

# Robertson School Diversity Plan

First approved by faculty in Fall 2008, the Diversity Plan was revised in Nov 2015 and revised for a second time in Dec 2015, each time by full faculty vote. It consists of six specific goals, created to take active steps to foster a diversity-friendly environment so that individuals from a wide range of varying backgrounds and perspectives would feel included in the Robertson School learning community.

## **Goal 1: Create an environment where differences are welcomed and valued**

### **Goal**

Create a working and learning environment where differences are welcomed and valued to ensure a climate that offers opportunity for and support of the success of all faculty and staff

### **Strategies**

1. The school will actively communicate its commitment to diversity through its publications, recruitment and other materials. The updated diversity plan will be placed on the school's website.
2. The school's administrators, faculty and staff will work to ensure that the school's students are provided with an open and inclusive environment, and will seek diversity in hiring and appointing student workers, peer advisers and members of other groups where opportunities exist to foster a diverse environment. The school's director will ensure that search committees for administrative positions, staff, student workers and peer advisers will have a diverse membership, and that in hiring, due consideration is given to diverse applicants. The school's director also will work to ensure that diversity is a primary element of the work of other groups that are established to carry out the mission of the Robertson School.
3. The school's Student Council will consist of a diverse group of undergraduate and graduate students so that students of many backgrounds will be represented in decisions affecting all of the school's students. The school's director will ensure that the council's annual membership reflects the diversity interests and commitment of the school.
4. The school's faculty annual report form will provide a means for reporting specific contributions faculty have made toward diversity and multiculturalism. Through this system, the school will monitor and also be able to provide documentation in its annual report of its advances in promoting a diverse climate.
5. The school will seek to reward and recognize administrators, faculty and staff who have contributed to the advancement of a climate of inclusiveness and acceptance by nominating such faculty for awards at the University, such as the VCU Presidential Awards for Community Multicultural Enrichment, or for similar recognition by professional or academic groups. Using the school's annual report forms, the school's director will ensure that administrators, faculty and staff are nominated for the PACME, Doris Budd and other awards that provide recognition for diversity efforts.

6. The school will encourage administrators, faculty and staff development in areas that will serve to promote a diverse and accepting culture and climate. The school's director and/or associate director will ensure administrators, faculty and staff are provided with appropriate information and opportunities to participate in activities that promote their knowledge of and expertise in diversity seminars, programs or other learning opportunities.
7. The school will invite faculty and staff to volunteer and participate in the Green Zone initiative in support of student veterans. Participants in the Green Zone program agree to attend a workshop that provides information and resources related to issues faced by student veterans and to display a Green Zone sticker outside their office doors to not only let others know they are available for support to student veterans, but to also serve as a resource to other faculty, staff or students who may have questions about student veteran issues.
8. The school will invite faculty and staff to volunteer and participate in the Safe Zone initiative in support of the LGBTQ students. Participants in the Safe Zone program agree to attend a workshop that provides information and resources related to issues faced by LGBTQ students and to display the Safe Zone logo as a symbol outside their office doors to not only let others know they are available for support to LGBTQ students, but to also serve as a resource to other faculty, staff or students who may have questions about such student issues.

## **Goal 2: Increase diversity of faculty and staff**

### **Goal**

Increase diversity of faculty and staff in University leadership and decision-making roles, increase the presence of diverse faculty members at all ranks and levels, and increase the presence of diverse staff members in higher pay bands

### **Strategies**

1. All search advertisements will include language encouraging applications from diverse groups, including women and minorities. The search committee chair and the school's director will be responsible for reviewing any advertisements to ensure appropriate language.
2. All search committees will include membership with as wide a range of diversity as possible. The school's director must approve demographic composition of the proposed search committee membership.
3. The school will seek to have as broad a search is possible, utilizing many publication outlets, to have a more diverse and qualified pool of candidates from the increased exposure. The chair of search committees and the school's director will be responsible for determining the length of the search period and appropriate publication outlets.
4. The school will participate in conferences and similar meetings to increase its recognition among potential minority administrators, faculty and staff candidates. The school's director will monitor and facilitate school participation on an annual basis and

will report to the full faculty.

5. The school will encourage women and minority members of the faculty, administrators and staff to take part in leadership training, including but not limited to those programs sponsored by the university, academic or professional organizations.
6. As with all new administrators, faculty and staff, new minority faculty will be assigned a mentor. Mentors are encouraged to help the new administrators, faculty and staff member assimilate into the school and VCU communities. The school's director will assign mentors to new faculty.
7. In making committee assignments, the school will work to ensure that female and minority administrators, faculty and staff members are not overburdened with service expectations within the school. The school's director will maintain and review records on the amount and type of committee assignments as well as the depth and scope of other service responsibilities.
8. The school will foster collaborative faculty research that includes female and minority faculty. The school's director will review annual reports and make note of collaborative efforts in annual administrators, faculty and staff reviews.

