

White Paper on Actionable Recommendations from the  
2016 Provost / Academic Senate Retreat  
on Enacting Access and Opportunity

Submitted to

the Provost  
and  
the Academic Senate

by the

Senate Committee on Campus Climate

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## Overview

The Provost and Academic Senate held a joint retreat on February 12 and 13, 2016 to address Campus Climate and Access and Opportunity at USC. The retreat was a working meeting of faculty and staff whose efforts are directly related to enhancing climate and access, as well as key faculty and administrative decision-makers whose judgment affects faculty career trajectories, program evaluation, and curricular development across campus. The retreat was well attended, with over 150 participants, the vast majority attending both days.

The resulting report from the retreat included 31 summary recommendations as well as over 120 more detailed recommendations. At the request of the Provost and the Senate President, the Senate Committee on Campus Climate has reviewed the retreat report. We have identified key priorities to be addressed initially, as well as suggested appropriate parties that should be responsible them. Though we have identified priorities, we believe many of the remaining recommendations from the original document which are not included here are nevertheless valuable and should be be addressed subsequently. Furthermore, many recommendations address critical improvements in policies and processes of the university, but we also believe is vital to address the social environment on campus in order to have a vibrant, thriving, inclusive community.

This white paper will be available on the Committee on Campus Climate's website:  
<https://academicsenate.usc.edu/committees/campus-climate/>

## Recommendations Currently Being Addressed

The following recommendations have begun to be addressed since the Provost / Senate Retreat. These represent positive strides that should be celebrated, but their continued progress should be monitored.

1. Leadership evaluation
  2. Transparency
  3. DPS
  4. Course evaluation
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### **1. Leadership evaluation**

Promotion of diversity and inclusion now serves as the second most critical measure of evaluation of the effectiveness of deans. This represents a significant accomplishment as the deans are now preparing their five year plans.

#### **Recommendation:**

This measure should be applied to the evaluation of other leaders within the university (Vice Deans, Chairs, Directors, etc.) There needs to be a specific strategy or protocol for such evaluation to ensure that we are actually understanding the desired outcomes, both individually and institutionally.

### **2. Transparency**

The Provost and Office of Institutional Research have made some demographic data available.

#### **Recommendation:**

Ensure that Office of Institutional Research continues to provide this data annually in a timely manner as well as maintain historical data (see *Gathering Data* below) and to identify the intended audience(s). This should also include historical and longitudinal data to show trends and to differentiate those groups that need to be strategically addressed.

### **3. Department of Public Safety Community Access Board**

Chief John Thomas voluntarily adopted policies outlined in California's racial profiling law that provide for civilian oversight, data reporting, and profiling prevention training.

#### **Recommendation:**

Continue to monitor progress of the Oversight Commission.

- A. Identify key positions to be held on the Oversight Commission, and define its role and authority;
- B. Create infrastructure that allows ease in recording, reporting, and analyzing data from DPS stops;
- C. Develop training for DPS officers around unconscious bias, community engagement, and relationship building.

**4. Course Evaluations**

Course evaluations are subject to many extraneous variables that affect outcomes, including gender, race, ease of grading, etc. Women and faculty of color are disproportionately negatively affected by student evaluations being used as the sole measure of teaching performance, as are RTPC faculty.

During the AY 2016-2017 the Committee on Teaching and Academic Programs is investigating how the university can better evaluate teaching and learning.

**Recommendation:**

Review the Committee's year end report for recommendations and next steps.

## Priority Recommendations to be Addressed

The following recommendations have been identified as key priorities by the Campus Climate Committee. For each broad recommendation, we have identified why the issue is important, which party(ies) should be responsible for addressing it, and possible solutions.

1. Gathering data
  2. Defining terms
  3. Training around issues of inclusion
  4. Faculty recruitment and retention; increasing the pool
  5. Faculty service / committee work and mentoring
  6. Student retention and experiences; minoritized and international student populations
  7. Curriculum
  8. Engagement of university community in dialogues around diversity
  9. Bias reporting process
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### 1. **Gathering Data**

*What is the issue / why is this important?*

In order for the University to know where to focus its climate and access efforts and resources, it must gather data on three levels: 1) quantitative data around who works and studies at USC, and where we need to increase our representation, 2) what the experience is of the people who work and study at USC, and 3) whether the policies and practices of the University reflect our stated value of equity and inclusion.

*What additional information is needed?*

See below

*What approach or solution can we suggest?*

#### **Recommendation #1:**

Conduct a Campus Climate survey to determine where the University should focus its efforts on improving the experience of its community members. *(It is understood that this is in process, but it is important to reiterate that this be completed in a timely manner as well as there being a schedule for regular admission.)*

#### **Responsible parties:**

Provost's Diversity Council.

