

# **Executive Summary**

## **Radford University Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Action Plan: A Diversity and Equity Action Committee Recommendation**

### Introduction

During the 2018-2019 academic year, the Diversity and Equity Action Committee (DEAC) of Radford University conducted a high-level review of university activities and college- and division-level strategic plans, looking for institutional plans, indications, and activities that signified a commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). While there were some bright spots, there were also clear gaps in evidence of institutional action on DEI. During the 2019-2020 academic year, the DEAC set for itself the task of developing a DEI Action Plan to recommend for adoption by the University.

In July 2019, the DEAC invited a wide variety of faculty, staff, and students to sit on DEAC working groups in order to develop the Action Plan. Following a planning meeting, the following working groups were formed: 1) Defining Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; 2) Communications for DEI; 3) Recruitment and Retention of Diverse Faculty and Staff; and 4) Training and Professional Development for Faculty and Staff. Those working groups met regularly and reported back to the DEAC over nine months. During the summer of 2020, the DEAC combined the working groups' recommendations and drafted its final DEI Action Plan—the document now being presented to the university's internal governance bodies for review and recommendation.

### What is the DEAC Trying to Achieve?

The Action Plan is meant to achieve the following goals:

- 1) Help make Radford University a welcoming campus for all students, thereby increasing retention and progression of minoritized and first-generation students;
- 2) Increase, and then maintain, the diversity of faculty and staff to keep pace with the changing population of students; and,
- 3) Close the equity gap in graduation rates between minoritized and majority populations and between first-generation and non-first-generation students.

These goals are aligned with the Radford University 2018-2023 Strategic Plan for academic excellence and research, strategic enrollment growth, and student success.

Finally, we are living in a disruptive moment in American history. With a global pandemic, racial reckoning, and political upheaval, these are difficult times for all of us, but even more so for minoritized people. This is an opportunity to live the values we state and be a university that understands, welcomes, and responds to diverse student populations and their needs in a time of adversity.

## What is the DEAC Asking of You?

The DEAC asks that your governance body review the proposed DEI Action Plan and support it with a recommendation that the President adopt the proposed DEI Action Plan. If your governance body has recommended revisions, the DEAC will certainly take those under advisement before forwarding the proposed DEI Action Plan to the President.

We believe these recommendations will make this university stronger and enable us to retain and graduate more students. Please join the DEAC in making these recommendations to the President for our university and for our students.

## Why Did the DEAC Develop the Proposed DEI Action Plan?

- A DEI Action Plan drafted, approved, and implemented by the university community is a strong statement of action and commitment to Radford University's core values of student empowerment and success, excellence, and inclusiveness.
- A DEI Action Plan helps the university achieve many of the goals in the 2018-2023 Strategic Plan, including:
  - becoming "a leading institution of higher education in the Commonwealth of Virginia" (Academic Excellence and Research, Goal 1);
  - increasing the academic success of undergraduate students (Enrollment Growth, Goal 8); and,
  - assisting "students in becoming more independent, self-confident and effective learners who disseminate knowledge, innovate and solve problems creatively" (Student Success, Goal 1).
- Radford University's student population has changed over the last 10 years.
  - The minoritized undergraduate population grew from 11.9% in 2010 to 32.2% of all undergraduates in Fall 2019. In Fall 2020, 32.8% of undergraduates are from minoritized populations.
  - Radford has traditionally enrolled a large percentage of first-generation students from 22% of undergraduates in Fall 2001 to a high of 39% of undergraduates in Fall 2017. As of Fall 2020, 30% of undergraduates are first-generation students.
- The racial and ethnic make-up of our faculty and staff has not kept pace with the changing student population.
  - There has been growth. The minoritized faculty and staff population grew from 8.2% in Fall 2010 to 11.0% in Fall 2020.
  - Students notice these demographics. In a 2017 survey of 506 RU students, "white students are more likely than other students to see faculty and administrative role models similar to them on campus, and black students are less likely to find faculty and administrative role models on the Radford University campus." (See **Action Plan, Appendix E**, p. 12).

