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Increasing Diversity of Faculty and Administrators in the Virginia Community College System

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INCREASING DIVERSITY OF FACULTY AND ADMINISTRATORS IN THE VIRGINIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM

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PREVIOUS VCCS DIVERSITY INITIATIVES

In 2013, Chancellor DuBois convened a Task Force on Diversity with the aim of making the Virginia Community College System (VCCS) a model for diversity by “increasing the demographic diversity of the VCCS so that teaching faculty and leaders look more like the communities we serve” (Chancellors Diversity Task Force, 2014, p. 3). The hard work of the Task Force members culminated in a report that summarized their findings and recommendations, including a “Call to Action” list of 11 steps, many of which have been implemented or are in progress. Several of these key initiatives have put the VCCS on track to meeting its diversity goals: the adoption of a VCCS policy statement on diversity and inclusion; the hiring of a Chief Diversity Officer and appointment of College Diversity representatives at each of the 23 VCCS colleges; the formation of diversity steering committees at each college; and the creation of an online *Diversity Dashboard* database which provides “institutional and system-wide longitudinal data on gender and minority status” (p. 12). We commend these efforts and would like to build on the foundation provided by the Task Force. Furthermore, we maintain that the success of the *Complete 2021: Educating for a Competitive Commonwealth* VCCS Strategic Plan depends upon increasing diversity and inclusion across the colleges, particularly in the hiring and retention of more diverse faculty and administrators. Although increasing diversity on college campuses has many benefits, improving student success and completion arguably being the most significant, we believe that campus diversity is *intrinsically* valuable, apart from the many benefits it affords institutions.

DEFINING DIVERSITY

We begin with the assumption that diversity and inclusion should be defined as broadly as possible. As the Task Force report notes, definitions of diversity have historically focused on race and ethnicity, while current definitions are often more expansive, encompassing gender,

sexual orientation, socio-economic status, nationality, (dis)ability, and other categories by which individuals are marginalized. However, given the complexity of our mission to increase diversity among faculty and administrators, a scarcity of data in some categories, and the limitations of time, we have chosen to focus primarily on addressing underrepresented racial and ethnic minority groups. Our group's decision to focus on gaps between minority representation among employees and minority representation within the larger population of a college's surrounding service region was grounded in a careful study of the data (see Appendix A).

DIVERSITY AND STUDENT SUCCESS

A growing body of research suggests that hiring and retaining a diverse faculty and staff are crucial to student success. Studies show that enrollment, retention, and completion of minority students, in particular, are likely to increase when they feel that their learning environment is inclusive and when their instructors share their culture or heritage. In addition to research cited by the Task Force, there are additional studies worth highlighting, some very recent. For example, a 2014 study from De Anza Community College in California shows that the equity gap in student success among minority students compared to non-minority students decreased in classes taught by faculty of color (Fairlie, Hoffman, & Oreopoulos). This is explained in part by research that suggests diverse faculty are more likely to incorporate teaching methodologies that are relevant to their students' cultural backgrounds; this phenomenon, called "cultural synchronicity," has proven advantageous for minority student success and completion (Villegas & Irvine, 2010). The California Community College system has made great strides in both researching and increasing diversity among its faculty. Their studies show that students of color are more likely to reach out to faculty who share their racial and ethnic background (Cole & Griffin, 2013) and that minority faculty are essential in providing students of color with a

“sense of belonging” (Benitez, James, Joshua, Perfetti, & Vick, 2017). This sentiment is illustrated by one African American faculty member who, in describing how a Latina student sought his counsel, remarked that “there’s some deep, deep unmet need that goes far beyond... curricular” (Levin, Walker, Jackson-Boothby, & Harberler, 2013, p. 13). This example demonstrates the strong need some students of color have for being able to access faculty of color, regardless of specific race, ethnicity, or even gender.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