### **Goal 3: Maintain a student body reflective of the diversity of Virginia students**

#### **Goal**

Maintain a student body reflective of the diversity in college-bound students in the Commonwealth of Virginia by ensuring a climate that offers access, opportunity and support for the success of all students

#### **Strategies**

1. The school (upon request) will mail materials about the undergraduate program to high school and community college mass communications teachers. The information will include a statement of the school's diversity goals.
2. The school will make scholarship and financial aid information readily available, in addressing recruitment and retention, as a means of achieving diversity goals.
3. The school will form relationships with professional and academic organizations, programs and/or conferences that promote diversity, as a means of providing additional ways for students to learn about diversity, as well as to network with professionals from diverse backgrounds and perspectives. The school's director will review data from faculty annual reports to determine the appropriate level of the school's participation.

### **Goal 4: Engage in community outreach that respects and demonstrates diversity**

#### **Goal**

Strengthen the capacity of the Robertson School, VCU and the greater community to engage in mutually beneficial outreach and/or partnership activities and/or events that respect and demonstrate diversity, and include groups with diverse backgrounds

#### **Strategies**

1. The school will establish and/or maintain connections with professional organizations. These connections may include, but are not limited to, faculty and student membership in the organizations, serving on committees or planning workshops, panels or conventions. The faculty annual report form will ask each administrator, faculty and staff member to include their professional organization membership.
2. The school will encourage and support attendance at the conventions of professional organizations, especially those serving people of color. For example, the school might buy an advertisement in the convention program or have an information booth at the convention. The faculty annual report form will ask each administrator, faculty and staff member to include this content for the director.
3. The school will support a variety of initiatives and groups that promote diversity. Those include having representatives from relevant professional organizations visit the school as guest speakers and in other capacities.
4. The school will encourage administrators, faculty, staff and students to engage in service and service-learning projects that expose students to diversity issues beyond their previous experience. These projects might involve creating advertising or public relations campaigns for nonprofit groups, engaging in community projects, and mentoring programs for area public schools. The faculty annual report form will ask each faculty member to include this content for the school's director.

#### **Goal 5: Increase diversity content in our curriculum**

##### **Goal**

Increase the amount of diversity content in the curriculum

##### **Strategies**

1. The school will offer, and encourage student and faculty participation in, the course MASC 474—Diversity in the Media on a regular basis (at least once per academic year).
2. The Diversity Committee will provide all faculty with recommendations and guidelines/suggestions for class diversity inclusiveness.
3. The faculty annual report form will ask each faculty member to include the content of course development that deals with diversity issues for the school's director. Faculty will include a summary of the diversity content in their courses on the annual report form.
4. Faculty will include on their annual report forms information about student projects on diversity, invitation to classes for guest speakers of diverse backgrounds, and student participation in conferences and programs related to the issue of diversity.

#### **Goal 6: Increase faculty research and scholarship on diversity**

##### **Goal**

Increase the amount of faculty research and scholarship that deals with the issue of diversity

##### **Strategies**

1. Administrators, faculty and staff will be encouraged to participate in and attend conferences with diversity themes. The school's director will use the annual report form to ask each faculty member to include this content.
2. Faculty will be encouraged to include diversity issues in their scholarship (professional and traditional/research). The annual report form will ask each faculty member to include this content.
3. Faculty will be encouraged to work in diverse collaborative research teams. The annual report form will ask each faculty member to include this content.
4. Administrators and staff will be encouraged to bring attention to and advance the discussion of diversity issues in their work, whether it is of a professional or academic nature. The annual report form will ask each administrator, faculty and staff member to include this content.
5. Administrators, faculty and staff will also report on the annual faculty report form any activities which bring attention to and advance the discussion of diversity issues as they relate to mass communications.

### **Conclusion**

The school is committed to a climate in which students, faculty, staff and administrators can freely express themselves and interact with individuals from diverse backgrounds. The school will take active steps to foster a diversity-friendly environment so that all of these individuals, from various backgrounds and perspectives, will feel included. This plan also is intended to foster mutual respect among those diverse individuals. In keeping with the diverse culture of the university as a whole, the school will promote openness, acceptance and inclusiveness. The school is firmly committed to fostering free speech as guaranteed by the First Amendment. The school will consistently endeavor to recruit, retain and promote administrators, faculty and staff members to facilitate diversity as defined above.

The school will also consistently endeavor to attract, recruit and retain undergraduate and graduate students to achieve a diverse student body. In recruiting and retaining students, the school also will monitor and attempt to address any gender disparity in the percentage of female and male students in the school.

The school will emphasize and promote diversity in its outreach and service to VCU, professional organizations, the Richmond community, high school and college students and teachers, and other groups. In such interactions, administrators, faculty, staff and students will encourage positive attitudes toward multiculturalism and showcase the school's commitment to diversity.