- Faculty members also notice this. In the 2020 Faculty Morale Survey, the statement, “I am satisfied with the diversity of faculty in my department,” received one of the lowest scores on the survey with an average of 2.73, landing between “Disagree” and “Neutral/Neither Agree nor Disagree.” (See **Action Plan, Appendix F, p. 2**).
- Campus climate surveys of students from 2017 and 2019 indicate that Radford faculty, staff, and students likely need training about discrimination and bias. (See **Action Plan, Demographic and Culture Change section, pp. 7-8**).
- Additionally, like many predominantly white institutions, Radford has an equity gap in graduation rates between minoritized students and white students and between first-generation and non-first-generation students. (See **Action Plan, Tables 1 and 2, p. 6**).

## What is the DEAC Proposing?

The full plan includes 30 recommended actions that touch many areas of the university. The recommended actions are divided by category: Communications and Accountability (**Table 9 in Action Plan, pp. 11-15**), Recruitment and Retention of Diverse Faculty and Staff (**Table 10 in Action Plan, pp. 16-21**), and Training and Development (**Table 11 in Action Plan, pp. 22-23**). Within those categories, the recommended actions are divided by an estimated time for how long it might take to implement the actions: immediate, short term, and long term. Some departments and offices have already begun taking some of these recommended actions, particularly in Human Resources with the recruitment and training recommendations. The recommended actions are as follows:

### Communications and Accountability

#### Immediate

1. Establish multi-channel safe spaces for feedback from students and other university stakeholders.
2. Adopt the recommended Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Statement (below) for the university that is easily visible on the university’s website and easily searchable on internet search engines.

Radford University strives for a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion. We are committed to creating paths for success that enable our students, faculty, and staff to move from where they are to where they want to go. We are working to create an environment that celebrates differences, challenges privileges, and provides effective opportunities for growth.

We understand diversity as the differences that define our community. We value our differing experiences and perspectives extending beyond legally protected categories, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, geographical origins, education, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity,

gender expression, nationality, age, language, veteran status, marital status, genetic information, abilities, and cognition.

We strive to identify, interrogate, and redress outcomes of systemic inequities. We understand equity to mean a process in which we eliminate barriers that prevent full participation in university life such as academic, extra-, and co-curricular activities, and create effective opportunity structures for all.

We understand inclusion to mean embracing and honoring diversity and protecting vulnerable members of our community. We seek to cultivate a culture of inclusive excellence where all voices are valued, respected, and integrated into the fabric of our community.

For more information on protection under the law, please visit the [webpage of the Office of Institutional Equity \(https://www.radford.edu/content/institutional-equity/home.html\)](https://www.radford.edu/content/institutional-equity/home.html).

#### Short Term

3. Post the Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Statement widely on our campuses, in classroom buildings, residence halls, and administration buildings.
4. Add authentic diverse imagery of students and faculty of color to magazines, brochures, and online media to showcase how Diversity and Inclusion are valued at RU; seek the input of students on these publications.
5. Develop a centralized diversity website; execute multi-channel dissemination of the website.
6. Enhance the use of OneCampus portal; Create RU Involved Diversity Group/Program; Create a dedicated DEAC icon in the portal & on RU app.
7. Provide regular updates and announcements.
8. Create a Diversity Dashboard that appears with the Electronic Factbook and includes data about social identities other than race, ethnicity, and binary genders and includes data from student, faculty, and staff climate surveys (see, e.g., <http://irp.dpb.cornell.edu/university-factbook/diversity>).
9. Require departments to submit and implement a yearly diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) action plan to include DEI programming, training, and faculty and staff recruitment efforts.

