Development of Contract Professionals

and Staff

Subcommittee

Report

Final Recommendations from
Subcommittee on Development of Contract Professionals and Staff

The Committee's Charge
We have been charged with creating strategies for developing contract professionals and staff at The University of Akron. More specifically, we are recommending strategies for the following:

- Understanding our institutional culture, climate and solidifying a welcoming, inclusive and equitable ethos and environment
- Recruitment of a diverse workforce – improving hiring practices and marketing strategies
- Accurately identifying demographic opportunities and challenges
- Professional development and retention of contract professionals and staff incorporating better practices in the areas of professional development and training, employee resource groups, creative mentoring approaches, and cultural accommodations for a diverse workforce
- Establishing collaborative partnerships with the student-led Inclusive Excellence Action Team

General Principles
Invest in a Diverse Campus Culture
In conjunction with the full complement of subcommittees of the Racial Equity and Social Justice Working Group – Recruiting and Retention of African American Administrators, Faculty Development and Curriculum Design, and Student Recruiting and Success – the Subcommittee on Development of Contract Professionals and Staff acknowledges that we need a campus-wide, ongoing and sustainable investment in engaging and understanding the importance of valuing diversity, and the accountability of holding all members of the community to the standards of inclusion and equity.

Our investment in a diverse organizational culture and climate demands an understanding of the current demographic makeup of the contract professionals (CP) and staff in The University of Akron workforce. From the figures, we have learned that **we must place a high priority on hiring and retaining African American CPs and staff,** as well as employees from other underrepresented populations.

The tables below demonstrate that the CPs and staff at UA belonging to diverse groups are extremely underrepresented.

Table 1. Demographic Information for Contract Professionals

		CONTRACT PROFESSIONALS					All
		Adjunct	Admin Prof Staff		Instr Prof Staff		
		FTPT	FTPT		FTPT		
		PT	FT	PT	FT	PT	
		N	N	N	N	N	N
ETHNICITY	**GENDER**						
Asian	**Female**	.	5	1	2	.	8
	Male	.	2	.	2	.	4
	Subtotal	.	7	1	4	.	12
	%						2.06%
Black	**GENDER**						
	Female	2	23	.	13	.	38
	Male	2	17	.	5	.	24
	Subtotal	4	40	.	18	.	62
	%						10.65%
Hispanic	**GENDER**						
	Female	1	2	.	1	.	4
	Male	.	2	.	.	.	2
	Subtotal	1	4	.	1	.	6
	%						1.03%
NR Alien	**GENDER**						
	Female	1	3	.	.	.	4
	Male	1	2	.	.	.	3
	Subtotal	2	5	.	.	.	7
	%						1.20%

Unknown	**GENDER**						
	Female	1	1	.	.	.	2
	Male	1	3	.	.	.	4
	Subtotal	2	4	.	.	.	6
	%						1.03%
White	**GENDER**						
	Female	13	161	1	91	2	268
	Male	15	158	4	43	1	221
	Subtotal	28	319	5	134	3	489
	%						84.02%
All		37	379	6	157	3	582
Percentage by job type		6.36%	65.12%	1.03%	26.98%	0.52%	100%

Table 2. Demographic Information for Staff

		STAFF							All
		Adjunct	Bargaining Unit		Classified Staff		Unclassified		
		FTPT	FTPT		FTPT		FTPT		
		PT	FT	PT	FT	PT	FT	PT	
		N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
ETHNICITY	**GENDER**								
Asian	**Female**	6	1	.	1	.	2	1	11
	Male	10	2	.	.	.	3	.	15
	Subtotal	16	3	.	1	.	5	1	26
	%								2.44%
Black	**GENDER**								
	Female	.	29	4	10	.	3	6	52