Individual-Level

As VCCS continues to build on the work of the Task Force, we believe much of the momentum will happen on the individual level. Our group has found it useful to draw upon the concept of “tempered radicals” as a theoretical framework for how individual VCCS employees might serve as catalysts for change on their respective campuses. In her book *Rocking the Boat: How to Effect Change Without Making Trouble*, D. E. Myerson (2008) defines tempered radicals as “everyday leaders” (p. 17) who effect incremental change by challenging the status quo in smaller, more subtle ways than organizational leaders do. The Action Cycle, detailed in *Rocking the Boat*, describes how visible, local actions help like-minded people find one another. Myerson writes, “When environmentalists do something *as environmentalists*, for instance, they become visible to other environmentalists” (p. 14). Visibility of individual actions is important for relationship building among those committed to increasing workplace diversity and inclusion.

The work of the Task Force will take flight as individual VCCS colleagues reach out to one another in daily, informal ways to communicate a shared commitment to promoting a culture of diversity and inclusion. Tempered radicals can communicate their interest in increasing diversity among faculty members and administrators by sharing ideas for hiring and retention practices; making efforts to plan social engagements or eat lunch with colleagues with attributes

different from you; displaying visual markers to signify a commitment to diversity and inclusion on an office shelf or posted on an office door; circulating and/or discussing relevant articles and TED talks; among other strategies. We recognize that our VCCS colleagues already engage in many of these practices—and many more than we can list or imagine here. We hope that these undocumented, informal practices become even more frequent, visible, and intentional. As Myerson (2008) notes, “When people believe they can make a difference, they are more likely to search for opportunities to act, which makes it more likely that they will locate opportunities. When people recognize opportunities for action, their environment will seem less threatening and more amenable to action” (p. 14). Cultivating our own tempered radicals at each college would foster a nurturing workplace environment for underrepresented students, faculty and administrators.

There are several key benefits to individual change agency: it requires little to no financial investment, and change comes with more alacrity because individuals often have a greater ability to assess and respond quickly to local needs, without being dependent on infrastructure. Educator J. Tagg (2003) distinguishes between “structural leaders” who gain their authority through their place on an organizational chart and “functional leaders” who act, not from formal positions of power, but from a sense of personal mission and in response to immediate situations and needs (p. 338). Bottom-up initiatives that originate from functional leaders spread organically and can often be scaled-up more quickly. In addition, the flexibility inherent in planning individual actions can allow for a greater emphasis on the importance of intersectionality. The richness within human lives means that individuals have intersecting identities with simultaneous, multiple, overlapping affiliations regarding categories such as race, ethnicity, gender, age, religious affiliation, ability, and socioeconomic status. Informal, organic

conversations are particularly useful vehicles for acknowledging and celebrating intersectionality within our diversity and inclusion efforts.

College/Campus-Level

While individual agents can help bring about significant positive change, the leadership of all VCCS colleges must continue to pursue initiatives and enact policies that will lead directly to the hiring and retention of diverse faculty and administrators. Individual colleges, and even campuses, have different needs when it comes to closing the gap between minority faculty and administrators and the student bodies they serve. Therefore, colleges should implement an institutional framework to ensure that their diversity and inclusion efforts are documented and sustained over time. Some of what we propose below overlaps with recommendations made by the Task Force, but in highlighting them, we hope to bring renewed energy to these action steps and suggest specific ways to ensure their sustainability and accountability. To that end, our college-level recommendations focus on initiatives that are concrete, measurable and easily embedded into the fabric of the institution.

Hiring-process best practices

In an effort to learn more about the hiring practices at our member colleges, we began by interviewing our directors of Human Resources and learned that some of the more successful colleges are highly intentional in their efforts to recruit, hire, and retain minorities. For example, J. Sargeant Reynolds reports the following best practices, among others: job openings are advertised in publications that target minorities (racial and gender); human resources representatives attend HBCU (Historically Black Colleges and Universities) job fairs; efforts are made to hire from the Minority Professional Teaching Fellows Programs; and hiring committees are required by policy to have gender and racial diversity. Rappahannock Community College (RCC) and Germanna Community College target a diverse pool of strong

candidates in their job postings and recruitment efforts and remain highly intentional throughout the interview and hiring process. At RCC, when screening applicants, hiring committee members do not have access to identifying information about applicants' race or ethnicity. However, if qualified minorities are not selected for interviews, the recruitment coordinator will question the committee and help ensure that the process is fair and equitable. This has proved highly successful as minority teaching faculty at RCC increased from 6% to 24% in the span of about 10 years. Sharing successful hiring and retention practices among all VCCS colleges should be a formalized and ongoing process.

