Office for Diversity
2017 Diversity Plan Accountability Report

Unit: College of Dentistry **Date:** November 21, 2017

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Introduction:
Texas A&M University College of Dentistry (COD) students, employees, patients, and volunteers represent a wide array of cultural backgrounds, preferences, and beliefs. Pleased to have attained status as a national leader in student diversity, COD identifies diversity and inclusiveness among its core values and is committed to maintaining a welcoming and supportive climate. All within the College are encouraged to show respect for individual differences, seek to understand and value the perspectives of others, and participate in the creation and sustainability of an accessible environment that promotes fairness and equality. Similarly, the College commits to increasing access to dental care and improving the oral health of the diverse community of Texans through the provision of culturally sensitive care for patients within the College and at community sites in the north Texas area and throughout the state.

Several events have helped to shape this 2017 College of Dentistry (COD) Diversity and Accountability Report. In December 2016, the Committee on Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access (I.D.E.A. Committee) was established: (1) to support COD's vision and core values to promote a diverse, welcoming, supportive, and culturally competent environment that improves access to oral health care; and (2) to improve communications and interactions among the diverse faculty, staff, student, and patient populations.

In keeping with practices at peer institutions, steps were taken by the I.D.E.A. Committee to develop a college-level diversity plan.

- In March 2017, a campus climate survey was administered to faculty, staff, and students.
- In June 2017, the I.D.E.A. Committee and other select leaders from within the College participated in a retreat to determine strategies to address known concerns.
- Based on these results from the retreat and the climate survey, the COD Diversity and Inclusion Plan (D&I Plan) was developed.

This Diversity and Accountability report reflects strategies that are either in progress or planned as based on the D&I Plan.

1. Recruitment. Assessment of what was learned from peers, and description of future plans, including barriers, to attain a strong, demonstrable presence of diversity in our faculty, staff, students, and administrators.

Faculty. Data presented during the 2016 ADEA Diversity Workshop, recognized COD among U.S. dental schools with the highest percentage of underrepresented minority (URM) faculty. This meant that the rates among our peers are comparable to or lower than ours. Though this was intended to motivate other schools represented in the audience, it also served as a wakeup for COD attendees. This information was shared with leaders at the College and a recent review of the current status of COD faculty indicates that 14% of faculty identify as URMs. To further improve this number, a multilayered process is planned to assure consideration of a diverse pool of candidates for faculty positions. Strategies used by other institutions of higher learning to support diversity in

faculty recruitment are being studied and will be provided to aid administrators and chairs in faculty search and hiring activities. In addition, URM students in the predoctoral dental program are encouraged and assisted in preparation as academicians through a Center of Excellence initiative which pays tuition and fees associated with matriculating in the TAMHSC Health Professions Education Program. In return for their training, students make a commitment to teach upon completion of the EDHP course of study.

A number of administrative barriers to faculty recruitment were found. One barrier was the lack of a written COD policy to guide recruitment within the context of diversity and inclusion. There were no specific measures that stressed the importance of seeking URM faculty and URM graduate students who might become faculty, including a lack of financial resources to support search committee actions for this purpose. Through the D&I Plan, budgeting for recruitment of URMs was established as an administrative priority. Another problem is that reduced state funding poses a barrier to recruitment which must be addressed at the governmental level.

Staff. Forty percent (40%) of COD staff identify as URMs. While these numbers indicate that current hiring practices are effective, measures are being reviewed to insure future success. As with faculty, the lack of available time and resources exist as barriers for staff.

Students. URM students represent 37% of the student body**.** The College will continue measures that are already in place to continue to recruit a diverse student body. Continued implementation of the pipeline program, managed by the Office of Student Development, is strongly encouraged. The recently renewed funding by HRSA for "Bridge to Dentistry: Awareness to Practicing/Teaching/Research" will allow continuation of the Center of Excellence initiatives that target these students as well as URM faculty. A loss of this funding would entail a significant blow to the College's efforts in this area.

The Admissions Committee will monitor the holistic file review and other components of the admissions process to assure continued success in recruiting and admitting a diverse student body. Continued support of scholarships and other incentives that encourage students from URM populations to matriculate at the College is also endorsed by the D&I Plan.

