# COAS Faculty Diversity and Inclusion Plan

June 14, 2019

This is the first document from the plans that will address the diversity and inclusion of the COAS faculty, staff, and the students. The focus of this documemnt is on the COAS faculty.

One of the major goals of an academic institution is to test new ideas. Intellectually diverse groups will produce more such ideas and lead to innovation. Innovation will be more likely with increased diversity in all its many forms. Furthermore, diversity is critical for students’ learning. In a diverse environment, students learn more [1-2] because students learn from each other and they learn more from a diverse group of students. Similarly, students learn more from a diverse group of faculty and staff.

Our goal is to strive towards broad diversity; however, our first step would be to increase the demographic diversity of our faculty, staff, and students in a way that reflects and then goes beyond the diversity of UNF’s service area. The proposed plan should bring us closer to this goal in the area of faculty diversity.

## I. Increase the awareness of diversity initiatives

I.1. Issue: COAS strives for broad diversity. However, the first step should be to approach the demography of the UNF service region. It should be noted that the demographic diversity of the service area differs significantly from the demography of UNF. Information about demographic composition of the college and demography of the area should be shared with the departments. As an initial objective toward meeting the goal of broad diversity, departments within COAS will need to substantively increase the number of faculty, staff, and students from underrepresented groups to reflect the diversity of the communities of northeast Florida.

I.1.Action: Distribute yearly demographic data regarding faculty, staff, and students. Demographic disparities can be discussed as a part of department's meetings in the fall semester and at the start of the hiring process. Potentially, the associate deans could coordinate such meetings and hold appropriate department chairs, search committee members, and directors accountable for improving diversity and inclusiveness. For instance, the chairs and directors should be able to address the issue of diversity in their annual reports and the search committee chairs should be able to address it in the hiring memo that is forwarded to the Dean.

I.2. Issue: The diversity initiatives need to be visible on COAS and departmental web pages. For instance, one could have 2-3 rotating profiles of faculty from underrepresented groups that would be displayed on the departmental and college web pages. Furthermore, the diversity initiatives such as Department of Communication Diversity plan could be highlighted on the college web page.

I.2.Action: The COAS webmaster will be tasked with development of these components of COAS and departmental web pages by the Spring 2020 and coordinated with the Diversity and Inclusion Plan development committee. Additional resources such as the Commission on Diversity and Inclusion, potential diversity focused awards, etc. will be referenced on the web page.

I.3. Issue: When new faculty members come onboard, they have very limited information about life in Jacksonville. In principle, this information is available. However, there is no centralized document that would have it all and such document could be quite helpful for a new faculty.

I.3. Action: The college in coordination with the departments will develop the "COAS resource document” that would be given to new faculty by the Spring 2020. The document will include information about university support services but also about life in Jacksonville such as things to see/visit in the area, restaurants, dry cleaners, hair salons, doctors, shopping, etc. Such a document could be created through a Canvas course or other easily available electronic format. Interested faculty could self-enroll and post suggestions on it. The information about this course could be provided at the university level during new faculty orientation and the invitations to join the course will be sent to all new faculty members.

## II. Hiring process

II.1. Issue. Quite often diversity is not considered in the hiring process.

II.1. Action: Consider diversity in the search evaluation criteria, particularly in the departments where diversity is low. Make sure that job advertisement ads have appropriate statements. Search committees will be provided resources on how to consider diversity while adhering to search and screen policies and applicable laws. (EOD will be a partner in this.) All hiring memos should state how the diversity was considered in the hiring process.

II.2. Issue: Quite often the members of a search committee are unaware of their biases. This can have a very strong negative effect on potential chances of hiring a faculty from underrepresented groups.

II.2. Action: We suggest that the search committee members participate in a series of cultural competency workshops that underscore the importance of diversity as well as awareness of implicit biases. Relevant workshops are available through the Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity, and student affairs. To accommodate faculty schedules, multiple session could be offered at start of each semester. Given often complex faculty schedules, it is suggested to offer such training during one week at the beginning of a semester. The availability of the training during each day of the week will allow for maximum faculty participation. Alternatively, a short online module could help.

II.3. Issue: The budget for position advertisements is limited. Very often such budgets do not allow for targeted advertisement on websites focused toward underrepresented groups. However, the advertisement on such websites would serve as a message that UNF is actively looking for faculty from underrepresented groups. This in turn may attract such faculty to UNF.