Cultural awareness

We agree with the Task Force that diversity efforts should include college-supported activities—both on campus and in the larger community—that raise awareness about cultural differences. One specific recommendation we propose is that colleges sponsor speaker series and book groups that address issues of diversity and inclusion. Reading groups could be comprised of diverse readers across campus focused on a common book, possibly taken from a selection of titles curated by the library. Alternatively, books could be selected based on a particular diversity issue and sponsored by specific campus departments or divisions. For example, nursing faculty and their students could read and discuss a book about the importance of diversity in the healthcare profession. When faculty become more familiar with topics and debates surrounding diversity and develop a vocabulary for discussing these issues, they will be more likely to incorporate these materials into their curricula. One specific recommendation of the Task Force was to “[i]nfuse diversity into the general education portion of the curriculum” (p. 9). Emphasizing diversity and inclusion within general education courses aligns well with the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia’s addition of civic engagement as one of the required General Education competencies. Because we believe that being an engaged citizen in a

democratic society necessitates a commitment to diversity and inclusion, and since educational access is a central tenet of VCCS's mission, merging them through civic engagement is a natural fit.

System-Level (VCCS)

Our group vigorously supports the Diversity Advocates program and VCCS Chief Diversity Officer Kate Haselhorst's efforts to implement it, and we predict that the Advocates will play a significant role in sustaining diversity initiatives at their colleges and at the System level. We would like to see a robust participation in the Diversity Advocates program among all levels of faculty, staff and administrators, ensuring diversified membership. As definitions of diversity evolve and best practices emerge nationally and statewide, we hope that leaders and members of the Diversity Advocates program will remain open to renewing and reinvigorating its processes and professional development. We envision the Advocates program as a vibrant, participatory community of practice that embraces lifelong learning, and is not focused narrowly on compliance. We believe the VCCS Diversity Advocates program has the potential to be a catalyst for positive change, providing the diversity and inclusion infrastructure we can rally around.

One strategy for developing a permanent link between the Diversity Advocates program and VCCS's long-standing commitment to professional development is to set aside time in the conference program for New Horizons 2019 to launch an inaugural Special Interest Group session. Special Interest Group (SIG) sessions are commonplace events among academic professional conferences, as they provide participants an opportunity for networking and coalition building. Furthermore, the selection of SIG topics often signal the host organization's values and support for the affinity groups listed in the official conference program. SIGs are

relatively easy to launch because they require minimal start-up organization. A SIG session at New Horizons 2020 would need a room and time set aside that is not in competition with other keynote or concurrent sessions (e.g. an early-morning or late-evening time slot) and advance promotion on the New Horizons website and via email, as appropriate. SIGs can evolve organically without an official leadership structure or pre-determined agenda, though it would be wise to designate a few people who could facilitate conversation and collect contact information of attendees at the inaugural SIG session. The main purpose of a Diversity Advocates SIG at New Horizons 2019 would be to provide space for the Advocates—and others interested in diversity and inclusion efforts—to gather, network, brainstorm, and plan for future action(s).

VCCS has made some great strides in its diversity and inclusion efforts, but perhaps the time has come to make a more significant financial investment by collaborating with an outside organization that has a proven record of accomplishment. The University of Southern California's Center for Urban Education (CUE) has been at the forefront of equity-minded research and practical strategies to promote diversity. CUE staff members facilitate positive change by guiding colleges—and even entire systems of higher education—as educators “question their own assumptions, recognize stereotypes that harm student success, and continually reassess their practices to create change” (“Equity-Mindedness”). One of CUE's innovations is *The Equity Scorecard*TM, which is both a “process and a data tool” whereby diversity data is collected and evaluated to tailor strategies to an institution's unique diversity equity needs (see Appendix B). Nearly 100 college and universities have collaborated with CUE, and the results are promising. One shining example is CUE's partnership with Los Angeles Trade-Technical College (LATTC), where researchers and higher education practitioners addressed common barriers to student success. The results were so impressive that the California

Committee on Awards for Innovation in Higher Education announced that LATTC will receive a \$2 million award for “boosting completion rates and making postsecondary education more accessible” (“Pathways”).