	Male	.	64	.	5	.	6	9	84
	Subtotal	.	93	4	15	.	9	15	136
	%								12.75%
Hawaiian	**GENDER**								
	Female	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	1
	Male	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	1
	Subtotal	.	1	.	.	.	.	1	2
	%								0.19%
Hispanic	**GENDER**								
	Female	.	4	.	.	.	1	1	6
	Male	.	2	.	2	1	.	2	7
	Subtotal	.	6	.	2	1	1	3	13
	%								1.22%
NR Alien	**GENDER**								
	Female	.	.	.	.	.	5	2	7
	Male	3	.	.	.	.	9	3	15
	Subtotal	3	.	.	.	.	14	5	22
	%								2.06%
Native Amer	**GENDER**								
	Male	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	1
	Subtotal	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	1
	%								0.09%
Unknown	**GENDER**								
	Female	2	4	.	1	.	.	4	11
	Male	5	2	.	1	.	.	14	22
	Subtotal	7	6	.	2	.	.	18	33

	%							3.09%
White	**GENDER**							
	Female	5	158	10	75	11	38	84	381
	Male	8	135	5	62	6	63	174	453
	Subtotal	13	293	15	137	17	101	258	834
	%								78.16%
All		39	403	19	157	18	130	301	1067
Percentage by job type		3.66%	37.77%	1.78%	14.71%	1.69%	12.18%	28.21%	100%

Objectives and Goals

Our team has been given the opportunity to assist in the development, formulation and implementation of strategies for recruiting, hiring, developing, supporting, training, promoting and retaining Contract Professional and Staff employees. To reach this goal, we have established four broad categories of focus: (I) Organizational Culture and Climate; (II) Recruitment of a Diverse Workforce; (III) Professional Development of Contract Professionals and Staff; and (VI) Partnership with Student-Led Inclusive Action Teams.

I. Organizational Culture and Climate

The first broad category of focus centers on recognizing where we stand in terms of organizational climate and culture, as well as determining factors that contribute to attrition. Understanding our current organizational climate is imperative to the recruitment, promotion and retention of diverse contract professionals and staff. As we demonstrate the need for shifts in our organizational culture, we likewise acknowledge the importance of breaking down silos between contract professionals, staff and faculty, and between all employment classifications. We must enculturate values and practices that unite rather than divide us based on the jobs we do, particularly since we are universally committed to supporting the education of students at a top-ranked, scholarly research university.

Climate Survey

To achieve a positive climate for racial equity, a university should not only reflect diverse characteristics in staff, but also in the work environment (Mayhew, Grunwald, & Dey, 2006). Organizational satisfaction is key to the recruitment, retention, and development of contract professionals and staff. It is noted that campus climate is positively linked to faculty and staff satisfaction (Victorino, Nylund Gibson, & Conley, 2013). Furthermore, a positive campus climate is connected to institutional priorities and policies that support the inclusion of minorities

in faculty and administrative positions, as well as promote an environment with few incidents of racial conflict and discrimination (Victorino et al, 2013).

Assessment of employee satisfaction is critical in creating a supportive climate. Having a solid understanding of campus climate and employee satisfaction is useful in efforts to improve morale, reduce turnover, and strengthen organizational commitment (Duggan, 2008; Saleh & Bista, 2014). Employee assessment is also useful in efforts to enhance racial equity and the development of faculty, contract professionals, and staff. **It is the recommendation of this sub-committee to conduct a climate survey to better understand where we are now in terms of campus climate.** This should be a comprehensive survey to be administered to administration, faculty, contract professionals, staff, and students. It is further recommended that this survey be conducted at the main and regional campuses.

The chart below highlights potential vendors for a climate survey. It includes vendor information, areas of survey focus, and potential cost (if available).

SURVEY RESOURCES

Vendor	Area of Focus	Potential Cost	Contact Information
Viewfinder Campus Climate Surveys, LLC	Administrators, Faculty, Staff, and Students	$5750 – combination survey (administrators, faculty and staff) $4250 – student survey	http://campusclimatesurveys.com/ 10013 Laureate Way Bethesda, MD 20814 314-200-9955
Diversity EDU	Faculty, Staff, and Students Search committee training around diversity and inclusion	Must schedule a demo for cost analysis	https://diversityedu.com/diversity-climate-assessment
Modern Think	Assessment and analysis of culture and climate Gather feedback from key stakeholders – administrators, faculty, staff, students, etc Exit Survey Support	Varies	https://www.modernthink.com/ 2 Mill Road Wilmington, DE 19806 888-684-4658 solutions@modernthink.com