II.3. Action: The Dean’s Office will work on a fund that would provide financial support for position advertisements targeting the faculty from underrepresented groups. This fund is expected to become available by the Fall 2019. The availability of these funds may be tied to committee members’ participation in the cultural competency workshops. Diversity advertisement funds could also be made available to support participation in conferences and associations that offer opportunities for recruiting faculty from underrepresented groups.

II.4. Issue: Very often faculty from underrepresented groups are attracted to other more actively recruiting institutions. UNF and COAS need to actively and competitively recruit faculty from underrepresented groups.

II.4. Action:

(a): At the beginning of each academic year, the Dean’s office, in consultation with the departments, will identify venues most likely to yield candidates from underrepresented groups for open faculty lines and send college representatives to those conferences, such as the McKnight annual fellow meeting and the Southern Regional Education Board (SBER) meeting. The representatives will share the information about interested candidates from underrepresented groups with the departments.

(b) Potential candidates from underrepresented groups regularly give presentations at professional conferences. COAS faculty will be encouraged to approach the potential candidate and invite them for a departmental seminar. This will help create a connection between the potential candidate and UNF. Such connection may increase the likelihood of the candidate applying for UNF job. The Dean’s office will work with the departments to financially support such invitations.

(c) Grow our own: COAS departments could encourage strong undergraduates from underrepresented groups to pursue graduate education and mentor them about careers in academia. When these students enroll in UNF graduate programs, we should provide them with teaching and research opportunities as a part of their graduate studies, with the aim of increasing the likelihood that they will enter academia.

II.5. Issue: Procedures that contribute to increased diversity have long been highlighted during required EOD training for the search committee members. However, many faculty view this training as a mere formality. College- and departmental- level encouragement of the practices leading to improved diversity of the college will go a long way.

II.5. Action: The search committee members will be encouraged to look at the qualified candidates from underrepresented groups in the applicant pool. All hiring memos will be required to provide a short report documenting the actions taken to improve the diversity of the applicant pool. Often small changes lead to significantly more diverse pools. For instance, including several candidates from underrepresented groups in the phone interview list could make a significant difference; the search committee could also pose a phone interview question to a candidate about involving the members of underrepresented groups in the candidate’s research and teaching. Leadership from the search committee chair will be essential.

II.6. Issue: Very often the prospective faculty members have equally talented spouses or partners. Right now there is no codified college program that would help the spouse or the partner gain employment at UNF.

II.6. Action: The Dean’s office will work with Academic Affaires to establish a trailing spouse assistance program for new hires as soon as practically possible.

II.7. Issue: The establishment of UNF Parental Leave policy is a great step forward. However, an improved Parental Leave policy will attract faculty to UNF. This is a family-friendly policy that could help retain the faculty and could be instrumental to improvement of COAS diversity.

II.7. Action: A more generous parental leave program should be established. Clearly, this is a university wide issue. However, the Dean could express support for a more generous policy to the union and upper administration.

II.8. Issue: The chairs need to be aware of diversity initiatives. However, there are many new chairs who do not yet possess all the knowledge necessary for a successful hire of faculty from underrepresented groups. The chairs need appropriate training.

II.8. Action: The New Chairs Training organized by the Dean’s office will provide the training.

## III. Faculty Mentoring and retention

III.1. Issue: Faculty retention is a critical component of the Diversity and Inclusion plan. It is imperative to have a support system for the faculty to assure their growth at UNF. This support system should include a Faculty Mentorship Program. The mentor will help the faculty make UNF home and advance their careers.

III.1. Action: By the Fall of 2019, the departments are to develop their own mentorship program either through individual mentorship or a mentorship group. The mentors will be coordinated at the college level. This could be done either through a committee or through direct coordination with an associate dean. The COAS departments in coordination with the Dean’s office will annually review their mentoring programs to make sure these programs use the best practices implemented at other institutions of higher education.

The following is a non-exhaustive list of potential mentorship services:

* encourage the departments to institute a position of mentorship coordinator
* informal mentoring including social and emotional support
* consultations regarding progress toward tenure and promotion
* advice in the preparation of promotion and tenure dossiers
* periodic workshops on topics affecting under-represented faculty
* receptions each term to encourage networking and community building
* yearly professional development days
* social media sites to encourage communication
* supplemental financial support to enable participation in conferences and other professional meetings
* potential collaborative research and publications

III.2. Issue: Other institutions of higher education such as University of Wisconsin have developed training programs focused on hiring and retention of faculty from underrepresented groups. COAS faculty and administrators could take advantage of such training.