There are several tiers of involvement with CUE and the Equity process, from one-day workshops to a two-year contract that involves a greater commitment of resources. This year the CUE is hosting its second annual Institute for Equity in Hiring at Community Colleges, an event that was so popular in the first year that they are considering a biannual conference (Gordon, 2017).

We propose the following timeline of engagement with the CUE:

- VCCS Diversity and Inclusion Steering Committee and a coalition of diversity delegates study CUE research and documents.
- VCCS sends a coalition of diversity delegates to CUE’s March 2020 Institute for Equity in Hiring at Community Colleges.
- VCCS allocates funding and hosts a one or two-day CUE workshop at the System Office or another centrally located venue where a critical mass of VCCS diversity delegates would be invited to attend (see Appendix C, “Equity Scorecard™ Services and Partnerships,” which lists CUE’s range of costs).

CONCLUSION

Improving the diversity of faculty and administrators is a responsibility owned by everyone within the VCCS. At the foundation of these efforts are the intentions to improve student success and reflect the diversity within our colleges and communities. The recommendations in the paper suggest actions at three levels: individual, college, and system. There are great people who care deeply for students at all levels, and with some coordination and collaboration, we conclude that improved diversity among faculty and administrators is within our reach.

If the VCCS were to partner with the Center for Urban Education (CUE), or another diversity center, it would be a positive step in the right direction for all our colleges. Additionally, we believe that bolder—and more enduring—moves would be to both 1) determine how to best partner with the CUE or a similar east coast center on diversity and inclusion to implement strategies such as the *Equity Scorecard*TM across the state (expensive), and 2) add measurable benchmarks to increase diversity within faculty and administrators to both President's and the Chancellor's annual goals (inexpensive). With its commitment to system-wide diversity and inclusion, the VCCS is poised to become a leader in positive change among all institutions of higher learning.

The colleges, with their appointed campus diversity advocates, are also currently well situated to support the system-wide work to improve faculty and administrator diversity. The institutional framework we propose to support best hiring practices and raise awareness of cultural differences would positively impact diversity among our faculty and administrators to support student success and community alignment.

Individual faculty and administrators on our college campuses can work to improve the diversity within their ranks through the promotion of a culture of diversity and inclusion. This culture is nurtured by tempered radicals who engage with peers through informal interactions and direct engagement with campus structures to provide a welcoming and supportive environment for colleagues from a variety of cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

Ultimately, all these efforts to improve diversity among faculty and administrators are intended to improve student success in a variety of measures: retention, academic achievement, and completion. This work requires the coordinated efforts of numerous key stakeholders in our communities and on our campuses. We are excited for these challenges and eager to continue the work already underway.

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APPENDIX A

Diversity Data

The data on the following pages is a summary of the “Diversity Gap” for all 23 colleges as well as for the System Office. The three categories we studied were: Full-time faculty (F-T Faculty), part-time faculty (P-T Faculty), and Administrators/Managers. The data were gathered from the VCCS Diversity Dashboard, and the differences between the minority percentage in the service area were compared to the minority percentage within the larger population of the surrounding service regions of the colleges in each of the three categories. Once the “Diversity Gaps” were calculated, they were sorted and color-coded based on the smallest gap to the largest gap (green to red and respective shades in-between). The shading only indicates where the college stands in relation to the other colleges (i.e. green does not denote that the numbers are always positive). A positive number indicates that the diversity at the college is higher than the diversity in the service area (smaller or no gap). Negative numbers indicate areas where the percentage of the college’s diversity population is lower than the diversity percentage in the service area.

