



**Student Affairs and
Academic Support**

**DIVERSITY, EQUITY,
AND INCLUSION
ADVISORY COUNCIL**

**Spring 2022
Listening Tour Report**

Executive Summary

In January 2022, Dr. Dennis Pruitt established the Student Affairs and Academic Support Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Advisory Council, with representation from each Associate Vice President/Dean of Students unit. At the direction of Dr. Pruitt, the Advisory Council adopted three goals:

1. Create and maintain structures and resources that support diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives.
2. Develop a Student Affairs and Academic Support DEI knowledge bank.
3. Identify DEI education and training resources.

Based on these stated goals, the Advisory Council identified three primary areas of focus for its work:

1. Recruiting, training, developing, and retaining employees (Employee)
2. Student employment and leadership opportunities (Std Employment)
3. Employee and student participation in DEI training (Training)

The DEI Advisory Council conducted a listening tour of the Division. The purpose of the listening tour was to learn what unit efforts were already occurring within the three primary areas of focus. Nine questions directly connected to the three focus areas were asked of 51 people from all levels of the organization. Results for each question were combined and analyzed for themes.

Recommendations came from the themes that emerged during the interview process. Three of the recommendations have already been completed (Change the name of the Council from Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Achievement (DEIA) to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI); HR should include diverse platforms/outlets automatically in advertising, and act on the results of the workplace survey).

The top recommendations were to create a diversity statement and to write a DEI plan for the Division of Student Affairs and Academic Support. Several recommendations centered around the Human Resources function, including creating EPMS DEI objectives based on job class, standardizing DEI training and expectations for search committees, and identifying unique DEI retention efforts. For students, the HR-type recommendation was to list all campus employment opportunities in Handshake. Asset mapping, centralized web DEI resources, and promoting and enhancing Division recognition and awards for DEI efforts were other near-term recommendations. Other recommendations were longer-term projects and include providing scholarship funding for DEI professional development, using the 4Cs approach to DEI work, creating an online DEI toolbox of Division resources, and then converting to templates for all to use and adopt, creating formal DEI training for professional and student employees, and creating a DEI core curriculum training for student employees and peer leaders.

Background & Goals

The Division of Student Affairs and Academic Support (SAAS) believes in providing a superior student experience and creating an inclusive environment that empowers staff and students to reach their full potential. As such, the SAAS Division made a concerted effort to facilitate Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) work. While some improvements have been implemented, an effort to accelerate and coordinate progress took place in 2020 when the Vice President for Student Affairs and Academic Support appointed a Taskforce to develop an action plan and identify a sustainable infrastructure for division-wide DEI leadership.

The Task Force issued a report with recommendations including creating a DEI Advisory Council for SAAS. The Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Achievement Advisory Council was formed and convened in January 2022. A formal application and job description were developed for potential council members. Each AVP/DoS unit conducted interviews to select a representative for the Council. To that end, the Council includes six representatives, one from each Associate Vice President (AVP) of Student Affairs and Academic Support and the Dean of Students Units, and two co-chairs. Advisory Council membership is as follows:

- Co-Chair: Silvia Patricia Rios Hussain, Ph.D., Associate Vice President for Student Success
- Co-Chair: Kirsten Kennedy, Ph.D., Associate Vice President for Student Housing & Sustainability
- Dean of Students Representative: Kaitlin Yoffie, Coordinator for Residential Student Conduct, Office of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity
- Enrollment Management Representative: Shanna Robinson, Gamecock Guarantee Coordinator, TRIO Programs
- Student Affairs Central Office and Planning, Assessment, and Innovation Representative: Alicia Bervine, Director of Human Resources, Division of Student Affairs and Academic Support
- Student Housing & Sustainability Representative: Ray DeJesus, Assistant Director of Custodial Staff, University Housing
- Student Life Representative: Shay Malone, Ph.D., Director of Multicultural Student Affairs, Student Life
- Student Success Representative: Zo Sediqi, Manager of Mentorship and Experiences, Career Center

The DEI Advisory Council's work aligns with the university's "Strategic Priority #4: Increase Diversity" from the institution's strategic plan, "For Carolina: A Path to Excellence." Specifically, it calls on the University community to "Cultivate a more diverse, equitable and inclusive campus culture where every individual, regardless of background, has the full opportunity to flourish and thrive."