* Rankin and Associates Consulting, LLC	Institutional Evaluation	Varies	https://rankin-consulting.com/services
	Focus Groups		
* Used by Kent State			P.O. Box 576
	Surveys		Howard, PA 16841
	Strategic Planning and Intervention		814.625.2780
			sue@rankin-consulting.com

Addressing Attrition

Addressing attrition is important in understanding if campus climate and culture is a contributing factor to the voluntary departure of contract professionals and staff from the University. One tool we can use to better understand voluntary departure is conducting exit surveys with contract professionals and staff. Exit surveys are valuable in obtaining feedback about employee satisfaction, administrative support, managerial performance, and salary and benefit satisfaction (Mazzei, 2008). If currently not in place, **exit surveys should be a standard process within HR.** Exit survey data can be useful in analyzing why contract professionals and staff leave the University, as well as understanding the financial impact associated with CP and staff departure and hiring/training of new staff.

A second recommendation in addressing attrition is conducting a salary equity study. Salary is often a factor in departure from the University. Conducting a salary equity survey can help determine salary inequities due to systemic barriers and fairness. Salary equity studies are considered best practices among employers committed to salary equity and fair compensation (Taylor, Lahey, Beck, & Froyd, 2020).

The HR department put out a request for proposal for a Classification and Compensation Study about a year ago (October 2019) and four companies submitted a proposal for review. It is the understanding of this sub-committee that HR was in the process of reviewing the proposals and seeking further clarification. The process did not move any further based on events inside and outside of the University. This study would have covered all non-bargaining staff and CP classifications.

We propose that **the University resume the Classification and Compensation Study process**. We are in support of a comprehensive pay equity study and implore the University to address any identified equity issues. We also recommend **analyzing differences in salary for contract professionals and staff in comparison to their counterparts at other MAC** and regional institutions.

II. Recruitment of a Diverse Workforce

Our second category of focus is the recruitment of a diverse workforce. The recruitment of a

diverse workforce should be a partnership between human resources, hiring managers, departments, and schools/colleges. In this section, we will make recommendations regarding hiring policies and practices, as well as marketing and staffing strategies.

Human Resources
Discussions with HR indicated that a job evaluation plan was created by the William Mercer Company for the University for the classification of job titles/positions. This occurred in 1998. The job evaluation addressed the following factors related to job positions and classification across the University: knowledge and experience, complexity and creativity, impact on institutional mission, internal and external contacts, leadership, and physical demands and working conditions. As indicated above, a **Classification and Compensation study process was initiated in 2019 but was tabled due to unforeseen events. Again, we recommend revisiting this process**. Having a solid understanding of the factors related to job positions and classification is vital to our efforts of recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce.
With respect to recruitment of a diverse workforce, this information will be useful in the formation of job descriptions and eligibility requirements. Informal discussions with CPs and Staff indicate a lack of understanding as to why certain people are excluded between submission of credentials and the approved pool of candidates. Having an updated classification plan can be useful in updating the union (for staff) and CP requirements for job description and hiring qualifications. Regarding the retention of a diverse workforce, updating the classification plan can allow for the identification and recognition of soft job skills – these may be applicable skills for filling a position, even though they may not directly align with the job specifications. This could serve as a mechanism for enhancing the eligibility list for positions, including on-campus talent.
This committee also investigated current HR policies around the recruitment of a diverse workforce. The EEO/AA Office has robust recruitment policies in place. We discovered that the recruitment process varies slightly depending on whether the position is for faculty, staff, or CP. For all positions, the search committee drafts the initial job posting. The EEO Office reviews search committee make-up, advertising locations, looks for potential barriers in the job requirements, and confirms the posting will reach a broad audience. Once a posting has closed, an analysis is run to pull the demographic information of all candidates and to determine that the interview pool is fair. No interview can be held until approved by the EEO for staff and CP positions. Hiring selections are not sent to the EEO. Of note, in the marketing section below, we will address some recommendations that may aid in enhancing this process.

