

University of Texas at Dallas: A Call To Action

Introduction

This document serves as an *initial** list of action items presented to university leadership toward creating increased support to Black faculty and staff. This list was created following the Black Faculty and Staff Alliance’s surveying of the general body for feedback regarding 1) experiences of anti-Black racism and 2) suggestions for racial justice efforts that could support an increase of recruitment and retention of Black faculty and staff. The Black Faculty and Staff Alliance created an oversight committee to assess the feedback collected and organize the needs addressed through the survey.

*It is important to note that the recommendations below do not constitute an exhaustive list of potential measures for university leadership to consider. We encourage regular and ongoing dialogue and evaluation to ensure that implementation of these recommendations be done in collaboration with the members of the Black Faculty and Staff Alliance. It would also benefit university leadership to conduct outreach to Black UT Dallas faculty and staff who may not be connected or involved with the Black Faculty and Staff Alliance. Furthermore, the Black Faculty and Staff Alliance stands in support of the Call To Action that was submitted to President Benson by the Black Student Body and its allies, encouraging changes which would enhance their student experience.

Feedback and questions related to this document should be directed to the Black Faculty and Staff Alliance Oversight Committee.

BFSA Oversight Committee Members:

Brianna Hobbs, Career Services (President, Black Faculty and Staff Alliance)

Cara Aronson, Engineering and Computer Science

Malika Buchanan, Facilities Management

Dr. Kimberly Burdine, Student Counseling Center

Sondrea Dorsey, Enrollment Services

Rosalyn Green, McDermott Scholars

Dr. P. Brandon Johnson, Office of Undergraduate Education

Brianna Nichols, Student Programs

Asa Randolph, Naveen Jindal School of Management

Macnery Siner, University Recreation

Arleen Smith, Behavioral & Brain Sciences

Carmen Tanner, Office of Financial Aid

Cameron Woods, Career Services

Implementation Matrix

The following implementation matrix serves as an overview of the items addressed in this Call To Action document. In order to assist in the implementation of these action items, we have prioritized them in three phases. We believe that the items listed in Phase I are necessary in order to communicate an immediate and measurable commitment to support Black faculty and staff by university leadership. Though we organize these items in phases, we strongly encourage ongoing reflection, re-evaluation, and accountability.

We present this matrix to facilitate the planning and implementation process. Also, the timeline included in this matrix gives guidance for Black Faculty and Staff Alliance members to follow up with university administration to review progress toward completing these items. To this end, we have identified the respective university office, department, person, or committee which we feel has stewardship to guide the completion of each action item. We are open to additional suggestions regarding responsible parties, as others may perhaps more closely align with the action item than we have indicated.

We have enumerated these offices in order to clarify that it is not the purview of the Black Faculty and Staff Alliance to execute these actions. Rather, we stand as an accountability arm to ensure updates are received and progress toward completion is documented.

Table 1.				
<i>Matrix for Call to Action Implementation</i>				
	Phase I (2020-2021)	Phase II (2021-2022)	Phase III (2022-2023)	Responsible Department/ Committee/Person
Actions				
Mandatory supervisor training	X			HR, Equity & Compliance, VP for Academic Affairs & Provost, VP & Chief of Staff
Diversity training for all faculty, staff, and students	X	X	X	HR, Diversity & Equity Committee, Institutional Diversity
Covid-19 safety	X			VP for Facilities & Economic Development
Compensated time for ERG meetings	X			HR, ODCE, VP for Academic Affairs & Provost

Dedicated BFSA/ERG Staff Council seat		X		VP & Chief of Staff, Staff Council Executive Board
Compensation equity analysis	X			VP & Chief of Staff, HR, Diversity & Equity Committee
Increased engagement with university leaders	X			UTD Cabinet, Executive Leadership Team
Supervisor evaluation by direct reports		X		VP & Chief of Staff, HR, VP for Academic Affairs & Provost, Deans
Annual Juneteenth celebration	X			UT Dallas President, VP for Academic Affairs & Provost, VP for Student Affairs
Increased visibility of the Diversity and Equity Committee		X		Diversity & Equity Committee, LOV Task Force
Increased Black faculty and staff hiring			X	VP & Chief of Staff, VP for Academic Affairs & Provost, Deans, Department of Faculty Diversity, HR
Measurable Black faculty and staff recruitment/hiring benchmarks	X			VP & Chief of Staff, HR, OSPA, Diversity & Equity Committee
Campus climate survey		X		ODCE, OSPA, Diversity & Equity Committee
Increase of Black counselors in EAP program			X	UT Dallas President, HR
Intentional recruitment and enrollment of Black students		X		Asst. Provost & Senior Director of Enrollment Management, Diversity & Equity Committee
Easy-to-find diversity statements	X			UT Dallas President

Items for Immediate Action, Planning & Implementation

The following list provides a description and rationale for each of the action items in the implementation matrix. It also includes the corresponding university personnel or department which has stewardship for completing the associated action.