2017 Differences between College and Region					
F-T Faculty Minorities		P-T Faculty Minorities		Admin/Mgrs Minorities	
Mountain Empire	2%	Paul D. Camp	2%	Northern Virginia	10%
Rappahannock	0%	Northern Virginia	-1%	Wytheville	6%
Southwest Virginia	-2%	Mountain Empire	-3%	Southwest Virginia	5%
Blue Ridge	-2%	Wytheville	-3%	Paul D. Camp	3%
Wytheville	-2%	Virginia Highlands	-3%	Rappahannock	3%
Dabney S. Lancaster	-2%	Southwest Virginia	-4%	Eastern Shore	1%
Virginia Highlands	-2%	Lord Fairfax	-4%	Patrick Henry	-1%
Northern Virginia	-3%	Reynolds	-6%	Mountain Empire	-1%
Piedmont Virginia	-5%	Patrick Henry	-6%	Reynolds	-3%
Lord Fairfax	-6%	Thomas Nelson	-6%	Lord Fairfax	-3%
New River	-7%	Blue Ridge	-6%	VCCS	-3%
Patrick Henry	-7%	Dabney S. Lancaster	-6%	Virginia Western	-4%
Germanna	-8%	New River	-7%	Virginia Highlands	-4%
VCCS	-10%	Rappahannock	-7%	Southside Virginia	-4%
Central Virginia	-10%	VCCS	-7%	Thomas Nelson	-5%
Virginia Western	-12%	Eastern Shore	-9%	Tidewater	-5%
Eastern Shore	-13%	Germanna	-10%	Germanna	-7%
John Tyler	-15%	Central Virginia	-10%	Dabney S. Lancaster	-7%
Thomas Nelson	-15%	Tidewater	-10%	Central Virginia	-9%
Reynolds	-17%	Piedmont Virginia	-10%	Blue Ridge	-9%
Tidewater	-20%	Virginia Western	-11%	John Tyler	-10%
Paul D. Camp	-21%	John Tyler	-12%	New River	-11%
Southside Virginia	-27%	Danville	-18%	Danville	-16%
Danville	-29%	Southside Virginia	-18%	Piedmont Virginia	-16%

2017 Differences between College and Region					
F-T Faculty Women		P-T Faculty Women		Admin/Mgrs Women	
Rappahannock	25%	Southside Virginia	22%	Eastern Shore	40%
Germanna	20%	Wytheville	19%	New River	33%
Paul D. Camp	19%	Paul D. Camp	19%	Southside Virginia	26%
Wytheville	12%	Patrick Henry	17%	John Tyler	24%
Virginia Western	11%	Rappahannock	16%	Virginia Western	22%
Lord Fairfax	10%	Eastern Shore	11%	Mountain Empire	21%
John Tyler	9%	Tidewater	10%	Southwest Virginia	20%
Thomas Nelson	9%	Lord Fairfax	9%	Germanna	19%
Northern Virginia	8%	Reynolds	9%	Northern Virginia	19%
New River	8%	John Tyler	8%	Rappahannock	16%
Southside Virginia	5%	Thomas Nelson	7%	Tidewater	15%
Virginia Highlands	5%	Piedmont Virginia	7%	VCCS	14%
VCCS	5%	Germanna	7%	Lord Fairfax	12%
Piedmont Virginia	4%	Danville	6%	Thomas Nelson	10%
Blue Ridge	3%	VCCS	5%	Blue Ridge	9%
Tidewater	1%	Mountain Empire	4%	Virginia Highlands	7%
Southwest Virginia	1%	Virginia Western	3%	Reynolds	6%
Reynolds	1%	Northern Virginia	1%	Dabney S. Lancaster	4%
Eastern Shore	-1%	Dabney S. Lancaster	1%	Patrick Henry	2%
Patrick Henry	-2%	Virginia Highlands	0%	Wytheville	1%
Dabney S. Lancaster	-5%	Southwest Virginia	-1%	Piedmont Virginia	1%
Central Virginia	-9%	Blue Ridge	-3%	Paul D. Camp	-1%
Mountain Empire	-10%	New River	-8%	Central Virginia	-5%
Danville	-11%	Central Virginia	-8%	Danville	-20%

APPENDIX B



CENTER *for* URBAN
EDUCATION

THE CENTER FOR URBAN EDUCATION & CUE'S EQUITY SCORECARD

The Center for Urban Education leads socially conscious research and develop tools for institutions of higher education to produce equity in student outcomes.

