

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA

STRATEGIC PLAN FOR

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

MAY 2017

**WE ARE SOUTH**

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The University of South Alabama was chartered in 1963 by the State of Alabama as a comprehensive, coeducational institution of higher education. The University serves as a major center of high-quality and accessible undergraduate, graduate and professional education for metropolitan Mobile, the State of Alabama, the Gulf Coast region and the southeastern United States.

The University's mission actively embraces the functions of teaching, research, public service and health care through which it vigorously pursues the preservation, discovery, communication and application of knowledge. The University is committed to the education of the whole person, the creative person. The University of South Alabama's programs of education, research, public service and health care are all founded upon the basis of a reciprocal relationship between the institution and the community of Mobile, Alabama and the central Gulf Coast. Instruction, research, scholarship, public service and health care that enhance the economic development of the State and improve the quality of life and health of its citizens are integral and essential parts of its mission as a comprehensive, metropolitan university.

As it grows and develops, the University will continue to focus on its strengths to produce programs of interdisciplinary excellence that address the special needs of the people it serves. As such, the University's leadership must demonstrate integrity, service, stewardship, and engagement, and foster environments of inclusivity.

The University of South Alabama now has over 16,000 students and employs more than 5,000 people on its academic and health systems campuses.

The University of South Alabama, like its home community of Mobile, Alabama and the central Gulf Coast, is growing and becoming more diverse and dynamic each day. Crucial to its mission to utilize "instruction, research, scholarship, public service and health care [to] enhance the economic development of the State and improve the quality of life of its citizens," the University of South Alabama is committed to diversity both within the University of South Alabama family and as a leader in the community.

## DEFINITIONS

## DEFINITIONS

In drafting this Plan, the Diversity and Inclusion Committee worked under a charge from the Knight settlement to draft a Strategic and Diversity Inclusion Plan that continues to increase racial and ethnic diversity in all areas of the University, with a particular emphasis on African Americans.

The Committee recognizes that certain terms and phrases can be sensitive and may have unwelcome and/or non inclusive connotations. For that reason, after thoughtful deliberation, the Committee has embraced the term "African-Americans and other underrepresented populations" to include those individuals whose representation at the University of South Alabama has traditionally been less than optimal for the University to create a fully diverse, thriving community of learning.

For the purpose of faculty and staff diversity reporting, the University and this Plan will utilize the United States Department of Labor classifications in use at the time of reporting.

For the purpose of student diversity reporting, the University and this Plan will utilize the United States Department of Education classifications in use at the time of reporting.

CHARGE TO  
STRATEGIC DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION  
COMMITTEE

The charge of this committee will be to:

- Identify and develop creative strategies and initiatives to increase the number of students, faculty, and administrators from African-American and other underrepresented groups
- Monitor USA's progress toward the goals of the Strategic and Diversity Inclusion Plan
- Make the University of South Alabama an even more attractive and inclusive community for people of all races, ethnicities, faiths and cultures

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this Strategic Diversity and Inclusion Plan is to define and clearly identify, within a legally sustainable structure, goals and measurable outcomes for diversity and inclusion at the University of South Alabama. The University recognizes and values the contributions made by African-American and other underrepresented populations and desires to make the University an even more attractive and inclusive place for people of all races, ethnicities, faiths and cultures to study and work in a supportive, diverse community.

## **Mission Statement**

The University of South Alabama, with a global reach and special focus on the Gulf Coast, strives to make a difference in the lives of those it serves through promoting discovery, health, and learning.

## **Vision Statement**

The University of South Alabama will be a leading comprehensive public university internationally recognized for educational, research, and health care excellence as well as for its positive intellectual, cultural, and economic impact on those it serves.

## **Core Values**

The University of South Alabama affirms the following core values as essential to the accomplishment of its mission:

- Diversity and a Global Perspective
- Excellence
- Freedom in the Pursuit of Knowledge
- Integrity
- Transparency and Participation in Decision-Making

## **WHY DIVERSITY MATTERS AT USA**

The University of South Alabama is an Equal Opportunity/Equal Access Institution and an Equal Opportunity/Equal Access employer. Although the University of South Alabama has made significant strides towards increasing diversity within the University community, the University recognizes that there are still gains to be made. At the time of adoption of this Plan, the presence of African-American and other underrepresented populations on campus is less than optimal for the University to enjoy the full benefits available to a diverse University community located in Mobile, Alabama.