#### **Recommendation #2:**

Have a plan in place to consistently update the Office of Institutional Research's data on diversity via the website. The faculty and student page still has data from 2013.

**Responsible parties:**

The Office of Institutional Research needs to maintain and update the data, but the support / approval of the Provost's Office is necessary for this to happen.

**Recommendation #3:**

Maintain historical diversity data (not just current year) on the Office of Institutional Research's website. It is critical that our transparency provide the opportunity to see trends over time.

**Responsible parties:**

The Office of Institutional Research needs to maintain and update the data, but the support / approval of the Provost's Office is necessary for this to happen.

**Recommendation #4:**

Gather all demographic data, climate survey data, and any other inclusion-related data in a central place. This can be at <http://oir.usc.edu/faculty-and-student-diversity/> or <http://diversity.usc.edu> but it should be easily accessible and centralized.

**Responsible parties:**

The Office of Institutional Research needs to maintain and update the data, but the support / approval of the Provost's Office is necessary for this to happen.

**Recommendation #5:**

Provide all the data in two formats: 1) the current visual format with tables and figures for the website, and 2) an easily computer-read format (e.g. CSV). The current visual layout is excellent for visitors and the general public, but we are a research university so we should provide the data in a manner accessible to research study.

**Responsible parties:**

The Office of Institutional Research needs to maintain and update the data, but the support / approval of the Provost's Office is necessary for this to happen.

**Recommendation #6**

Issue reports on the resolution of bias incidents so the community can see follow-up in these efforts.

**Responsible party:**

Office of Equity and Diversity

**Recommendation #7**

Create reports on "best practices" for academic units and/or schools that are performing significantly above average in areas of inclusion and diversity.

**Responsible party:**

The diversity liaisons should be responsible for maintaining and sharing updates on best practices in their schools.

## 2. **Defining Terms**

*What is the issue?*

There is a lack of clear definitions around the terms involving diversity and inclusion as well as terms such as racism, sexism, etc.

*Why is this important?*

Frequently, various stakeholders have different understanding of these terms, which inhibits productive dialogues and progress on these issues.

*What additional information is needed?*

The Climate Committee has gathered definitions pertaining to racism, sexism, etc. from peer institutions, but needs to perform similar analysis on affirmative terms such as diversity and inclusion. In addition, we would like to gather existing working definitions from each school.

*What approach or solution can we suggest?*

Develop definitions of terms such as diversity, equity, and inclusion as well as discrimination, harassment, racism, anti-semitism, etc.

*Who should be responsible?*

Campus Climate Committee

## 3. **Training around Issues of Inclusion**

*What is the issue?*

The university needs a comprehensive education and outreach program around positive strategies for inclusion and awareness around issues of bias. For administrators, staff, and faculty, this can provide opportunities to learn more about how to effectively engage with students and how to avoid biased assumptions about students or colleagues that could be hurtful (i.e., language-based assumptions, gender-based assumptions, race-based assumptions).

*Why is this important?*

Education about unconscious bias and the impact of unintentionally transgressive statements is critical to the success of our students as leaders in the wider world.

Administrators, faculty, staff, and DPS Officers are particularly in need of guidance around these issues as they are in positions of power that require thoughtful communication and the ability to reach colleagues and students from diverse life experiences.

*What additional information is needed?*

In addition to the background research described below, we need accurate reporting data to measure our progress

*What approach or solution can we suggest / who should be responsible?*

**Recommendation #1:**

Identify successful best practices and programs that exist for faculty training around inclusion. Compare similar programs at peer institutions.

**Responsible parties:**

Campus Climate Committee

**Recommendation #2:**

Identify successful best practices and programs that exist for student training around inclusion. Compare similar programs at peer institutions.

**Responsible parties:**

Student Affairs

**4. Faculty Recruitment and Retention; Increasing the Pool**

*What is the issue?*

There is a very small pool of people from underrepresented minority groups who are potential candidates for graduate degree programs, and later faculty positions.

*Why is this important?*

A diverse faculty can bring valuable and unique perspectives and experiences to teaching and scholarly work. Faculty with different backgrounds and identities also serve as mentors and role models for the university's diverse student body.

Research on underrepresented minority faculty searches suggests there may be a lack of information among search committee members regarding what the academic recruitment pipeline actually looks like. Search committees need real data regarding the number of PhD graduates from underrepresented backgrounds in their discipline each year, and they also need to be cognizant of other valuable assets that faculty candidates may bring related to other identities, many of which are not obvious or visible, and that may not be reflected in standard measures of scholarly activity. And while it may be true that some underrepresented minority candidates may be heavily recruited, the belief that minority candidates are routinely courted and unattainable has been debunked in research by Daryl Smith (2004) and others. Lastly, research on effective recruitment of underrepresented minority faculty point to the idea that recruitment does not begin when a vacancy occurs, and that talent must be cultivated and supported through networks and relationships over time. This may include postdoctoral positions, fellowships, mentorship of young scholars and informal relationships.

