

2016 University Diversity Plan Accountability Report

Reporting Unit: Division of Research
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In support of the Texas A&M University Vision 2020 Imperatives, the Division of Research (DOR) strives to attract and nurture an ethnically, culturally, and geographically diverse staff through its recruitment, climate and retention activities. The Vice President for Research (VPR) and his leadership team realize that the Division has room for improvement in some areas where the makeup of its staff population lacks diversity, but we are proud of the progress that has been made in improving the climate, in developing employees, and in rewarding excellence on every level of the organization. The Division more than doubled in size over the past year, and due to the strain this placed on internal staff to manage the growth, some of the previously planned high-impact climate and diversity activities were postponed. However, this report will show that our vision and commitment to diversity remained consistent over the year and that steady and sure strategies and practices to increase diversity were integrated into the existing and new units within the Division. We are excited that this year's report includes plans for the coming year that are well underway. In addition to investing in and piloting a new program to develop high potential employees, the Division is leveraging its partnerships across campus to learn about and implement proven strategies for increasing its diversity across all programs, processes and units in the Division of Research.

ACCOUNTABILITY – Peer departments and institutions cast broad nets when advertising vacancies to be filled, they send additional notifications to minority groups to advertise positions and they use professional services to increase their applicant pools. They also work to instill attitudes within their workforces that value diversity and inclusion. Accountability for climate and diversity matters are important across all levels in the Division. The Senior Administrative Leadership Team casts the vision for the DOR and holds directors accountable for their units. Supervisors are very aware of the high standards expected of them to ensure a welcoming and inclusive environment. As evidenced by the Staff Climate Survey Results (discussed later in this report), DOR employees recognize and act upon these values and expectations. Efforts to recruit and retain a diverse workforce were especially challenging this year as the Division took on a new unit that was experiencing an unusually high turnover rate; however, there are areas where improvement was realized in comparison to last year's data and where the Division is stronger than its peers in terms of diversity in its staff. Like our peers, the Division advertised its positions to minority groups, looked for other ways to increase diversity in its applicant pools, and continued with its efforts to maintain healthy attitudes among its workforce to promote diversity and inclusion.

Recruitment –The DOR is interested in staying abreast of effective recruitment strategies that promote diversity. Through job postings in online journals and through notifications to minority network job forums, we are actively seeking diverse individuals with new ideas and fresh approaches to enhance our efforts as a tier one research university. The DOR continues to add verbiage to position descriptions and notices of vacancy that places importance on previous experience in working with people of diverse backgrounds. Supervisors are encouraged to seek information on a candidate's diversity and inclusion experience when obtaining references from previous employers. As time and resources allow, our business personnel are assisting supervisors in the hiring process to encourage them to acquire larger, more diverse applicant pools before placing job postings on hold. All of these practices were implemented across the new units that joined the organization, and the comparison data reflects the following improvements:

- Many of the positions posted by the Division typically receive very small applicant pools due to the nature of the work or the qualifications required. However, in FY16, the DOR had an average of 15.69 candidates apply per position, and those pools are increasing so far in FY17.

- When compared to our local and national peers, the Division of Research had the highest percentage of females in management occupation roles at 68.1%. The next closest percentage came from Texas A&M's Academic Affairs at 60.4%. The DOR was over 15% higher than the other two departments in the comparison.
- In office and administrative support occupations, the DOR had the second most diverse group of employees. Nearly 20% of the DOR employees identified themselves as Hispanic and another 9.8% identified themselves as Black or African American. Both of these percentages were the second highest of their respective classifications.
- In FY16 the number of employees in DOR who self-identify as a minority grew from 21 to 67.
- In a comparison of self-identified minority groups by job group, between the fiscal years 2015 and 2016 in the DOR, the number of employees in the Professional Job Group (which is the largest job group by number of employees) who identified as belonging to a minority group grew from 17 to 46; and of those who chose to identify themselves, the number of employees who identified themselves as belonging to a minority group was 1.6% higher than the previous year.

Although the data shows improvement, the Division is not satisfied with the rate and degree of improvement; therefore, we have partnered with the Academic Affairs Climate and Diversity Committee. This group is identifying further changes to be implemented within the Division's recruitment and hiring processes. Many of these will be implemented in conjunction with the position description changes that will occur due to the implementation of the System-wide Pay Plan on December 1.

The DOR also reaches out to the research community of Texas A&M to enhance diversity among its research staff. This office continues to provide advice and guidance to departments with regard to best practices, and we go to extra efforts post faculty-equivalent research positions on websites that promote vacancies to veterans and to those with disabilities.

Retention - The Division of Research provides excellent opportunities for employee advancement and regularly rewards its top performers and those eager to enhance their job knowledge. In FY16, 24 employees were reclassified to higher titles, eight received job-related skill enhancement increases, and 18 received hiring salary adjustments. Of the 24 employees that were reclassified, 18 are women and several identified as belonging to an ethnic minority group. The Sponsored Research Services (SRS) unit showed commitment to high-performing employees and to the success of the Division by issuing counter offers for three employees who were vital to the function of their unit. SRS also proactively provided equity increases to seven employees, of which five are women. The DOR awarded out-of-cycle merit increases to 37 employees who were performing above expectations; of the 37 who received these increases, 30 are women.