III.2. Action: The Dean’s office will work with Academic Affairs to secure funding for such training.

III.3. Issue: The mentorship work should be compensated. A faculty mentor will receive a teaching release after mentoring a certain number of faculty.

III.3. Action: Such a program could be a part of the existing course banking policy found in the CBA. The COAS Dean’s Office will commit funding to this program.

III.4. Issue: The results of the Instruction Satisfaction Questionnaire (ISQ) are an integral part of teaching assessment at UNF. However, existing literature [3-6] strongly suggests that ISQs are biased against faculty of color, female faculty, and non-native English speakers. In particular, the “overall rating of instructor” question displays the most significant bias, which can be as large as 0.5 points.

III.4. Action: The Dean’s office will work with UFF and the upper administration to make them aware of these biases. Potential modification of ISQs so that an average score from all the questions but “overall rating of instructor” will be reported in addition to the “overall rating” score.

III.5. Issue: The faculty from underrepresented groups often serve on significantly higher number of the committees and mentor students from underrepresented groups. Student mentoring is often unmeasured, unplanned, unscheduled and takes significant amount of time that is ultimately taken from faculty’s scholarship. These issues are often overlooked.

III.5. Action: The chairs will be encouraged to collect information on faculty members’ service assignments and student mentoring (formal and informal), and share workload data with the department’s faculty. The Dean’s office will work with the departments’ chair to help provide this information to the faculty. Chairs will use this data to work toward equitable workload assignments. One also needs to work towards addressing these issues in the CBA.

III.6. Issue: The faculty from underrepresented groups often face headwinds with many issues at the department. These include student biases, faculty biases, isolation, hypervisibility and many more.

III.6. Action: The chairs will need to identify, monitor, and report these issues in the day to day operation of the department, departmental meetings, the chairs annual evaluations, progress towards tenure, mid-tenure reviews. Intentional faculty mentoring needs to address these issues.

## IV. Diversity initiatives and Financial support

IV.1. Issue: UNF has a number of student-centered diversity initiatives, such as Connections Student Mentoring by the Intercultural Center for Peace. Such initiatives can make a significant impact on success of students from underrepresented groups at UNF. The information about such initiatives should be shared with all the relevant advisors and faculty members.

IV.1. Action: the advisers will be made aware of the student-focused diversity initiatives. The COAS Dean’s office will supervise the dissemination of this information and include student representation in planning and execution of activities. The faculty will be encouraged to provide mentorship to students.

IV.2. Issue: Currently there is only limited support for the diversity-focused initiatives such as courses, minors, awards. No diversity improvement plan can be successful without such support.

IV.2. Action: The Dean’s office will provide additional resources such as course releases, awards, and stipends to stimulate faculty interest in diversity-related activities. In particular, the following initiatives will be supported by the Dean’s office:

* Research Enhancement Award with diversity component. This could be called Diversity Enhancement Award.
* Teaching releases to develop specific diversity focused programs

## V. Diversity and Inclusion Policies assessment

V.1. Issue: The college needs to have a robust feedback system to help college leadership and faculty identify and expand successful initiatives and improve or replace those that are not working as intended. Exit surveys of faculty members who have left UNF can help us to assess our policies.

V.1. Action: The Dean’s office will collect, analyze, and summarize the information from the faculty exit surveys. For instance, the Dean’s office could arrange for a confidential meeting of departing faculty members with the Dean or one of the Associate Deans. The information garnered at the meeting will be summarized in a report that will assure anonymity of the responders. This report will be shared with the committee and will lead to additional policy changes. Open discussions from year to year with faculty will address concerns before they fester.

V.2. Issue: Fixing problems before they lead to the departure of a faculty member is critical for faculty retention. A chair of the department may not be aware of her/his actions that might have created a personal conflict or management issue. It is important to have a line of communication that would make such feedback possible while preserving the anonymity of a faculty member.

V.2. Action: The Dean’s office in conjunction with the departments will create an annual questionnaire that will solicit feedback on existing and proposed college and departmental policies. This may include faculty feedback on the hiring process, the way the teaching and service assignments are distributed within departments, and other relevant issues.

## References

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