(https://sc.edu/about/our_leadership/president/strategic_plan/index.php). Within that strategic priority, there are three goals which include the following:

- Improve the relative racial/ethnic and gender representation of our student body, staff, and faculty.
- Ensure that there is equity for all students and staff and faculty members across key measures of success.
- Create, promote, support, and assess a campus culture/climate that embodies our Carolinian Creed and makes every member of our university community feel that they are valued and affirmed.

Additionally, the work aligns with the Division of Student Affairs and Academic Support Goal 3, which calls for the Division to "build a safe, civil, and nondiscriminatory environment that ensures equity and fosters inclusion for members of our community"

(https://sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/student_affairs/toolbox/strategic_plan/index.php).

The Council adopted the DEI definitions presented by the Taskforce during their March 19, 2021 presentation.

- **Diversity** is the representation of all our varied identities and differences (race, ethnicity, gender, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, socio-economic status, thinking and communication styles, etc.), collectively and as individuals. We should be seeking to proactively engage, understand, and draw on a variety of perspectives, believing that the solution to problems can be found by affirming our similarities, as well as by finding value in our differences.
- **Equity** seeks to ensure fair treatment, equality of opportunity, and fairness in access to information and resources for all. This is only possible in an environment built on respect and dignity.
- **Inclusion** builds a culture of belonging by actively inviting the contribution and participation of all people, believing that every person's voice adds value and striving to create balance in the face of power differences. True inclusion holds that no one person can or should be called upon to represent an entire community.

The Advisory Council's goals are as follows:

1. Create and maintain structures and resources that support diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives.
2. Develop a Student Affairs and Academic Support DEI knowledge bank.
3. Identify DEI education and training resources.

The Advisory Council identified three primary areas of focus for its work

1. Recruiting, training, developing, and retaining employees (Employee)

2. Student employment and leadership opportunities (Std Employment)
3. Employee and student participation in DEI training (Training)

Listening Tour Methodology

The Council engaged in structured listening tours of each unit within the SAAS division to start the work. Listening tours were conducted by a pair of council members, one Council member from the unit being interviewed and another Council member from outside the unit. The Council developed a Listening protocol including nine primary questions/prompts and follow-up questions with direct ties to the Council's areas of focus (see appendix A).

The primary questions/prompts are as follows:

1. Describe your workplace culture.
2. Describe the diversity, equity, or inclusion in your area.
3. How is the unit/department putting DEI into practice?
4. Describe diversity, equity, and inclusion when recruiting and onboarding new professional staff.
5. Describe diversity, equity, and inclusion when recruiting and onboarding new student employees and peer leaders.
6. Tell us about the DEI programs/training you have available in your area.
7. Within our three focus areas, what does an ideal campus environment that is welcoming, inclusive, and increasingly diverse look like from your perspective?
8. What programs and services are provided to retain staff?
9. What kind of leadership efforts would represent a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion?

Listening tours were conducted both in-person and virtually. After some sessions, questions were sent back to the groups, which provided an opportunity for them to submit additional feedback. A total of 51 individuals were interviewed, 21.6% were males, 78.4% were females; 21.6% were people of color; 33,3% identified as directors/managers/supervisors; 66.6% as professional and administrative staff.

Findings and Insights

Overall, the listening tours appeared to be welcomed by participants. The primary questions/prompts are listed below, followed by the findings for each:

- 1) Describe your workplace culture. Participants shared that happiness at work is more than the tasks that are completed. Participants stated that workplace satisfaction is also related to the extent to which personal values, vision, and work style align with that of the organization. The staff interviewed from SAAS reported that they felt positively connected to the mission and vision.

In Spring 2021, the Division of Student Affairs and Academic Support identified courage, inclusion, innovation, integrity, and services as its division values. The interviewees also reported that the culture of their workplace was collaborative and welcoming. In their view, the pandemic created additional work and the Great Resignation resulted in fewer employees. Because of this, the interviewees reported feeling over-worked and burned out. Handling additional tasks to compensate for understaffing not only increased employees' workload but also intensified feelings of stress and burnout.

