

**College of Liberal Arts and Sciences**  
**Florida Educational Equity Act Report**  
**July 2015 – June 2016**  
*(Your responses may include events that will happen through June of this year)*

## **I. Equal Opportunity Compliance**

Our office has a very diverse staff. Of the 35 employees in the Academic Advising Center (AAC) during this reporting period, 23 are female, 8 are African American (6 females and 2 males), 2 are Hispanic/Latino/a (2 females), 1 is of Native American heritage (female), and 1 is an Asian American (male). Because of our diverse employees, we have no problem including the relevance of diversity in everything we do, and since we deal with a very diverse student body, it is the only approach that makes any sense.

The most important policy to achieve diversity is to ensure that we encourage diversity in the pool of applicants for jobs we are trying to fill. We make sure that all jobs are advertised appropriately in venues that oversample minority populations in Florida and the nation as well as mainstream venues like the online *Chronicle of Higher Education*. Our Office Manager, Sherrel Brockington, is in charge of personnel and ensures that we routinely post our job openings in the proper venues to attract a diverse pool of applicants. In addition, Assistant Director Kathy Rex was named the Diversity Liaison for the AAC, a position which will advise all future search committees on best practices related to diversity.

In our hiring, we embrace valuing diversity as a positive and important aspect of the job, regardless of the candidates' background. To that end, we construct specific questions in our interview process (which is scripted) so that the candidates' attitudes toward diversity are examined in a detailed, in-depth manner. We do this for several reasons. First, we all believe that good advisors must have an open and supportive attitude toward differences in the students, parents, faculty, staff, administrators and community members with whom we routinely interact. Second, because of our advising mandates, we serve a population of students that is overrepresented by minority students. We have specific advising responsibilities for the AIM program that serves at-risk undergraduates on campus. About 70% of the AIM population is African American. Another 20% is Hispanic American, and the rest are predominantly either Asian American or white.

In order to advise more than 10,000 undergraduate majors properly, training advisors to deal with a diverse population is necessary. Our formal and informal training includes many references to this issue. These typically come in the form of case studies or role-playing by the veteran advisors who are tasked with training the newcomers.

Our advisors and staff are also constantly monitored for their respect for diversity. Every student who has an individual advising session with an advisor is sent an e-mail after their session asking them to evaluate their advising experience with the particular advisor whom they saw on that occasion, including responding to the following statements:

- I had non-academic concerns affecting my academic performance and goals, and my advisor discussed these with me.
- My advisor made me feel comfortable in the advising session.
- My advisor was a good listener and allowed sufficient time to discuss my academic concerns.
- My advisor was friendly and approachable.
- My advisor was realistic and honest with me.

Each of these plumbs the issue of diversity, of course, and we also provide students with the opportunity to make open-ended comments about their advising experience. The Director and Assistant Director review these every semester with the advisors to ensure that diversity is respected by all advisors. Additionally, students can rate the support staff in the same fashion or by using paper evaluation forms.

## **II. Equity Accountabilities**

Outreach to diverse populations is a valued tradition in the AAC, and we have a strong record of support in this area. The AAC has a formal advising role with the AIM program, and also is involved in many other support activities for diverse populations.

### The AIM Program

A number of offices and staff members around UF contribute to this program. The AAC has a team of five full-time academic advisors, and one graduate assistant, who provide the academic advising for first-year AIM students. The program, in existence since 1997, serves first-year students who are academically at-risk by coordinating for them a year-long learning plan featuring smaller classes developed to enhance mathematics and communication skills. Students qualify for this program based on all or any of the following criteria: first-generation status, family income, and attendance at one of UF's Alliance partner schools.

In the summer of 2015, approximately 260 new students were admitted through the AIM program. The AIM advisors met with the students when they came through orientation and worked with them to get registered for their initial Summer B and Fall 2014 classes. They met with them again in the Fall to help the students choose Spring 2015 classes.

More than one thousand new and former AIM students signed in for advising between summer B 2015 and summer A 2016. While AIM advisors work principally with AIM students doing one-on-one advising, the team facilitated the following group activities/workshops during the 2015-2016 academic year: residence hall "Meet and Greet Your Advisor" (reception/Q & A/scavenger hunt in Yulee Hall); "Registration Prep" (to review with students critical information to consider as they started preparing to select spring 2016 classes); "Finding the Path Back to Academic Success" (designed specifically for students on academic probation or who just earned below a 2.0 fall GPA); "How to Beat the Heat: Making Plans for Summer and Beyond" (designed to give students ideas on

how to use their time constructively over the summer). More than 200 students attended a workshop.

Between 2004 and 2008 (the most recent years for which we have data), the retention rates of students participating in the AIM program from the first to second year of college has been between 91% and 93%.

### Student Organizations

AAC advisors support educational equity through support of and outreach to diverse student organizations. Below are several examples of these activities:

- An AAC advisor is the faculty advisor to Health Educated Asian Leaders (HEAL). HEAL is an organization of students representing various health related fields at the University of Florida. Their goal is to unite and build a network of diverse students with similar interests and career goals. Students are provided with the resources needed in order to be successful in furthering their professional ambitions.
- The Pre-Health advising team in the AAC supports the efforts of UF's PreMed AMSA student group to retain minority, underrepresented and disadvantaged students in pre-health tracking. One program we have zealously promoted is the Minority Pre-Medical Forum, which is run every fall semester. The Minority Affairs Committee in PreMed AMSA put together the programming and recruitment of medical schools that have a strong emphasis or mission to promote diversity in the healthcare workforce.

### **III. Diversity in Services**

The AAC dedicates a significant proportion of our time and resources to students with diverse backgrounds. Below is the most recent data available breaking down advising visits versus overall UF student population:

group	AAC visit %*	UF Overall Population**
American Indian or Alaskan Native	0.71%	0.004%
Asian (includes Indian subcontinent)	11.56%	7.89%
Black (non-Hispanic)	11.94%	8.76%
Hispanic	22.78%	16.52%
Nonresident Alien	1.34%	0.96%
Not reported by individual	6.88%	2.55%
White (non-Hispanic, includes Middle	44.78%	61.35%

Eastern peoples)

\* Based on 29,129 visits from 7/1/2015

\*\* Based on UF Fact Book, total Undergrad Population 34,002 in Fall 2015

#### **IV. New Initiatives**

We will continue to assess, enhance and improve our current activities that promote educational equity, especially through our work with AIM and FOS students, student organizations, and our Ambassadors.

One new initiative we are planning is to obtain more information about the first-generation college students enrolled in CLAS, particularly those who are not part of a program such as AIM or FOS. We will begin to determine what their concerns are and how their collegiate perspectives may vary from other populations. Many of these students are investing in their future through loans and part-time work. Many of these students may also come from families where English may not be the language spoken at home, and they may be the first natural U.S. citizens in the household to attend an American institution of learning. Once we have a clearer picture of this group, we will develop ways to target our support for their educational engagement and success. Tools we have recently developed that may provide useful levels of detail are a General Student Survey, conducted in the Fall of 2012, and a First-Term Survey, conducted in the Spring of 2013. These two tools are now providing the AAC with important information regarding student success and learning outcomes. In the Fall of 2015, we conducted (for the second year) a survey of Exploratory students as well, to better understand student success among entering students without a declared major.

#### **V. Accolades**

One of the AAC's advisors serving University of Florida Online students, Meredith Beaupre, was recognized by the National Academic Advising Association as an Outstanding New Advisor. Ms. Beaupre serves our online student population, which is slightly more demographically diverse than our residential student population, and includes many returning and non-traditional students.