Training, safety, and professional development

1) Mandatory recurring supervisor training

Supervisors of faculty and staff need frequent and required training to ensure their continued fair and equitable treatment of their direct reports. It is essential that training be conducted at regular intervals, perhaps resembling a recertification process for a type of diversity credentialing.

This training can be virtual or in-person and needs to include a testing or assessment component. It should be sourced from an outside agency with content which has preferably been vetted by the ERG Council and/or Diversity and Equity Committee. Topics should include: anti-racism, sensitivity, unconscious bias, and other relevant areas to address the needs of a diverse workforce. Completion of this training should be documented on the employee annual evaluation.

Responsible Office/Department/UT Dallas Official: Vice President and Chief of Staff, Office of Human Resources, Office of Equity and Compliance

2) Diversity and inclusion training for staff, faculty, and students

In addition to supervisors, all faculty, staff, and students should participate in some type of regular diversity and inclusion training. Though supervisors can set the tone for their department, it is incumbent upon the University for the entire UTD community to not only be exposed to, but be educated on these topics. Training can be completed online or in-person and should be at least strongly encouraged if not required as the supervisor training would be. Topics should include: anti-racism, sensitivity, unconscious bias, and other relevant areas to address the needs of a diverse workforce and student body.

Responsible Office/Department/UT Dallas Official: Office of Human Resources, Office of Institutional Diversity, Diversity and Equity Committee

3) Covid-19 safety

Ensure that protective gear and resources are available for all Black essential workers including daily disposable masks, or multiple cloth mask, sanitizers, and gloves. Due to the nature and location of their work, some staff do not have access to their email. Therefore, it is paramount these workers are informed through alternative means of

ways in which they can receive the essential protective resources in order to feel secure during their employment with the University.

Responsible Office/Department/UT Dallas Official: Vice President for Facilities and Economic Development

4) Compensated time to attend ERG meetings

Employee Resource Groups play an essential role in the transition and enculturation of Black faculty and staff to UTD. Specifically, as a professional development tool, the Black Faculty and Staff Alliance creates an opportunity for many Black faculty and staff (who might never see each other), to meet, learn, and grow. Black faculty and staff should not have to use their lunch breaks and personal time to attend these meetings, nor to assist in planning for culturally enriching events.

Black Faculty and Staff Alliance members need at least two hours per month allocated to them to attend meetings and events, while officers should have six hours (mirroring Staff Council) for planning and executing BFSA-related activities. Guidelines should also be drafted on how faculty and staff can document the use of those hours to prevent supervisor interference and/or retaliation. To encourage participation by Black faculty, involvement in such activities should be counted toward the service component of their tenure portfolio.

Responsible Office/Department/UT Dallas Official: Vice President for Diversity and Community Engagement, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost, Office of Human Resources

5) Creation of a dedicated Staff Council seat for the BFSA

Dedicated representation of BFSA is needed to ensure the issues and concerns of this ERG are brought to the attention of Staff Council. This also provides an avenue for important Staff Council information to be disseminated back to the ERG population. Alternately, we would encourage inclusion of an ERG district or other means to ensure adequate representation of all ERG's on Staff Council

Responsible Office/Department/UT Dallas Official: Vice President and Chief of Staff, Staff Council Executive Board

Equity and Accountability

6) Comprehensive compensation equity analysis¹

¹ Interactive: The Black and White Higher Education Workforce, College and University Professional Association for Human Resources, <https://www.cupahr.org/knowledge-center/diversity-resources/black-and-white-higher-education-workforce/>

A culture of equity and inclusion must also be represented in the compensation of Black faculty and staff. As such, an additional salary analysis with specific plans to address any pay discrepancies needs to be conducted. This analysis should compare Black faculty and staff with their white and non-Black counterparts of comparable levels of education and years of experience. Accountability measures must also be created for supervisors who are found to violate equitable hiring practices by demonstrating bias or preferential hiring.

