

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE INCLUSION & DIVERSITY TASK FORCE

September, 2017

INTRODUCTION

Austin College has increased in diversity throughout its history as in 1849 it was founded to educate young, White, Presbyterian men to become ministers and today is a 21st century liberal arts college educating students of various ethnicities, genders, and faiths (or no faith) to become leaders in various fields. As noted in the January 2017 Austin College Magazine, AC's "diverse and united" nature aligns with its mission. In fact, three of the six factors mentioned in the mission relate to diversity. Thus, valuing, promoting, and understanding diversity are fundamental to the College's identity. However, diversity and inclusion are not synonymous. The Austin College community has members who vary with respect to gender, disability status, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, religious orientation, and socioeconomic status, i.e., it is diverse. However, do people who vary in these identities feel equally valued by and free to participate in the life of the college, i.e., is it inclusive? This question and the extent of the diversity on campus were at the heart of what the Task Force set out to discover. We collected and examined internal and external data as part of our investigation.

STUDENT BODY SUBCOMMITTEE

Selected Key Findings

- Asian and Black students are overrepresented while male students are underrepresented in student leadership positions
- First-generation college students and male students were underrepresented among students visiting the Counseling Center while White students and Black students were overrepresented.
- A survey of first-year students and sophomores found that economic reasons (i.e., not enough financial aid, needing to work, being concerned about student debt) were the primary reasons respondents said they may have difficulty staying at Austin College.
- Compared to 89 peer institutions
 - AC (2%) has a significantly higher percentage of students registered with disabilities than its peers (1.68%).
 - AC has a higher proportion relative to the average of its peer institutions of American Indian/Native American students (1% vs. 0.34%), Hispanic students (16% vs. 6.97%) and Asian/ Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students (15% vs. 3.63%).
 - AC has a lower proportion relative to the average of its peers of White students (58% vs. 69.10%), students of two or more races (1% vs 3.08%) and race unknown students (1% vs. 4.17%).
 - It does not differ from its peers in proportion of Black students (6% vs. 7.83%).

Recommendations

- Foster positive perception of counseling services among Asian and lower SES students
- Increase local community awareness of the diversity on campus

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- Have more structured coordination between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs to foster incoming students' connection with and persistence at the College

CURRICULUM SUBCOMMITTEE

Selected Key Findings

- Area studies at Austin College have increased in diversity at least since the 1970s.
- Of 17 peer institutions
 - 14 (82%) have a formal diversity component as part of their general education programs,
 - more than half require multiple courses to fulfill the requirement.

Recommendation

- Establish diversity competency graduation requirement
 - *Component 1: Global Diversity* - The purpose of the Global Diversity Competency Requirement is to foster every students' learning in an academic context of material on people and/or people groups outside of the European or post-colonial North American cultural context. Such courses focus on cultures indigenous to Africa, the Americas, Asia, Australia and/or Oceania.
 - *Component 2: Systems of Power, Privilege, & Inequality* - Students will interrogate questions of justice, equity, and identity in relation to issues such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion, socioeconomic status, and/or (dis)ability in order to provide context for critiquing institutional systems, public discourse, policies, social norms, and/or human behavior and challenge assumptions about how human society functions.

This proposal is currently under consideration by the faculty as part of a larger curriculum review. After the first round of discussions, it received widespread support to move forward second only to the proposal to review the quantitative graduation requirement.

KEY OFFICES SUBCOMMITTEE

Selected Key Findings

- Focus groups regarding LGBT students, students with diverse abilities and student-athletes revealed that generally students in these respective groups felt supported by staff and faculty. However, at times they experienced micro-aggressions from their peers.
- Of 17 peer schools, 15 of them – 88% - have an Office or Center relating to inclusion and diversity (e.g., Office of Intercultural Student Engagement, Center for Inclusion and Campus Involvement, Diversity Center, and Office of Multicultural Affairs).

Recommendations

- Provide more education and resources.
- Maintain a Committee under the purview of the President (as opposed to the creation of an Office or Center) to be responsible for these initiatives.
- Support more consistent, transparent, and open channels of communication.

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- Increase community capital by continuing to educate ourselves, and making sure to keep everyone in the conversation.

WORKFORCE SUBCOMMITTEE

Selected Key Findings

- Employee satisfaction did not differ depending upon sex, ethnicity, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, first-generation college status, ability status, age, household income, or faculty / staff status.
- Low staff morale was largely due to feeling like they were treated as second-class citizens, particularly in comparison to the ways faculty are treated.
- Neither voluntary nor involuntary employee terminations differed by race or sex.
- Compared to 17 peer institutions, Austin College has lower percentages of male, Asian, Black, and biracial / multiethnic non-instructional staff, while having higher percentages of female, American Indian, and White non-instructional staff.
- Compared to 17 peer institutions, Austin College has lower percentages of female, Black, White, and biracial / multiethnic faculty, while having higher percentages of male, American Indian, and Hispanic faculty.

Recommendations

- Increasing the diversity of the workforce requires that searches expand beyond traditional applicant pools.
- Identify specific strategies and tactics that may improve the community understanding of the richness of our diverse workforce and student body.
- Make employee training available by HR and mandated by senior leaders where appropriate, such as for employees with little to no experience in highly diverse environments.
- Authorize and promote Staff Council or some revised version of it to serve as a voice to surface broad staff concerns and issues to senior leaders, just as the FEC does for faculty and as similar staff organizations do at other colleges and universities.
- Have HR better publicize the grievance procedures that exist as well as the Campus Conduct Hot Line.

TASK FORCE CO-CHAIRS' COMMENTS

Points of Note

- Physical Plant consistently follows guidelines for the Americans with Disabilities Act and maintains facilities up to those codes. Wide-scale changes to the physical plant would require special funding.
- The data regarding student perceptions of the campus climate will not be available until August 2017 when the National Survey of Student Engagement results are back. The Task Force report will be updated once they are available.

Additional Recommendations from the Task Force Co-Chairs

- Reinforce Title IX training and guidelines for reporting grievances for students, staff and faculty some are ignorant of, confused about, or concerned about the reporting incidences of sexual misconduct and other grievances.

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- Have Institutional Research create and maintain a diversity dashboard for Board of Trustees and Senior Leadership Team.
- Develop and communicate clear protocols to faculty and staff regarding interventions for students with seizures.
- Develop and communicate clear protocols for students to get accommodations for diagnosed psychological disorders from the Counseling Center.
- Have Human Resources take a larger role in developing and updating employee training regarding diversity.
- Re-establish annual Staff Development Day making sure it includes regular diversity training opportunities for staff - possibly the Wednesday between Jan Term and Spring semester.
- Implement a compensation study for staff.

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COMBINED LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Student Body

- Foster positive perception of counseling services among Asian and lower SES students.
- Increase local community awareness of the diversity on campus.
- Have more structured coordination between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs to foster incoming students' connection with and persistence at the College.

Curriculum

- Establish graduation requirement with two components: 1) Global Diversity and 2) Systems of Power, Privilege, & Inequality.

Key Offices

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- Maintain a Committee under the purview of the President (as opposed to the creation of an Office or Center) to be responsible for these initiatives.
- Support more consistent, transparent, and open channels of communication.
- Increase community capital by continuing to educate ourselves, and making sure to keep everyone in the conversation.

Workforce

- Increasing the diversity of the workforce requires that searches expand beyond traditional applicant pools.
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