

**Office for Diversity  
2017 Diversity Plan Accountability Report**

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**Unit:** Public Partnership and Outreach (PPO)

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1. **Recruitment.** Assess what you have learned recently from your peers and describe future plans, including barriers, to attain a strong, demonstrable presence of diversity in our faculty, staff, students, and administrators.

To facilitate better recruitment of new employees, Public Partnership and Outreach (PPO) adopted these peer strategies:

- PPO will network about potential new hires within diverse community groups with whom we work and are engaged with community leaders.
- PPO will adopt peer strategies by advertising PPO jobs to audiences beyond BCS where we have a Texas A&M presence, and reach out to our former student networks, ensuring advertising within diverse professional networks appropriate to the job duties.
- The PPO leadership will investigate the possibility of diversity internships that could mirror the AAUP national program for the University Press, Educational Broadcast Services and Academic Affairs Communications.

Status of these Strategies:

Because our ability to fill vacant positions was frozen until September 2017, PPO has not yet devised a systematic way to address these recruitment strategies. However, for the positions we are now allowed to advertise, supervisors worked on these strategies independently. Two positions in the central office (program manager and administrative assistant) were shared with the leaders of the Women's Former Students, the Black Former Students, and the Aggie Educator's Network as well as being posted with the Hispanic Network through various social media. In addition, they were shared with the BCS Chamber of Commerce Leadership, McAllen community leaders, and PPO leadership responsible for these positions personally reached out to candidates with diverse backgrounds and perspectives to encourage them to apply. One position at the University Press was an internal hire. For a second position, the hiring supervisor reached out to a candidate with a diverse background and perspective who had been a temporary employee from a local agency doing the job in an emergency capacity. Several weeks after posting, that candidate decided not to apply, and the other applications that had been submitted during that time are being evaluated. Because of the desire to fill this position quickly, after reaching out to the diverse individual serving in a temporary capacity, the Press leadership relied on the regular Human Resources processes to encourage diverse applicants to apply. Also, this position is more clerical/administrative and so not something that would normally be posted outside the local area. The University Press plans to implement these strategies with other new hires. Academic Affairs Communications has had two positions open, and while one has been filled through an internal reclassification, the other has not yet been filled. In this search

process the supervisor has additionally advertised in HigherEd Experts job board and a current diverse staff member will be presenting at a national conference soon, which is hoped to raise visibility about the position and potentially attract additional candidates. If the search fails, there are plans to expand the search and advertise the positions through other means.

For diversity internships, the leadership team members have been investigating existing issues and programs in communications, publishing, and broadcasting. The key need identified is sustainable funding to pay for the intern's stipend. However, gathering information from existing programs provides PPO with a framework from which to identify viable models and reasonable funding amounts needed to establish such programs. This has been the focus so far. The next step will be to begin discussions about how to raise such funding. Initial results of our investigations follow:

- Publishing – In 2015, Lee and Low Books did a diversity baseline survey of 34 trade publishers (25.8% response rate of nearly 12,000 publishing employees) which documented an alarming lack of diversity in the publishing industry nationwide. Essentially, 79% of employees are white, and 86% of the executive positions are also held by whites. Women comprise 78% of the publishing staff and 59% of the executive positions. This data led PPO to begin conversations at the leadership level about the potential for Texas A&M and PPO units to provide diversity internships in the publishing field as well as in broadcasting and communications, which face similar demographic challenges. The American Association of University Presses (AAUP) has over several years held multiple sessions at its annual conferences to discuss this concern. They recognize that, while university presses were not included in the Lee and Low Books survey, their diversity statistics are the same or worse. Because of this, AAUP has recommended focusing recruitment efforts on HBCU's and elsewhere to help to attract diverse individuals into the industry through a diversity internship program currently being piloted at several University Presses. The Texas A&M University Press director is tracking how these internships are being implemented and how one could be established at Texas A&M. In addition to tapping into the multicultural organizations on the Texas A&M campus in College Station, it may also be possible to connect with other schools in the Texas A&M system to provide a pipeline for potential interns into such a diversity publishing internship.
- Broadcasting – The NAB Educational Foundation, Sinclair Broadcast Group Inc., and the Society of Broadcast Engineers were contacted about their scholarship and internship programs. There are 6 different scholarships or apprenticeship programs in operation across these, with four housed in the Society of Broadcast Engineers, which is the only one of the groups to recruit both high school and college graduates. Each of the three organizations has provided background information about their programs that could be used as models for such programs in Educational Broadcast Services. Again, there is a potential to consider other Texas A&M campuses for potential interns, but also our two local high schools, one of which has a broadcasting program. It may be possible to identify Texas based or local foundation grant funding to support such high school students in a co-op program, which would also resolve concerns about funding for housing and meals that interns need to address.
- Communications – After exploring options for internships, the Academic Affairs communication group has proposed offering internship positions as a facet of their ongoing practice of hiring undergraduate or graduate students to perform communication functions as part of their creative teams in design, writing, communication, and marketing. Specifically, they will continue to work with the Department of Visualization to recruit diverse candidates for design-related student positions, and investigate establishing similar relationships with the Department of