- 2) Describe diversity, equity, and inclusion in your area. Many interviewees stated that DEI has been coming into greater focus in their units. The consensus among those interviewed is that units within SAAS strive to create a work environment where, regardless of who they are or what job they have, employees feel equally involved and supported in the workplace. Interviewees mentioned DEI training opportunities, staff retreats designed to increase belonging and workplace morale, intentionality in hiring practices, and opportunities for conversations centered on DEI.
- 3) How is your unit/department putting DEI into practice? Interviewees reported that AVP units were active in advancing DEI initiatives; however, those efforts lacked consistency and coordination, resulting in potential duplication of effort. Similarly, the interviews brought to light unique initiatives taking place in some departments that other units could put into practice. Across SAAS, units are at varying levels of breadth and depth in advancing DEI work. Some AVP units infuse DEI into all aspects of their operation, while other units are less advanced in DEI integration. For example, some units are offering training and education for students and staff, while others are allowing the space for DEI conversations to occur organically. A few units are using the Kirwan Institute as the basis for implicit bias training for employment application review. One unit penned a Diverse Aware Hiring Guide, which instructs search committees on how to conduct a structured process that cultivates a diverse applicant pool, creates evaluation rubrics based on the position description, and assigns an equity advocate. One unit incorporates its mission and value statement into interview questions and performance reviews. Yet other units are looking for opportunities where voices and views that are not currently represented can be heard.
- 4) Describe diversity, equity, and inclusion when recruiting and onboarding new professional staff. When units recruit new professional staff, they frequently use diversity questions provided by Human Resources. Units reported that they incorporated a diversity statement into the job announcement. As an employee is onboarded, the diversity efforts appear to be less structured. For example, interviewees described informal practices like being encouraged to attend diversity-focused professional development, to create an inclusive environment, and to participate in unit-wide discussions on DEI. Interviewees indicated a desire to have more formalized recruiting and onboarding practices that highlight DEI priorities. Interest in a more prescribed process

stemmed from a general dissatisfaction with the wide quality variance in DEI onboarding initiatives, with some units not including DEI in their onboarding process at all. Interviewees expressed a desire to have a unified DEI onboarding experience so that new employees can make connections and build community, and so that the expectations are consistent Division-wide.

- 5) Describe diversity, equity, and inclusion when recruiting and onboarding new student employees and peer leaders. The quality and quantity of DEI onboarding activities varied widely for student employees and peer leaders. Some units had no formal process for recruiting or onboarding student staff or peer leaders in general. Other units had formalized recruiting and onboarding processes, but they spent little time on DEI-related topics. Yet other units invested time into DEI-related professional development for their student employees and peer leaders. In the recruitment phase for student employees and peer leaders, interviewees indicated that they made efforts to recruit marginalized students into their programs. Some interviewees stated that investing heavily in onboarding for student staff is difficult because there is high turnover in those positions. Additionally, when hiring student staff, interviewees felt as though they needed to hurry the onboarding process along to get students working in their respective roles. Overall, the value was seen for student staff to have a more formalized process for recruiting and onboarding, though many mentioned that this process does not need to be as formal or in-depth as it should be for professional staff. Interviewees indicated a desire to have a better understanding of the available resources and of how they could effectively use those resources to supplement their existing training and onboarding processes.
- 6) Tell us about the DEI programs/trainings you have available in your area. Current DEI training and programs vary widely across the Division, depending on whether those efforts are directed toward students or toward employees (either student or professional). Some units have DEI teams who spearhead those efforts, while others incorporate DEI into regular professional development opportunities. Consensus across units was that there is an opportunity to leverage existing training for the entire Division. Interviewees expressed a desire for a centralized location for all training and programs related to DEI. Several units were waiting on guidance and advice from the DEIA Advisory Council before advancing more initiatives in this area, presumably to align their efforts with the Division's efforts.
- 7) Within our three focus areas, what does an ideal campus environment that is welcoming, inclusive, and increasingly diverse look like from your perspective? Interviewees responded that UofSC would be a place that would be safe to challenge each other in meaningful ways on DEI topics. Several interviewees described the ideal space as a family where people feel connected to each other, with an emphasis on creating opportunities to engage outside the office. A few departments recommended focusing on practices like bonuses, prioritizing one-on-one meetings, holding regular staff meetings, and engaging in leadership and personality assessments.