CLIMATE – In light of peer findings, the Division is partnering with one of its peers to strengthen its climate. Our peers use similar strategies to ours when it comes to promoting a positive climate that is welcoming and inclusive. Like their peers, leaders in the Division of Research work diligently to see that employees are kept abreast of information within the organization, to provide opportunities for communication and networking across the organization and across the campus, and to assess and remedy areas where improvement is needed.

The DOR has a climate that supports professional growth through training and job opportunities. Supervisor trainings, held periodically for new supervisors, have been successful in giving newly appointed staff the skills and confidence needed to effectively carry out their supervisory roles and responsibilities. Supervisors learned to provide a training plan and to provide meaningful feedback for their staff. Training related to matters such as the proper handling of FMLA issues, leave usage, employee discipline, and essential skills that are sometimes assumed to be possessed by individuals in supervisory roles has also helped to provide tools to make a well-rounded

supervisors, thus providing a strong support structure for the DOR. The Division is now partnering with the Academic Affairs Climate and Diversity Committee and Texas A&M University's Employee and Organization Development office to develop a program for new supervisors to ensure that they have received effective and essential training. We expect that these trainings will expand to reach other levels of employees across both organizations.

The Division of Research also holds events to provide networking and to improve internal communications. Feedback has shown that staff are more inclined to be involved if they have knowledge of the mission and activities of the Division. Bi-monthly newsletters introducing new staff, praising professional accomplishments, and providing information on new business and events provide staff with a sense of unity and promote comradery. Emphasis on communication--both horizontal (within and between departments) and vertical (between managerial tiers)--has been encouraged in order to engage our staff in creating and developing a strong Division. Events held throughout the year were designed to provide staff with outlets in which to mingle with other units within the Division. Events such as the Chili Cook-off, Ice Cream Social, Staff Appreciation and the Holiday Party, in which awards are given to staff for exceptional service, are just a few opportunities to enhance the climate and foster goodwill amongst peers. Some of those events include a charitable component, which allows for teamwork in giving to those in need outside of the DOR. One area where we did not meet our goals was in providing Division-wide supplemental diversity education. A scheduled Division-wide "Lunch and Learn" focused on inclusion was canceled due to flooding last spring; the high waters kept the speaker from traveling. The other educational activities were also postponed due to the heavy workloads of those who plan the events. Plans are underway to reschedule and hold those educational sessions in FY17.

Some of the efforts described above were new this year, and other have been ongoing. We are seeing improvement in the overall climate even though workloads have been strenuous. The results of the 2016 Staff Climate Survey, conducted by the University's Human Resources Department, show that the DOR compared more favorably than the overall University in every attribute that was surveyed under the "Diversity & Inclusion" section. Under the University section, DOR respondents agreed more favorably in areas such as their leaders' commitment to diversity, that diverse perspectives are valued, and in their sense of duty to support diversity at Texas A&M. They also were in agreement with departmental diversity matters more so than the overall University responses, especially in their responses to the statement that "a diversity-friendly work environment is maintained" within their department. These responses are even more remarkable when you consider that the DOR ranked less favorably with the overall responses in the areas of stressful environment and workload. With the start of the new fiscal year, new positions have been added to continue our work in alleviating those strains.

We believe that by providing an adequate workforce that values diversity and inclusion and by partnering with other organizations with expertise and abilities in these areas, our climate efforts will have a profound impact on the DOR in the coming year.

Equity – Our peers use data to find areas where equity issues need to be addressed. They employ tools such as salary increases, professional development, career counseling and mentorship programs. Additionally, it is widely known that about 74% of colleges and universities engage in some form of succession planning. Like our peers, the DOR uses some of these measures to maintain equity within the organization.

The DOR has been working to establish career paths for large groups of its employees. We still have not received final plans or approval from Human Resources (HR) on the career ladder, which was proposed for research compliance and biosafety personnel in FY15. The System-wide Pay Plan delayed those proposed changes, but we

are hopeful that HR will soon approve that request. Early in FY16 a committee formed by the VPR worked with HR to establish a career ladder for the SRS personnel who perform core responsibilities of research administration. That career ladder helped to facilitate quite a few well-deserved promotions over the year.

Several personnel actions were used to provide equitable titles and pay for employees across the Division. During FY16, the Division took advantage of excellent opportunities for employee advancement by reclassifying the positions of 24 employees who had gained the experience and skills to take on more responsibilities within the organization. The Division identified and awarded nine employees who were in need of equity adjustments, and more than half of those were women.

In addition to the professional development of those in technical, entry-level, and supervisory positions, the Division is looking at developing those at higher levels in the organization to fill needs in its leadership succession planning. In FY17, Human Resources' Employee and Organizational Development office, which has partnered with the VPR, will roll out a new program aimed at preparing those with high leadership potential to be able to assume greater levels of authority and responsibility. The Executive Leadership Development Program will be piloted in the Division of Research.