*What additional information is needed?*

Academic units: Data and guidance on developing effective practices for inclusive faculty searches within that specific discipline.



*What approach or solution can we suggest?*

Appoint diversity liaisons who are trained in diversity recruitment practices and serves as a resource or advocate for each faculty search. This resource person would also have access to current data or information about the underrepresented minority pool in that discipline to share with the search committee. Lastly, this individual would also be responsible for all initiatives related to active recruiting and establishing relationships with young scholars to build the recruitment pipeline even when there is no vacant position.

In addition, faculty members on all search and promotion/tenure committees should be trained in diversity recruitment practices to address many of the entrenched academic barriers that often hinder some candidates in the process. As an example of a successful model, Carnegie Mellon University's School of Engineering requires all faculty on all search committees have attended a training on bias awareness and diversity recruitment.

There also needs to be a broader evaluative tool to respect disparate research assessments and indicators of academic rigor.

*Who should be responsible?*

The diversity liaison should serve as the resource person/advocate.

Academic units: All faculty members who are serving on search committees or promotion/tenure committees should receive training on inclusive hiring practices and implicit bias awareness.

## **5. Faculty Service / Committee Work and Mentoring**

*What is the issue?*

Faculty of color and other minority faculty such as sexual minorities (LGBT), those with disabilities, and women are tapped more often than other faculty of privilege to serve on committees because, on top of their area of expertise, they also bring a diverse perspective to the committee's work. Because of the limited number of minority faculty, this burden is often a heavy one. Minority faculty are also often the "go to" person for students and other minority faculty for mentoring, advising, and support.

*Why is this important?*

These activities, while important, add an undue burden to the heavy workload already carried by faculty members. It is incumbent upon the University to make accommodations for these tasks, to reward them, and to do what it can to increase the number of minority faculty to help alleviate the workload. Implicit in this is also the question of how this work is evaluated in tenure, promotion or merit increases.

*What additional information is needed?*

Qualitative and quantitative survey data from all faculty regarding committee work, mentoring, etc. -- to then evaluate differences in experiences of faculty.

*What approach or solution can we suggest?*

This kind of work must be valued through annual performance reviews, promotion and tenure as mission critical work for the university. Though much of this work constitutes faculty service, the reality is that many minority faculty must choose between mentoring, advising or supporting students, and pursuing scholarly work.

*Who should be responsible?*

Though each school develops its own annual evaluation process for faculty, it is incumbent upon on the chairs/directors, deans, and ultimately provost to provide institutional support on these changes.

There needs to be university-wide discussion and agreement on how work that promotes diversity is valued. For example, efforts that supports the recruitment and retention of underrepresented minorities must be valued as an essential part of faculty work, worthy of consideration for promotion and tenure along with other considerations such research, teaching, service, etc.

## **6. Student Retention and Experiences; Minoritized and International Student Populations**

*What is the issue?*

Student Affairs too often hears from undergraduate students from underrepresented groups that they want to leave USC. They are burned out rather than energized. International students often feel isolated in their educational experience in the U.S. They need resources where they can build community and support. We need data to support this.

*What additional information is needed?*

We know that 92% of our students graduate after 6 years. How many of the 8% are from underrepresented minority groups and what do we know about their academic profile? In other words, what do we know about why they leave? Even if they do exit interviews those data are not really reliable.

*What approach or solution can we suggest?*

### **Recommendation #1:**

Systematic and regularly scheduled student assessments related to engagement, campus climate, or satisfaction. There are a number of survey tools available that USC can use annually for a fee. Many of these surveys offer benchmarking against similar types of campuses (for example, all four year, private research universities).

### **Recommendation #2:**

The data/findings need to be made available to the campus community for use in improving services, accountability and assessing student outcomes. These data can be disaggregated by gender, race, school, academic year, commuter vs. residential, nationality, etc.

**Recommendation #3:**

A systematic way of responding to findings that indicate problems/barriers/significant challenges to degree completion for USC students. It is critical to acknowledge that such any group breakdown (race, gender, etc.) is not a monolith and that it will require disparate strategies to address retention.

Another key area to analyze is whether certain groups are overrepresented in the 8% of students that do not graduate in 6 years, and then to develop targeted interventions.

*Who should be responsible?*

Office of Institutional Research for systematic assessment; USC Student Affairs to develop and implement additional programs and services.