Responsible Office/Department/UT Dallas Official: Vice President and Chief of Staff, Office of Human Resources, Diversity and Equity Committee

7) Increased engagement with university leaders

University leaders should challenge themselves to become more in tune with the needs and concerns of the Black faculty staff on campus. More opportunities should be created to engage in dialogue and listening through attendance of Black Faculty and Staff Alliance meetings or inviting representatives to Cabinet meetings.

Responsible Office/Department/UT Dallas Official: UT Dallas Cabinet, Executive Leadership Team

8) Supervisor evaluation by direct reports

Direct reports should be given the opportunity to evaluate their supervisors in a respectful and constructive manner, protected from possible retaliation. A 360 review of assistant-director-level and higher would be helpful with this. Such feedback should be included in the supervisors' annual review. Often, the next-level supervisor is unaware of the behavior of their direct report to the lower level employees, allowing the behavior to continue unaddressed. Staff also need a trusted, confidential process for reporting discriminatory or other unprofessional behavior from their supervisors. Whatever current mechanism exists does not seem to be adequate.

Responsible Office/Department/UT Dallas Official: Vice President and Chief of Staff, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost, Deans, Office of Human Resources

9) Annual Juneteenth celebration

The Juneteenth holiday should be celebrated as a campus-wide event rather than relegated to a program solely out of the Multicultural Center. Such a campus celebration should resemble efforts to plan and execute the annual holiday celebrations. The Juneteenth holiday is deserving of more recognition, as Texas is the home of this historical event and it should be celebrated as such.

Furthermore, in recognition of the colloquial importance of the Juneteenth name, it should be changed on the academic calendar from "Emancipation Day" to "Juneteenth".

Responsible Office/Department/UT Dallas Official: UT Dallas President, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost, Vice President for Student Affairs

10) Increase visibility of and communication with the Diversity and Equity Committee

The efforts of the Diversity and Equity Committee should be more readily advertised to the university community. Furthermore, channels to communicate suggestions from this Committee should be created or strengthened. Additionally, a *paid* student advisory team should be created to provide ongoing consultation to university administration from a student perspective.

Responsible Office/Department/UT Dallas Official: Diversity and Equity Committee, Living Our Values Task Force

Recruitment, Hiring, and Retention

11) Increase hiring of Black faculty and staff, necessitating a thorough review and update of HR policy and procedures related to hiring and recruitment

For several years, the percentage of Black faculty and staff has remained consistent, while other minority groups have shown nominal increases. An extensive review of faculty and staff recruitment and hiring methodology is needed to determine why there has been such lackluster growth. Incorporating alternative job boards for posting positions is a must. Furthermore, there must be strict training and enforcement of the principles set forth in the “Resource Guide for Recruiting a Diverse Workforce”² during each search.

Responsible Office/Department/UT Dallas Official: Vice President and Chief of Staff, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost, Deans, Office of Human Resources, Department of Faculty Diversity

12) Create measurable benchmarks to assess the university’s efforts to increase the number of Black faculty, staff, and students

Assessment is an integral component of University operations. There are several “quantitative targets” identified in the UT Dallas Strategic Plan. Each target creates a measurable goal to be assessed. Similar targets should exist for measuring the efficacy of recruitment and retention efforts for Black faculty, staff, and students.

The Diversity and Equity Committee should be tasked with monitoring and reporting the attainment of the to-be-established goals. Additionally, this committee, in concert with the Office of Strategic Planning and Analysis and other university administrators, must create or revise any existing measures for assessing and defining “diversity”.

² A Resource Guide for Recruiting a Diverse Workforce, https://www.utdallas.edu/execsearch/docs/OIEC_Recruitment_Guide_Staff_2017.pdf

Responsible Office/Department/UT Dallas Official: Diversity and Equity Committee, Vice President and Chief of Staff, Office of Strategic Planning and Analysis, Office of Human Resources

13) University and department campus climate surveys

According to the Institutional Diversity webpage, the last campus climate survey that was made available to the public was conducted in 2010. A subsequent climate survey was administered and reported on in 2016³ by the Diversity and Equity Committee. However, that report is not as easily accessible as its 2010 predecessor. Due to the interval since the last survey was conducted, and exacerbated by the recent cultural and social changes, it is imperative to conduct a new climate survey as soon as possible to guide the decision-making process regarding diversity and inclusiveness at UT Dallas. Furthermore, climate surveys should be administered at regular intervals with the results made easily available to the public.