Communication and the Department of Marketing. They have identified a model internship program already in use by the research communications group that can be applied to any new internships.

In addition, we are in the early stages of identifying funding sources for these internships. One avenue is a PPO collaboration with the Texas A&M Hispanic Network (TAMHN). Currently the TAMHN has a scholarship campaign to raise \$250,000 over the next 2-3 years. One of the areas this money will be used is for internships. There are very few Hispanics in the fields of publishing and broadcasting. We will ask the TAMHN to consider allocating a portion of their money to support interns in these fields. PPO leadership team member Roger Martinez is the primary point of contact with the TAMHN on this project.

Finally, PPO became aware in October that the Academic Affairs Climate and Diversity Committee's Recruitment and Retention subcommittee has been asked to explore issues related to helping division supervisors understand how to advertise job positions broadly to diverse networks. We will be watching closely to see what this subcommittee recommends.

2. **Retention.** Assess what you have learned recently from your peers and describe future plans, including barriers, to retain diversity in our faculty, staff, students, and administrators.

To facilitate better retention of employees, PPO adopted these peer strategies:

- PPO will do a better job of onboarding new employees so they have a clearer understanding of the overall unit, its mission and strategic goals.
- The unit will help new staff connect with various networks both on campus and in the local community and support their participation in these groups

#### Status of these Strategies:

Two members of the PPO leadership team (Martinez and Cooper) have started to research best practices for onboarding new hires (for example HireRite's 10 best practices of onboarding). There will be additional research of best practices through a search of current human resources literature. When the research is complete, we will request additional input from the leadership team and staff of PPO both on findings and their personal thoughts/experience. The next step will be to make recommendations to the leadership for implementation. Once implemented, we will assess the process and identify improvements. Part of the best practices could include connecting new hires with various organizations of interest like the Texas A&M Hispanic Network, Black Former Student Network, religious and faith based organizations, etc.

3. **Unit Climate.** Assess what you have learned recently from your peers, including campus and unit climate assessment data and describe future plans, including barriers, to enhance the educational environment where the opportunity to fully participate does not inappropriately or unintentionally depend on elements of an individual's identity.

To facilitate a better unit climate, PPO adopted these peer strategies:

- Previously mentioned retention strategy of better onboarding new employees.
- Ongoing teambuilding efforts will include creating three staff committees that

cross workgroup boundaries to:

- Plan the annual January staff retreat and staff appreciation events
- Focus on wellness issues
- Explore recognition and leadership efforts

Status of these Strategies:

Ongoing teambuilding effort committees were populated and launched December 2016 and formally introduced to the entire unit in January 2017 at the annual retreat. Each of the three teams is led by a leadership team member. Overall, this effort has engaged 23 staff members from across the four major workgroups as subcommittee members. This represents about 34% of the total unit membership.