There is one point we wish to highlight, the EEO/AA office has indicated they are in the process of **creating a guidebook for search committees addressing specific issues of diversity during the recruiting process.** This guidebook will address consideration for reviewing job qualifications, drafting the job posting, selecting the advertising location and considerations to account for implicit bias. The EEO/AA Office hopes to have this guidebook available in

Brightspace with the search committee training. The office is evaluating ways to have it provided directly to the committee in a timely fashion, perhaps with the PRF approval. Again, this process certainly supports some of the recommendations made in the marketing section below.

Marketing

In the above section, we address some of the current HR practices around the recruitment of a diverse workforce. **This committee would like to suggest more intentional recruitment and hiring.** This would involve greater communication and assistance between multiple departments and buy-in from the administration with staff support and intentionality.

1. UCM should provide guidance to HR and hiring departments to use in paid advertisements for recruiting that includes sample messaging when ads are placed on social media outlets. These ads and **messages should be customized to target specific audiences with messaging on LinkedIn, Glass Door,** etc. (i.e. Women in Tech, targeted ads to HBCUs, etc.) while adhering to overall UA branding (which should, in turn, be strongly inclusive).
2. **HR should create a list of places to advertise to attract a more diverse applicant pool.** Marketing can help search committees make more informed decisions when choosing *where* to advertise. This is a moving target for all markets; the goal of reaching a more diverse applicant pool will require continual attention. Do we have research expertise within the faculty that specializes in this kind of analytics/metrics monitoring in media buying?
3. **The University should leverage existing employees** - utilize authentic content from folks on campus – Employee Resource Groups, Event Staff, Diversity and Alumni offices. UCM in partnership with HR can empower the entire staff with positive messaging to use across platforms.
4. **Hiring managers and committees should be encouraged to alert the applicant pool that we are interested in their applications with direct language and messages about recruiting POC/underrepresented populations.** Efforts will need to be made across all University messaging to ensure that we are being inclusive without coming across as anything but sincere and will require the buy-in of a diverse group to determine the best messaging.

We are aware that this is a big task and will take continued work on the part of everyone on campus for the long haul. It is also critical to move forward with a diverse workforce.

Staffing

This final section of the recruitment of a diverse workforce category focuses on staffing. We highlighted a few of the processes in place by the EEO Office regarding diversity efforts within the recruitment process. Also mentioned are some of the processes that the EEO Office is working to create, which addresses specific issues of diversity during the recruitment process. Our committee recognizes that **Human Resources and Institutional Marketing departments**

will need support in both budget and staffing to accomplish the goals of this push to attract and maintain a more diverse workforce. **We recommend that benchmarking data for staffing be collected from peer institutions to guide resource allocation in these departments.**

III. Professional Development of Contract Professionals and Staff

The third broad category addresses professional development of contract professionals and staff. As noted above, contract professionals and staff at UA belonging to diverse groups are extremely underrepresented. We speculate that strengthening our professional development efforts can be impactful with regards to increasing diversity. Furthermore, we posit that improved professional development efforts will impact succession planning and develop the next generation of leadership at UA. The recommendations we make in this section focus on professional development and training, the creation of a more formalized mentorship process, the use of employee resource groups, and assurance of accommodations for a diverse workforce.

Professional Development and Training

Organizational learning culture is critical to staff development. Colleges and universities should strive to be sites of learning not only for students, but for those employed by the University (Olsen, 2015). Recognizing that UA offers a tuition remission program, **we are suggesting formal and informal training programs aimed at providing staff and contract professionals with the necessary skills and support to enhance job performance, as well as professional growth within the organization**. This type of programming can be housed within our various colleges, schools, departments, and HR. A review of our HR website displays training and development courses on search committee processes, on-boarding of new staff, and workplace harassment and diversity. While these courses are important within our university, there is opportunity to expand training and development offerings. Due to budget cuts, job transfers, and employee lay-offs, contract professionals and staff are facing more duties. Adequate professional development and training will ensure proper preparedness for new and expanded responsibilities. Our professional development and training recommendations should be developed in partnership with HR and the various colleges, schools, departments across campus, and the community.

Professional development and training programming should include but not be limited to:

1. Our team recommends **creating a more robust process for onboarding Staff and Contract Professionals through a comprehensive employee orientation program aimed at continuous development, job satisfaction and ultimately improved retention.** This process can lead to leadership training programs for developing Contract Professionals and Staff and/or skill development of those currently in leadership roles.
2. At the core of professional development and training, ensure the importance of Diversity and Inclusion's role in providing **training for understanding, communication styles, emotional intelligence, and core cultural awareness** and how it differs among colleges and departments.