Responsible Office/Department/UT Dallas Official: Diversity and Equity Committee, Office of Diversity and Community Engagement, Office of Strategic Planning and Analysis

14) Work with the UT Systems to ensure adequate amount of Black counselor options in the EAP program

We recommend that the UT Dallas Human Resources department works with our EAP providers and advocates at the UT System level to ensure an increase in Black counselors/providers on the EAP staff.

As the nation and world continue to navigate difficult yet necessary discussions about race, the emotional turmoil that these conversations create must be mitigated. Those Comets who are doing the hard work of answering questions and experiencing racial injustice must be supported with adequate mental health resources. There is a dearth of mental health professionals offered through the EAP program who can relate to the experiences of Black people. Shared identity can increase the likelihood that mental health providers are sensitive to anti-Black racism and reduce the added stress of the recipient having to educate a provider about these concerns. Offering access to more Black mental health professionals would likely encourage increased use of this resource.

Responsible Office/Department/UT Dallas Official: UT Dallas President, Office of Human Resources

15) Review and amend admission standards to be more intentional in recruiting Black students

³ Diversity and Equity Committee Report on 2016 Climate Survey – Draft II, <https://utdallas.edu/diversity/partners/downloads/Diversity%20and%20Equity%20Survey%20Report%202016.pdf>

Intentional recruitment and enrollment of Black students from the Dallas metro-plex is essential if UT Dallas truly wants to call itself a diverse campus. The creation and bolstering of new and existing pipeline programs will extend the reach of UT Dallas to areas that have previously been overlooked or ignored. The university should increase its presence in the neighboring Black communities and high schools. UT Dallas should also seek partnerships with Black-owned businesses and other community partners to create non-merit scholarships that address room, board, and textbooks. Such ancillary aid should be designed not to negatively affect any financial aid awards.

Responsible Office/Department/UT Dallas Official: Assistant Provost and Senior Director of Enrollment Management, Diversity and Equity Committee

University Administration and Commitment

16) Introduce a pledge or diversity and inclusion statement to the UTD strategic plan, website, and other outward-facing media

Simply put, the university's commitment to fostering inclusivity and creating a truly diverse campus should be outward-facing. Such statements need not reside several clicks into the website or solely on the web page of the Office of Diversity and Community Engagement, but be proudly displayed in easy-to-find locations.

Responsible Office/Department/UT Dallas Official: UT Dallas President

Items for Additional Planning & Implementation

Items for additional planning and implementation impose expenses which likely fall outside of the current fiscal ability of the institution. We propose that the university consider acting on the following as soon as resources are available, with as much urgency as the financial standing of the institution allows. We also encourage immediate reallocation of funds to support many of these efforts, given that the impact of financial strain often disproportionately impacts Black faculty and staff.

- 1) Award grants and scholarships for Black faculty and staff, especially for those in academic programs at UT Dallas (Certificate programs, Masters, PhD program etc.).
- 2) Hire additional Black faculty and staff to support the creation of an African, African Diaspora or Black studies major or minor.
- 3) Hire an external candidate to the position of Staff Ombudsman who would report directly to the President.
- 4) Increase the staff and programming budget for the Office of Diversity and Community Engagement, with emphasis on the Office of Institutional Diversity.
- 5) Increase funding and support for "Operation I am" Undergraduate Success Scholars and other URM student success and retention initiatives.

Accountability

In accordance with the outlined phases in the implementation matrix, the Black Faculty and Staff Alliance requests scheduled updates at either the beginning or end of each semester on the progress of the presented action items. These updates can be provided to the Oversight Committee or the Black Faculty and Staff Alliance general body. Of primary importance is the effort of the designated university official(s) to maintain an open and transparent dialogue regarding the progress of the items.

Questions for Further Consideration

- 1) How do you ensure that merit increases are based on the employee performance rather than a blanket distribution?
- 2) Is there someone who actively reviews for biases in the application and hiring process?
- 3) Besides the initiatives you have already mentioned, what other efforts has the cabinet considered?
- 4) Most, if not all, of UTD's peer and aspirational institutions have a Chief Diversity Officer who operates in only that position, though in some instances they do have a faculty appointment. Could you provide some context as to why the Vice President for Diversity and Community Engagement splits his time serving as Dean of a School?
- 5) What efforts have been made toward enhancing #2 of Strategic Theme One "Improve the recruitment and retention of underrepresented students"? And what benchmarks or other metrics have been established to assess this?