the most up-to-date information regarding diversity initiatives, so that they may plan, assess, collaborate, and coordinate their current and future diversity work. The second intention is to enhance the broader conversation about diversity at Texas A&M. We hope that when considered with the campus climate data, this information can serve as a catalyst to have an informed conversation regarding our challenges and opportunities. Third, we would like this report and database to assist those who coordinate diversity initiatives, by providing ideas to inform practice, potential partnerships for collaboration, and possibilities for replication of initiatives.

### References

Kezar, A. (2007). Tools for a time and place: phased leadership strategies to institutionalize a diversity agenda. *The Review of Higher Education*, 30(4), 413-439.

Kezar, A. J. & Eckel, P. D. (2005). *Leadership strategies for advancing campus diversity: Advice from experienced presidents*. Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education.

Kuh, G. D. (1996). Guiding principles of creating seamless learning environments for undergraduates. *Journal of College Student Development* 37(2), 135-48.