- 8) What programs and services are provided to retain staff? Utilizing training and development opportunities from Organizational and Professional development were the most common ways of retaining staff. Other strategies include leveraging opportunities for flexible work schedules and remote work, as well as encouraging connectedness through staff social events. Some staff use the GEMS program for colleague-to-colleague recognition as well as Division awards. Departments would like more flexibility with telecommuting because they believe it is a key to retaining employees. Some factors, however, detracted from retention efforts. For example, employees feel overwhelmed by the amount of work and the lack of resources. Managers feel their ability to increase salaries is limited because of the current budget situation and compression issues. Staff members are being lured away to other UofSC units (and private industry) that can provide greater salaries, less work, and more flexible work arrangements.
- 9) What kind of leadership efforts would represent a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion? Interviewees stated that they would like to see leadership that is authentic and honest around DEI. Additionally, they would like leadership to acknowledge DEI issues, rather than ignore them.

Recommendations

The following is a summary of the recommendations from the DEI Advisory Council. These recommendations are based on a review of internal DEI practices, and findings and insights from the listening tour. Recommendations are outlined with an implementation timeline and aligned with the Council's three focus areas. In addition, some of the listening tour feedback has been compiled as items/ideas to share with the division leadership because actions in those areas are beyond the Council's ability to implement. Some recommendations necessitate policy changes or large-scale investment from the university. Some recommendations have been completed and are listed in the first grouping.

Recommendations Completed prior to Fall 2022

1. Change the name of the Council from Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Achievement (DEIA) to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)
2. HR should include diverse platforms/outlets automatically in advertising
3. Act on the results of the workplace survey

Recommendations to be implemented in Fall 2022

1. Develop a Diversity Statement for the Division.
2. Conduct Asset Mapping to identify DEI professional development opportunities across the Division and the University (e.g., CTE, Office of DEI, etc.) to reduce duplication and identify gaps in content.
3. Enhance DEI professional development opportunities for employees.

4. Standardize search committee training with respect to DEI and complete online training with Human Resources. Including reducing minimum educational requirements to broaden the applicant pools.
5. Through the asset mapping, identify unique DEI retention initiatives currently taking place within departments in the Division so other units can put them into practice.
6. Require that all student employment opportunities in the Division be promoted in Handshake.
7. Promote the student employment toolkit developed by the Career Center to be used across the Division.
8. Provide a centralized web location for resources DEI resources, which could include a link to OMSA's website.
9. Create a training objective with EPMS which would include required institutional training and could include DEI training and development opportunities.
10. Promote and enhance recognition and awards for DEI efforts.

Recommendations to be implemented in Spring/Fall 2023

1. Provide scholarship funding for DEI-related professional development for areas that do not have funding.
2. Consider using the 4 Cs approach to DEI work- Compliance, Culture, Communication and Connections
3. Highlight what is currently being done well, what is not currently being done well, and then focus on goals with measurable outcomes. Create an online DEI Toolbox of Division resources. Edit resources submitted to make them "template-based" for all units to use.
4. Create formal DEI training for professional and student employees
5. Create a DEI core curriculum training for student employees and peer leaders – a common, baseline curriculum

Recommendations to be Shared with Division Leadership

The recommendations below are outside of the work of the Council but the Council wishes to acknowledge what was shared during the listening tours and share with the Division's leadership for consideration to share with the university leadership.

- Diversify presidential cabinet
- What is our definition of retention? Keep people in their current roles or develop them for the next role at the university?
- Show care
- Provide greater flexibility with telecommuting because they believe it is a key to retention.
- Some factors detracted from retention efforts. For example, employees feel overwhelmed by the amount of work and the lack of resources.
- Formally recognize DEI work
- Offer mentorship opportunities
- Sense of burnout and not wanting to volunteer for additional duties without remuneration.
- Erosion of benefits and increase in workload are leading to low morale

- A few departments recommended focusing on practices like bonuses, prioritizing one-on-one meetings, holding regular staff meetings, and engaging in leadership and personality assessments.
- Interviewees believe that a commitment to DEI is evident when leadership is authentic, honest, and acknowledges DEI issues instead of ignoring them.