3. We believe that professional development and training can be further enhanced by **developing a job rotation system** to help employees gain more experience and skills within or outside their Department. Further enhancement can be obtained by **offering qualified Contract Professionals and Staff opportunities to fill open positions before advertising** externally for them.

4. Our team also observed a need for better workplace balance. "All work and no play" is not a good way to create a work environment conducive for professional development and training. To gain better workplace balance we suggest **implementing timely meet/greet luncheons, ice cream socials at Student Union/Game Room for CPAC, SEAC, Faculty Groups** for the purpose of further developing relationship building, emphasizing a sense of belonging, sharing and simply having fun.

5. To begin work on the above program examples, we are **recommending the creation of a professional development and training work group.** This work group should consist of contract professionals, staff, department representatives, and HR. The goal of this group is to brainstorm and formulate a strategy for developing a robust professional development and training program.

Mentoring

Our committee recognizes the emphasis and efforts being made to increase diversity at our institution and believe there is a need to expound on it by suggesting the strong need to cultivate a culture that creates a sense of belonging for new hires and current employees. To establish more diversity, equity, and inclusion across sectors, we need to reimagine the traditional mentor and mentee relationship to shift power to younger and less experienced colleagues who possess unique insight into bias and racial dynamics (Gandhi 2020). To that end, we are making several suggestions:

1. **Develop a "Reverse Mentoring Program"** that allows new employees or lower-level management staff the opportunity for professional development and relationship building with a senior team member or Board Trustee to share knowledge, skills, and understanding. If mentoring is to establish more diversity, equity, and inclusion across sectors, we must reimagine the power dynamic of these two roles. *Reverse mentoring* achieves this reimagining through a model of mutual exchange. It is configured along the lines of age and position in the workplace hierarchy, whereby the younger, less experienced colleague offers the older professional lessons and skills relative to their age demographic. Not only are younger peers usually more familiar with the technology that organizations use in today's fast-paced economy, but they are also more likely to be more informed about the latest social and cultural trends.

2. **Create mentoring cohorts for new hires** (as opposed to strictly one to one mentoring relationships). In economy or industry, mentoring is used for career development or

enhancing job satisfaction while in public institutions mentoring is employed for knowledge transfer and to support the socialization of new hires into the profession (Zeigler, Schemke, & Stoger 2009). In addition to mentoring cohorts, we recommend more robust policies for on-boarding new employees and providing opportunities for connections across campus with other newly hired peers.

3. **Provide more opportunities for CP's and Staff to participate in and attend campus events**. This includes inviting and encouraging colleagues to attend campus lectures, events, etc., as well as providing support for supervisors to allow employees to attend campus events when possible.

Employee Resource Groups

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) are voluntary, employee-led groups that foster a diverse, inclusive workplace aligned with organizational mission, values, goals, business practices, and objectives (Welbourne et al., 2017). These groups offer a unique, employee-driven way to achieve a cohesive work environment and connection with existing groups on campus and can foster a more connected and engaged workforce. Other benefits include the development of future leaders, increased employee engagement, and expanded marketplace reach (Welbourne et al, 2017). The purpose of these peer groups is to build a genuine sense of inclusiveness and to provide a safe space where they can share their thoughts, ideas and challenges. These diverse groups can help campus identify the best ways to overcome cultural challenges in the workplace. It is the recommendation of this subcommittee **to survey employee resource groups that are active on campus and provide this information to the campus community** as well as to make the list readily available to new employees, including part-time employees such as adjuncts, as part of their on-boarding process. Further, we **encourage the ERGs to leverage the use of virtual platforms such as social media, web and the Digest** to bring people together and increase awareness.

In work areas where employees do not have access to computers, it is the recommendation of this group that **a computer station is available for those employees** to check email and access information about these working groups.

Accommodation for a Diverse Workforce

Accommodation can be viewed as a way to invest in our employees and to create an atmosphere that in turn encourages the best work from staff who know the University cares about them as individuals. It should be a conversation – how can UA adapt to allow CP and staff better opportunities while also encouraging more positive engagement by the employee – especially as newly hired staff learn to adapt to the culture at UA.