#### Long Term

10. Develop a strong social media presence.

#### Recruitment and Retention of Diverse Faculty and Staff

##### Immediate

11. Develop all-inclusive “About the University” language for employment postings that is more attractive to potential faculty/staff of color.

12. Create institutional language such as “we encourage applicants interested in helping us achieve our diversity vision.”
13. Seek external funding for minority recruitment initiatives.
14. Allow students of color to participate in search committee processes (e.g., student serve on some committees, require candidates to meet with students during the campus visit).
15. Require cultural competence training that focuses on unconscious bias for all search committee members, deans, and chairs.
16. Training for deans, chairs/directors, and faculty on how to develop inclusive position descriptions consistent with (but not the same as) the university’s diversity statement.
17. Provide opportunities for current diverse faculty/staff to volunteer to help recruit other faculty/staff to apply for positions at RU.
18. Create a Faculty of Color Network at RU and RUC to increase success and retention of diverse faculty.

#### Short Term

19. Develop student “come teach us” promotional videos featuring RU’s diverse student population.
20. Require departments to submit to HR and the appropriate divisional Vice-President a plan for diversification and inclusion before authorization of hiring for any position.

#### Long Term

21. Create a cabinet-level Chief Diversity Officer position that is fully funded to oversee all aspects of DEI work across the RU and RUC campuses.
22. Hire or promote an in-house HR recruiter who focuses primarily on minority faculty and staff recruitment.
23. Create feeder programs/agreements with HBCU’s, MI’s, and institutions that have historically produced the most minority faculty members.
24. Build networks with minority-serving professional organizations, conferences, and social organizations, both conventional and unconventional (for example, historically Black fraternities and sororities can be a great resource for identifying applicants of color).
25. Revise tenure and promotion guidelines to value contributions to diversity efforts and for faculty outreach to diverse on-campus communities, off-campus local communities, and diverse national communities.
26. Launch a Diversity Visiting Scholars program.

#### Training and Development

##### Immediate

27. Create new employee on-boarding that describes the Highlander culture, including commitment to DEI and expectations of faculty and staff in upholding that commitment.
28. Promote diversity and equity training for students, faculty, and staff.

Long Term

29. Create a DEI Training Hub on the HR website that can be accessed through the RU Portal with a glossary of terms, Q &A, micro-learnings, trainings, additional learning resources.
30. Create or otherwise make available classroom and online training accessible through the new Training Hub which includes preliminary required DEI training for all employees but also multi-level certificate programs. The trainings should be categorized by level: All employees; supervisory and/or leadership series; and ally level (skills based, action-oriented training).

## What is the Impact of These Recommendations?

The impact on different groups and offices will vary. Like the university's Strategic Plan, the responsibility for the DEI Action Plan falls on every office and department in order to create a welcoming culture for all. For example, there will be new training for every person who develops job descriptions and sits on search committees. There may be additional annual reporting responsibilities. University Relations will be charged with assisting the DEAC to develop a DEI-focused webpage. Facilities would have the responsibility of posting the DEI Statement widely on our campuses.

There are some recommendations that require funding, such as creating the position of Chief Diversity Officer and a position in Human Resources focused on minority faculty and staff recruitment. We understand that the actions requiring funding are a tough ask in the current economic conditions. Almost one third of the recommendations do not require additional funds. Some require a small amount of funding.

Finally, this proposed DEI Action Plan is an investment in the present and future of Radford University. By simply adopting and posting widely the DEI Statement on our campuses, the University has the potential to easily and positively impact our current student recruitment and retention efforts. Backing the statement with our other recommended actions, both visible and not-so-visible, will help Radford to become "a leading institution of higher education in the Commonwealth of Virginia"—the goal towards which we are all striving.

Please review the **Recommended Actions Tables** in the full proposed DEI Action Plan (**pp. 11-23**). Those tables include details on which offices and departments are impacted, what that impact might be, the outcomes the actions will achieve, resources required, estimated costs, and the justifications for the recommended actions.

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