Appendix A

Listening Tour Protocol

Before Meetings

- Teams need to decide if they will conduct listening meetings with everyone as a group or if you will be doing individual meetings with directors of departments or a hybrid approach. This decision may depend on the complexity of the area being interviewed.
- Teams should decide in advance who would ask questions and who would take notes for each meeting.
- If assistance is needed taking notes, please let the council members know so additional note takers can be found
- Communicate with those you want to interview and set meeting times
- Send questions ahead of time if appropriate
- If you need meeting space, coordinate ahead of time.
- Sample Email

Dear XXX,

My name is XXX, and in partnership XXX in your unit will be conducting listening tours on behalf of the Student Affairs/Academic Support DEIA council. These listening tours will allow us to learn the various DEIA efforts and programs currently in place and will provide a baseline for upcoming DEIA endeavors. We want to meet with you and XXX. Please let us know if any of the times below work for you.

The work of the Council is centered around three initial areas of focus:

1. Hiring, on-boarding, and retention practices.
2. Employee and student participation in DEIA training.
3. Student employment and leadership opportunities.

Thanks for the consideration,

--XXXX

During Meetings

- Thank the individuals attending your listening tour
- Reiterate the purpose of the meeting
- Share the initial areas of focus for our work
- Let them know that you will be answering a standard set of questions and follow up question will be asked as needed
- Ask the questions and use follow up questions if needed
- Ensure that a plan is in place for what material will be shared, who will send them and when they will send materials to the team.

After Meetings

- Send thank you emails and updates as appropriate

Questionnaire Grid

The primary questions are open ended and may elicit a response that includes all the information needed. However, if the group does not touch on the subjects outlined of the follow up questions, use follow up questions.

1	Describe your workplace culture?
Goal	To get people talking about the good things in their office environment.
Sample Answer	We all have lunch together. We go out once a quarter for drinks.
Follow-up	
2	Describe the diversity, equity, or inclusion in your area [insert area e.g., Enrollment Management]?
Goal	What programs and initiatives does the area have this includes for staff and students.
Sample Answer	
Follow-up	How is this put into practice?
3	How is the unit/department putting DEI into practice?
Goal	How does each office incorporate diversity into their policy.
Sample Answer	
Follow-up	Did any practice recently change in your area? Is DEI practices written into your job descriptions in your area? If so, is it universal to your area or individualized?
4	Describe diversity, equity, and inclusion when recruiting and onboarding for new professional staff?
Goal	How is DEI incorporated in recruiting efforts, does the area pay for recruiting on diverse websites for positions
Sample Answer	We advertise on Insight into Diversity; we make sure we have a diverse search committee
Follow-up	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In what ways are job postings/descriptions written to promote a diverse applicant pool? Do you use inclusive language in writing PDs?• How and where do you promote job postings/descriptions to recruit a diverse applicant pool?• How are search committees formed?
5	Describe diversity, equity, inclusion when recruiting and onboarding new students' employees and peer leaders?
Goal	Understand how inclusivity is being used for student recruiting.
Sample Answer	

Follow-up	How are you posting your positions?
6	Tell us about the DEI programs/trainings you have available in your area?
Goal	Does the office bring in specialist or utilize HR Training
Sample Answer	Every employee is required to attend Generalization Differences. We brought in X expert to a staff retreat.
Follow-up	How do you decide on the content? How do you assess the need for training? Is the training/education the same for everyone or different depending on roles? How do you evaluate growth and transition in DEI in your area due to training/education programs? How do you assess program/training assessment?
7	Within our three focus areas, what does an ideal campus environment that is welcoming, inclusive, and increasingly diverse look like from your perspective?
Goal	To ascertain how each employees thinks an inclusive environment looks like.
Sample Answer	I am able to show up as my authentic self
Follow-up	What initiatives or programs do you believe would help to focus and share the vision of diversity education and training more consistently across all departments within Student Affairs and Academic Support?
8	What programs and services are provided to retain staff?
Goal	To understand what each area may be doing to retain diverse staff.
Sample Answer	We offer X training.
Follow-up	Is anything provided to retain diverse staff? Do you provide information on implicit bias, discrimination and harassment, and/or diverse practices and identities before and after? Are you aware of the services/benefits available to employees (e.g. EAP, tuition assistance, health services)?
9	What kind of leadership efforts would represent a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion?
Goal	Provide advice to leadership.
Sample Answer	
Follow-up	
10	Within the scope of (list focus areas) What deliverables are you looking for from us as a council to accomplish.
Goal	To get an understanding of expectations for the committee.
Sample Answer	
Follow-up	