1. Adopt policies that can help **remove workforce barriers to allow staff** to apply for jobs, gain access to training, perform well, and ultimately provide opportunity for growth in their job or to promotion elsewhere on campus.

2. This committee would like to **recommend accommodation and encouragement for celebrating non-Christian religious observations**.
3. We would like the University to consider how it can be more accommodating to workers with disabilities (both physical and mental) beyond ADA minimum requirements.
4. The University should **consider bringing back an on-campus childcare option for staff/faculty** – can be excellent experience for Education majors. If not a complete return to the full day care center, at least an option for staff in emergency or short-term need of childcare assistance. The University should also consider more flexible workday options to accommodate parents.

IV. Partnership with Student-Led Inclusive Excellence Action Teams

The final broad category of focus is the collaboration of staff and contract professionals with Student-Led Inclusive Action Teams. Recognizing that contract professionals and staff often serve as student advisors and mentors, our committee views this collaboration of high importance. As you know, the creation of the Inclusive Excellence Action Teams was announced in June of last year. Through a systematic review process, the IEAT focuses on issues of race, equality, and inclusion. The charge of the student led IEAT is to identify areas of discrimination and implicit bias within our system and make recommendations to administration and University leadership.

Similar to diversity data presented earlier on CP's and Staff, the tables below demonstrate that Fall 2020 enrollment for students belonging to diverse groups are extremely underrepresented.

Total Fall 2020 Student Enrollment: 17, 829

Enrollment by Ethnicity	Number	% of Total
African American	1, 579	8.9%
American Indian	25	0.1%
Asian American	569	3.2%
Hispanic American	559	3.1%
Native Hawaiian	5	0.0%
Non-Resident Alien	590	3.3%
Two or More Races	733	4.1%
Unknown	311	1.7%
White	13, 458	75.5%

Fall 2020 Enrollment by Gender

Gender	Total
Total Men	8, 796

Total Women	9, 028
Unknown	5

The committee **recommends that the University should acknowledge CP and staff roles as allies and mentors to students**. Recognizing that the IEAT taskforce is student-led, this committee believes there is merit in collaboration among this group with CP's and staff. Oftentimes, CP and staff are the constant points of contact in some departments and are available to assist with student initiatives throughout the calendar year.

Summary

Contract Professionals and Staff are a vital asset to the University and the students we serve. Our subcommittee is charged with developing strategies for attracting, developing and retaining contract professionals and staff at The University of Akron. To reach this goal, we created four areas of focus: Organizational Climate and Culture, Recruitment of a Diverse Workforce, Professional Development/Retention, and Partnerships with Student-Led Inclusive Excellence Action Teams.

Understanding current organizational culture and climate is vital to enhancing recruitment and retention of diverse staff. One recommendation is to complete a climate survey to understand where we are now. We also suggest addressing attrition using exit surveys and interviews. This will aid in understanding why contract professionals and staff leave the University. Our second area of focus is recruitment of a diverse workforce. We made several recommendations aimed at improving our hiring policies and practices, marketing to diverse applicants, and creating staffing strategies to attract and maintain a more diverse workforce.

Our third goal is professional development and retention of contract professionals and staff. Recommendations include professional development and training, development of a mentorship program, connecting contract professionals and staff to employee resource groups (ERGs), and accommodations for a diverse workforce. Our final area of focus is partnerships with student-led inclusive excellence action teams. Many contact professionals and staff serve as mentors to students. We feel it is imperative to acknowledge and strengthen our role as student mentors.

Future Considerations

We have identified several implications and areas of on-going work for the University:

- Budget implications - create a plan to begin a cost analysis of recommendations.
- Analysis of current HR Policies - examine current process and manage accountability to the policies and practices; Act and React to the policies that exist and encourage and enforce intentionality.

- Changing Campus Culture - establish ideas and suggestions to improve culture. Some suggestions include interviewing our peers for suggestions/ideas and brainstorming ways to celebrate successes.
- Manage frustration with challenges around Professional Development and Promotion and seek solutions to move these initiatives forward.

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