2. Retention. Assessment of what was learned from peers and the description of future plans, including barriers, to retain diversity in our faculty, staff, students, and administrators.

Faculty. The plan supports increased emphasis on current efforts to identify and enroll URM faculty in professional development initiatives. The Center of Excellence (COE) and Faculty Mentoring and Career Development Program (FMCDP) focus on enhancing skills in teaching and leadership. Upon completion, it is anticipated that participants are better positioned to pursue advancement opportunities. In addition, recognition of faculty progress and accomplishments in the area of diversity and inclusion will be included in annual faculty evaluations and in the promotion and tenure process. The COE is funded by the HRSA grant; FMCDP is funded by the office of the dean.

Staff. One strategy to improve staff retention includes identification and development of individuals from diverse backgrounds to advance as managers and leaders. In addition, awards for outstanding achievements toward building and promoting an inclusive environment are under consideration.

Students. The D&I Plan promotes the assessment of additional information on departmental scorecards as a new strategy. In addition to current information, department heads will also (1) assess and report student success in courses housed within their departments, with particular focus on URM students; and (2) put measures in place to improve student outcomes, where needed.

Lack of available time for professional development activities has been identified as a barrier to retention of both faculty and staff. Through the Plan, scheduled training and mentoring activities will be set and time for faculty/staff to participate will be integrated into their schedules. A potential barrier to student retention is low academic performance due to the unwillingness of students to take advantage of resources (tutoring, counseling, etc.) Another is stress. And still another is students' perception of the lack of support by some faculty and staff. In response to these issues, routine, mandatory cultural competency training for faculty and staff (focusing on teaching and interpersonal skills) has been scheduled to improve/prevent negative interactions between employees and students. It is hoped that in doing so, negative feedback on social media platforms will be minimized. To address stress, plans are underway to encourage student engagement in wellness activities. Similarly, peer and faculty mentors will be instructed to encourage students to seek out and use available support services/resources such as:

- *Academic Counseling* and support which occurs on a variety of levels within the College.
- *Peer Tutors* (students) who are hired to work with other students who are experiencing academic difficulties in clinical and pre-clinical courses. This service is offered at no cost to the tutees.
- *Advanced Tutoring* for students, beyond that provided by their peers, is also available from graduate students, residents and/or faculty.
- An administrative team, known as the *Student Success Team* (SST), receives performance updates on students and meets periodically to discuss student academic progress and propose intervention strategies.
- *Exam Accommodations and Learning Disability Services are also offered to s*tudents who have been diagnosed by a licensed professional as having a learning disability that qualifies the student to receive exam accommodations under the provisions of the American Disability Act (ADA).

The retention initiatives for students are possible because of the HRSA grant funds previously mentioned.

3. **Unit Climate**. Assessment of what was learned from peers, including campus and unit climate assessment data and description of future plans, including barriers, to enhance the educational environment where the opportunity to fully participate does not inappropriately or unintentionally depend on elements of an individual's identity.

The College of Dentistry commits to lead and actively support initiatives that foster teamwork, collaboration, and communication among people of varying backgrounds; create a climate that accommodates various racial and ethnic constituencies; and fully recognize, value and integrate diversity and inclusion in the pursuit of academic excellence. Practices and processes established by the Plan to promote a welcoming, inclusive, and outstanding working and learning environment are described below:

- **Engage faculty, staff, and students in regularly recurring cultural competence training initiatives.** By December 31, 2017**,** current faculty and staff will participate in cultural competence training via TrainTraq; this training will be repeated on a biennial basis. Beginning in February, 2018, face-to-face small group training sessions will be conducted for each department and repeated every five years. For new hires, both TrainTraq and face-to-face

training measures will commence within the first year of employment and repeated at least once every two and five years, respectively. Training for students is a part of the curriculum and implementation will continue as approved by the Curriculum Committee in collaboration with the Director of Diversity and course directors.

- **Create regularly scheduled interactive and interdisciplinary encounters that result in a culture of inclusion. Interactive discussions, workshops, and presentations about the positive benefits of achieving a culture of inclusive excellence will be offered.** COD will sponsor guest speakers with expertise in promoting inclusiveness, arrange for participation in workshops/presentations, and encourage bonding through activities described below:
    - "Lunch Bunches," groups to promote unity and a sense of belonging.
    - "Cultural chats," led by varying groups based on racial/ethnic/nationality who discuss their customs and cultural beliefs with others in the College.
    - Group-driven service projects that promote structured "families" such as adopt a school/student initiatives.