To date, the appreciation committee (7 members) has been the least engaged of the three committees. Most work has been accomplished via e-mail with minimal participation by team members. The chair of the group is reassessing how best to engage participation in this year's events. Even with the short timeframe to execute the two events that were organized and implemented by this group in the past year (the January Staff Retreat and the April staff appreciation luncheon in the press box at Kyle Field) both events went well and received good feedback from staff participants. The wellness committee (8 members) has been very active, reminding the unit regularly about health and wellness activities and resources that are available on campus and in the local community. They also organized three "Walk Across Texas" teams, facilitated a Money Education Class for unit employees, and encouraged participation in the 2017 Chamber of Commerce Watercooler Run/Walk. More PPO staff participated this year in the chamber event than in the past as a result of this encouragement. The recognition and leadership committee (8 members) raised awareness of awards available to PPO staff, which resulted in several nomination packages, netting three major awards: Two Tradition of Excellence and one ACE Diversity Staff Award. The group also launched a recognition newsletter (with an anticipated minimum triannual distribution) in which individual and workgroup efforts are affirmed and applauded. While the goal is to celebrate the staff (addressing the Academic Affairs climate survey finding that staff don't feel appreciated), the newsletter has had the additional benefit of making people in the unit aware of the diverse work roles of their colleagues. This subcommittee is also implementing the unit's first "years of service" recognition at the January 2018 retreat. Finally, the group is gathering data to identify potential gaps for awards and leadership recognition opportunities across the staff.

Other measurable impacts of these committees forming has been that staff have gotten to know each other across the unit. Such information has resulted in new collaborations, such as engaging KAMU to livestream the NCORE Diversity Speaker Series in Fall 2017 and Academic Affairs Communications to create advertising for it, launch of the new KAMU TV and University Press program, "The Bookmark", featuring interviews with authors, KAMU participating in the Brazos Valley Worldfest, Texas Target Communities working with Academic Affairs Communications to develop quickly an information piece that could be used in their response to Hurricane Harvey, and a

program by the University Press authors of “Architecture that Speaks” for the Community of Faculty Retirees.

4. **Equity.** Assess what you have learned recently from your peers to address equity issues in your unit and describe future plans, including barriers, to address equity or inequity in your unit (e.g., advancement, promotion, professional development, salary studies, staff training and development, student leadership development, start-up packages, leadership succession planning, etc.).

To facilitate equity in our unit, PPO adopted one peer strategy:

- Title and Salary analysis will take place each January, to address equity issues. This has become an annual process but recommendations made in January 2016 have been on hold for a variety of reasons beyond the control of the unit leadership.

Status of these Strategies:

This strategy was identified by the leadership team as the single most important issue that PPO needed to address. The initial impetus of seeking equity changes in salary and titles was because of the merging of a number of workgroups over the past 3 years with a plethora of different titles, salary ranges and job duties (Public Partnership and Outreach, two communications teams, educational broadcasting, University Press, and International Programs). A great deal of effort was put into assessing each job role and identifying equity issues that needed to be addressed across the entire unit. Compounding the merging of units were budgetary issues in the last legislative session and the FY 2017 Voluntary Separation Program that resulted in six people retiring across the unit. This was a devastating loss of experience and talent, totaling 180 years of service to Texas A&M University. The state hiring freeze that followed these retirements in January 2017 caused many PPO staff to have to fill in for their retired colleagues in order for the unit to provide critical services. Unfortunately, by the start of FY2018, six additional staff had retired, reflecting an additional 140 years of University service, experience, and talent. With the hiring freeze finally lifted, the leadership felt it was essential to align duties, titles, and salaries for the remaining employees, addressing the longstanding equity issues that were put on hold in January 2016 and again in January 2017. This effort was finalized in October 2017, after the new leadership in the Provost’s Office approved the changes. The result was a reassignment of job duties, which, in some cases, precipitated retitling and equity increases. The final leg of this effort was to facilitate hiring for six vacant positions now that the hiring freeze has lifted and several reclassifications. Unfortunately, owing to loss of E&G funding at the end of FY2017, one unit, Educational Broadcast Services, has been unable to fill vacant positions, leaving this unit understaffed at this time. In addition to these personnel issues, PPO has been asked to fulfill new duties, which will impact a staff already stretched thin owing to the above situations. Clearly, there is more work to be done in the area of equity.