The University reaffirms its dedication to providing a diverse, inclusive and stimulating learning and working environment and to continue serious and substantial assessment of the University's progress toward further increasing the diversity of the University of South Alabama by even greater inclusion of African Americans and other underrepresented populations at the University of South Alabama.

The University has identified five institutional priorities:

- A. Student Success and Access
- B. Enhancement of Research and Graduate Education
- C. Global Engagement
- D. Excellence in Health Care
- E. University Community Engagement

This strategic diversity and inclusion plan consists of four goals directly related to the institutional priorities. Each goal of this plan has action steps associated with it that are designed to move the institution forward towards attainment of the established goals.

To maintain the University's focus on and commitment to diversity, the President, vice presidents, deans and department heads will be responsible for providing leadership to accomplish the goals of this plan.

## STRATEGIC DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION GOALS

### ONE

Demonstrate a commitment to increasing representation of African American and other underrepresented populations at the University of South Alabama.

### TWO

Educate all students for an increasingly global society in Alabama, the United States and the world and continue to foster respect for the multicultural communities at the University of South Alabama.

### THREE

Promote diversity and inclusion through the development of access and success initiatives for students, faculty, and staff.

### FOUR

Increase community outreach programs in an effort to facilitate recruitment and retention of qualified African American and other underrepresented students, faculty and staff at the University of South Alabama and to enhance the perception of the University as a place open and eager to educate and employ persons of all races, creeds, religions and national origins.

# STRATEGIC PLAN

## GOAL ONE

### USA PRIORITY #1: STUDENT SUCCESS AND ACCESS

Demonstrate a commitment to increasing representation of African American and other underrepresented populations at the University of South Alabama.

#### ACTION STEPS FOR GOAL ONE

1. Each college shall submit to the Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs an annual report on its accomplishments and objectives related to diversity and inclusion. These reports are reviewed by the Vice President who, in turn, advises the University's President.
2. Submission of annual reports by individual academic departments will continue during the life of this Strategic Plan for Diversity and Inclusion. Each report should include an assessment of the department's institutional environment as it relates to diversity on campus and should include specific numerical data substantiating the findings contained in the report. While the University may not and will not set numerical goals as the measurement of diversity, the University does expect and require each department and/or division, as applicable, to submit substantive, hard data to support its conclusions as contained in its annual reports.
3. A commitment to diversity as evidenced by departmental and/or division annual reports and other factors will be a part of job descriptions in ads and required job goals and

objectives for each person responsible for submitting and/or reporting on these plans.

4. The University will maintain its Diversity and Inclusion Committee and this committee shall meet and report to the President as necessary to effectively provide input into and guidance for the future progress of diversity programs at the University.
5. The University will send at least two representatives to annual diversity conferences and will post a report on the University's website regarding the conference(s) and any recommendations resulting from participation in such conference(s). The two representatives will be selected by the Diversity and Inclusion Committee and administration.
6. The University will continue to develop and support programs to facilitate successful transition to the institution for underrepresented students.
7. The University will explore the development of a retention initiative designed to improve the retention rates for African American males.
8. The University will sponsor and establish programs that educate students and the University community to racial and ethnic diversity, inter-group relations, and conflict resolution.

## GOAL TWO

### USA PRIORITY #2: ENHANCEMENT OF RESEARCH AND GRADUATE EDUCATION

Educate all students for an increasingly global society in Alabama, the United States and the world and continue to foster respect for the multicultural communities at the University of South Alabama.

#### ACTION STEPS FOR GOAL TWO

1. Study the potential impact of increasing University Library holdings, including electronic resources, related to African American and other underrepresented populations.
2. Sponsor and encourage research, publication and professional development in African American and underrepresented population studies.
3. Explore the potential impact feasibility of expanding the African American studies program to include a major.
4. Explore the potential impact of creating a multidisciplinary center for the study of race and ethnicity that would focus on research, teaching and public programs.
5. Explore the potential impact of pursuing the McNair Scholars Program, through the TRIO grant.
6. The University will actively pursue entrepreneurs from underrepresented categories to participate in university sponsored incubator programs.

## GOAL THREE

### USA PRIORITY #1: STUDENT SUCCESS AND ACCESS

Continue to develop recruiting and retention initiatives designed to enable students to enroll and progress at even higher levels at the University of South Alabama.