**7. Curriculum**

*What is the issue?*

In much of university curricula, the dominant voice is that of the majority. The University can do a better job of reflecting the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion in its curriculum.

*Why is this important?*

Explicit documentation of diverse perspectives in USC's curricula will draw more students, faculty, and staff from diverse backgrounds. Most classes have room for discussion about the application of that material to issues that address diversity, equity, and inclusion.

*What additional information is needed?*

It is left to each discipline to consider how to incorporate diverse voices in curriculum.

*What approach or solution can we suggest?*

Challenge faculty to bring diverse voices into the classroom experience and curriculum. We want to build an environment where in each discipline, students are exposed to scholars and narratives from an spectrum of different identities and perspectives. There should also be an understanding that we deconstruct the historical perceptions around "who" is a generator of knowledge and thought. Student should have agency and be empowered to achieve personal and academic success.

These can be woven organically into course readings, assignments, projects, guest speakers, and discussions. As some faculty might object that issues of diversity do not apply to their courses, encourage them to consider the environment of their discipline / industry that could be discussed in class. Other considerations are inviting guest speakers from underrepresented minority groups to discuss their discipline / industry (not diversity issues directly).

*Who should be responsible?*

Primarily the responsibility falls with individual faculty to enhance their curriculum. However, the diversity liaisons of each school should help faculty with suggestions and best practices (through workshops or resources). It is important for there to be institutional support and encouragement for these changes through the deans and department chairs / program directors.

**8. Engagement of the University Community of Students, Faculty, and Staff in Dialogues around Diversity**

*What is the issue?*

The University community needs activities and policies that allow all to see how diversity, equity, and inclusion, as well as oppression, marginalization, microaggression and power structures impact our environments and our lives.

*Why is this important?*

Engaging the larger community of students, faculty, and staff in dialogues around diversity, not just those in underrepresented minority groups, is critical to promoting the values we have around this issue. USC should be a leader in effectively addressing these issues on its own campus and teaching its students how to address them as they enter the wider world.

*What additional information is needed?*

We need comprehensive data about diversity on the campus now and longitudinally. This should come from a climate survey as well as qualitative sources such as the Faculty Forum, etc.

*What approach or solution can we suggest / who should be responsible?*

**Recommendation #1:**

Provide opportunities for faculty to learn how to facilitate respectful but honest dialogues in the classrooms, supporting examination of issues of equity and oppression as they relate to course material, encouraging all students to have a voice.

**Responsible Party:**

Center for Excellence in Teaching

**Recommendation #2:**

Provide safe, but challenging opportunities for faculty to engage in conversations and reflection where they can examine their own views and how unconscious biases might influence teaching and research. For this to be sustainable, there needs to be resources (funding and staffing) to ensure that the conversations and training can occur.

**Responsible Party:**

Provost: *provide resources and support*

Academic Units, Campus Climate Committee: *help recruit volunteer faculty to help facilitate session*

**Recommendation #3:**

Make University policy one of education vs. punishment when first addressing bias incidents committed by faculty, students, and staff (egregious exceptions apply).

**Responsible Party:**

Provost's Office, Office of Equity and Diversity, Student Affairs

**Recommendation #4:**

Educate the community about the issues involved around free speech/academic freedom and the responsibility of faculty to communicate in a thoughtful and inclusive manner.

**Responsible parties:**

Office of Equity and Diversity

**9. Bias Reporting Process**

*What is the issue?*

Students and faculty are often unaware or distrustful of the bias reporting process.

*Why is this important?*

The majority of student complaints around bias incidents involve interactions with faculty, rather than peers or staff.

*What approach or solution can we suggest?*

**Recommendations #1:**

Improve communication about bias-reporting mechanisms.

**Responsible party:**

Office of Equity and Diversity

**Recommendations #2:**

There should be more clarity in the process of follow-through with schools and professors when a bias report is made about an interaction with a professor. Create a set of guidelines for schools to follow in addressing bias reports with faculty, suggesting steps for remediation from minor to severe, and protocol for keeping records that would only be used to identify problematic, sustained patterns of behavior with a professor who has demonstrated a lack of willingness to address these issues. Since there are clear power dynamics in many of these situations, students should have various resources to address perceived and actual concerns, especially when their grades and academic success are at stake.

**Responsible party:**

Provost's Office, Office of Equity and Diversity

## In Conclusion

We are encouraged that progress has been made on the recommendations from the retreat. As this paper illustrates, though, there are still many issues to be addressed regarding access and opportunity. Moreover, we collectively (as the university) need to ensure forward movement on these issues. With that, we can cultivate an environment that is more inclusive for all students, staff, faculty, and administrators as well as the broader community.