Using data, process and benchmarking tools as well as structured inquiry activities embodied in what is called the Equity Scorecard™, CUE helps two- and four-year colleges and state higher education systems identify problems, develop interventions and implement equity goals to increase retention, transfer and graduation rates for historically underrepresented racial-ethnic groups.

Since its founding, more than ninety two-year and four-year colleges and universities in ten states have partnered with CUE to use the Equity Scorecard™ and learn about the concept of “equity-mindedness” that is the foundation for institutional responsibility. Our work is made possible with the financial support of many foundations.

CUE's Equity Scorecard

The Equity Scorecard™ is an inquiry process and set of data analysis tools organized in a five-phase course of action. It brings together education practitioners—administrative leaders, faculty and staff—to investigate issues of educational equity. In colleges and universities across the United States, equity issues concern the disparities in educational participation and outcomes among racial-ethnic groups that leave African Americans, Latinas, Latinos, Native Americans, Southeast Asians and Pacific Islanders, and other underrepresented groups at a disadvantage.

The Equity Scorecard empowers practitioners and decision makers to use data effectively to achieve equitable outcomes among racial-ethnic groups. Equity goals become real, manageable, and attainable through inquiry, the systematic process of using data for experimentation and improvement.

The Scorecard tools enable faculty, academic leaders, and staff in two- and four-year colleges to gain a nuanced understanding of the barriers that impede racial and ethnic equity.

APPENDIX C



CENTER *for* URBAN
EDUCATION

EQUITY SCORECARD SERVICES AND PARTNERSHIPS

WORKSHOPS

One-day workshops hosted by your institution include CUE staff and facilitators on-site, with groups of 10 to 60 people. Multi-day workshops and workshops for groups larger than 60 individuals are also possible. Cost for one day workshops: \$9,000 - \$30,000, two day \$20,000 - \$60,000.

Past webinar and workshop topics and themes:

- Equity-mindedness
- Data Use - Can include custom Vital Signs or BESST
- Creating and Sustaining Change
- Becoming practitioner-researchers
- Inquiry Protocols - examples include Syllabus review, web scan, and site-observations
- STEM education

DATA TOOLS

This option is recommended as an add-on to either a webinar or a workshop. CUE will create Vital Signs or a BESST tool based on data you provide. Each tool comes with a ½ day of instruction on how to use it, which can be done in-person or via virtual meeting: \$3,000 - \$8,000.

THE EQUITY SCORECARD PROCESS

The Equity Scorecard process is designed as a two-year, five phase initiative. Engaging in the full Equity Scorecard process has proven to be the most effective way to create and sustain changes that positively impact students, but for institutions that are not able to devote resources to the full process, CUE is able to create a custom partial process.

FULL EQUITY SCORECARD

For more information on the Equity Scorecard process and the success past partners have had, please visit cue.usc.edu. Cost for full Equity Scorecard (2 years): \$250,000 - \$400,000 per campus or team.

PARTIAL EQUITY SCORECARD

If you are interested in forming a team and engaging with CUE and the Equity Scorecard in a limited capacity please contact the center at rsoecue@usc.edu. Partial Equity Scorecard projects are developed in tandem with CUE and based around a specific area or topic. Cost for partial Equity Scorecard (6 months - 2 years): \$150,000 - \$250,000 per campus or team.

Note: The items and events below give only a general guideline as to past activities and prices. If you'd like to partner with CUE for anything from a one-day workshop to the full Equity Scorecard process the exact details of the partnership and the cost would be negotiated based on your needs. CUE is also available to do direct inquiry, such as interviews and document analysis, on your organizations.