#### ACTION STEPS FOR GOAL THREE

##### A. Student Diversity

##### 1. Undergraduate Student Diversity

The University of South Alabama currently has underrepresented population enrollment of 24.8% of its undergraduate student body. Almost nineteen (18.7%) percent of the undergraduate student body is African-American. This number exceeds the national average of 13.1% undergraduate African-American students. Based on these data, University of South Alabama graduate responses to exit surveys and the general climate in existence at the University, the University believes that its current recruitment initiatives are successful and that the African American and other underrepresented populations enrollment will continue to grow as the University's recruitment and retention programs continue their current success.

The University will focus on increasing recruitment and retention of qualified applicants across all undergraduate populations with increased emphasis on programs specifically designed to assist less academically prepared students with the transition to successful collegiate studies at the University. The Diversity and Inclusion Committee will monitor the success of programs like Pathway USA in achieving this goal.

## 2. Graduate Student Diversity

The University will develop and, to the extent practicable, implement other, legally viable programs to assist underprepared students (which is not synonymous with African-American and other underrepresented populations) to succeed in graduate programs.

Continue to look for innovative and exciting programs to legally grow both enrollment and retention of African American and other underrepresented student populations.

To the extent feasible, support and nurture the programs currently in place to recruit and retain African American and other underrepresented student populations.

Review, analyze and, to the extent practicable, expand mentoring programs available to students.

## GOAL FOUR

### USA PRIORITY #5: UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

## GOAL FOUR

Increase community outreach programs in an effort to facilitate recruitment and retention of qualified African-American and other underrepresented students, faculty and staff at the University of South Alabama and to enhance the perception in the University's main service area of the University as a place open and eager to educate and employ persons of all races, creeds, religions and national origins.

#### A. Community Outreach

In an effort to ensure that the University of South Alabama continues to be seen as a great place for African American and other underrepresented populations to become students and/or employees, the University will stress to its students, faculty, staff and alumni the importance of developing and maintaining solid relationships with the African-American and other underrepresented population communities in the University's geographical area. The University will identify key persons to be charged with general oversight of the University's efforts in this area. The identified persons will be asked to document the University's efforts in these areas and suggest and/or oversee the development of new, legally sustainable efforts. To the extent possible, the University will consider ways that funding for community initiatives, both people and programs, might be available.

The University will review and determine the viability of a "Community Leadership Committee" to be composed of community leaders from across the University's geographical drawing area for the purpose of providing increased recognition of the programs and opportunities available at the University for African Americans and other underrepresented populations.

The University will actively seek ways to utilize its resources to provide professional development, training and advancement opportunities for current and prospective University faculty and staff.

# MONITORING FOR EFFECTIVENESS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

## Monitoring of Strategic Diversity Plan for Effectiveness and Accountability

The University of South Alabama recognizes the importance of a systematic, thorough and routine review of its efforts towards increasing African American and other underrepresented populations diversity at the University of South Alabama. To this end, the Strategic Diversity Plan will be subjected to the following measures of accountability and review (and any others deemed appropriate):

1. The President will designate an employee of the University with the responsibility of overseeing the implementation and continuing obligations of this Strategic Diversity Plan. That individual will designate persons and/or departments with specific responsibilities pursuant to the plan.
2. As part of his/her annual performance review for at least the next five years, all University personnel charged with specific responsibilities pursuant to this plan shall be accountable for his/her responsibilities under the plan, including, to the extent applicable, a review of: (1) progress toward goals; (2) campus environment; and (3) recruitment and retention efforts for African-American and other underrepresented populations. Goals set will not be in the form of set asides or quotas, may vary depending upon job market, job openings, and student applicant pool, and will serve as only a management tool for assessing the effectiveness of ongoing diversity programs.
3. The University will post on its website by February 1<sup>st</sup> of each year, beginning in 2008, a report regarding the

implementation of the Strategic Diversity Plan that will include the following:

- a. Racial composition data of student body (total, undergraduate, and graduate) from 1991 to the present;
  - b. Racial composition of the students awarded bachelor, graduate and professional degrees;
  - c. Racial composition of fulltime faculty from 1991 to the present;
  - d. Racial composition of presidents, provosts, vice presidents, deans, department chairs and other EEO1 level administrators from 1991 to the present;
  - e. Racial analysis of faculty and administrative positions filled during the year, including the number of African-Americans considered for these vacancies; and
  - f. An assessment of progress by the institution in enhancing diversity and/or moving toward its diversity goals, with an emphasis on the representation of African-American faculty, EEO1 level administrators, and students.
4. These annual reports will be distributed to the Board of Trustees each year.
  5. The Strategic Diversity Plan and the annual reports will remain readily available to the public in both the University Library and on the University's website.