During the spring semester, the *Speakers Series* was kicked off, by then Vice President and Associate Provost for Diversity, Dr. Christine Stanley, with a presentation on **Diversity and Inclusion at Texas A&M University**. Later, Dr. Brian Williams, the trauma surgeon who provided care for police officers shot during the July 7, 2016 attack, shared his experience. The I.D.E.A. committee also provided support for the screening of a film regarding education of members of the Bahi' faith in Iran.

- **Establish metrics to monitor the climate and progression toward achievement of diversity and inclusion goals.** The climate survey was analyzed and the results were discussed with the IDEA Committee and COD deans and directors. Implementation and assessment timelines have been established for addressing noted concerns. This information will be presented to faculty and staff during their upcoming retreats in January and, later, with students. The survey is scheduled for re-administration every 3 years. Similarly, annual administration of the graduation survey to students during their last semester of matriculation will continue. Finally, in addition to changes to scorecards described above (student retention), department heads and administrative officers will also report rates of diversity among employees and actions to improve as needed.
- **Collaborate across U.S. and international cultures to foster global engagement and citizenship**. Diversity team leaders and students will be encouraged and supported to participate in national meetings that focus on diversity, such as the ADEA Diversity Workshop, the National Conference on Race and Ethnicity, National Student Leadership Conference, and the National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education.
- **Communicate the College's commitment to excellence at all levels.** Beyond the communication of climate survey results and related strategies, other activities include development of a diversity website, posting of signage around the campus, and giving stakeholders the opportunity to be involved in choosing information to be included in the awareness campaign.

During the planning retreat, the following climate-related barriers were identified:

- Lack of communication
- Lack of training/education on backgrounds and lifestyles

- Making time to build a climate of equity and inclusiveness
- Awareness of discrimination problems (negative impact of certain behaviors and attitudes)
- Attitudes of faculty and staff
- Self-awareness of bias and limitations

The D&I Plan includes measures aimed at alleviating said barriers.

4. **Equity**. Assessment of what was learned from peers to address equity issues at COD and description of future plans, including barriers, to address equity or inequity

COD endeavors to ensure inclusion, equal opportunity, and success for all with special attention to underrepresented/underserved populations, communities, and community members. The College will incorporate within the language of its mission and goals assurances that students, staff, faculty, and patients - regardless of identity or other cultural identifiers - are all treated equitably. Plans are in progress to:

- **Identify and support measures that address retention of faculty and staff including equity in compensation and advancement opportunities.** The College will adhere to the tenets of the Equal Pay Act to assure that all employees are given equal compensation for equal work. Faculty salaries at other institutions are regularly reviewed and compared to those of COD faculty and, where needed, equity adjustments are made as the budget allows. Approximately every two years, the College compares faculty salaries by rank and years in rank with the national data on faculty salaries provided by the American Dental Education Association. In the past, due to budgetary constraints, we have strived to have faculty at least at the National median by the time they have been in their current rank for 5-6 years. The next salary study is due and will gather information required to get current faculty up to the national 75% once they have been in their current rank 5-6 years. Once we know how much that will cost, we will attempt to seek funding sources to fill that gap. Requests for faculty equity come from department heads as needed and compare the faculty needing equity with peers in the department. We have standardized stipends for faculty while they are also performing administrative duties.
- Several administrators, nearing retirement, observe faculty who might assume their responsibilities, and once identified, provide informal mentoring. Effective in the Fall 2017 semester, Dr. Amanda Muns and Dr. Janna Burnett were appointed as co-directors of the preclinical fixed prosthodontics course after having been mentored by Dr. Amp Miller, the former course director.
- **Continue measures that are already in place to retain a diverse student body.** Tutoring and other assistance for URM students should also be sustained. In addition, course directors and department heads will assess and report student success with particular insight to URM students, and put measures in place to improve student outcomes, as needed.

Funding is the most notable barrier of concern. Funding cuts and potential hiring freezes by the state pose a threat to the ability to offer equity salary increases and start up packages.