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## Fwd: An update on University diversity initiatives

1 message

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Mon, Jul 12, 2021 at 9:24 AM

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From: **URI Communications** <[uricommunity@ais.uri.edu](mailto:uricommunity@ais.uri.edu)>  
Date: Mon, Jul 12, 2021 at 8:05 AM  
Subject: An update on University diversity initiatives  
To: <[anna\\_barone@uri.edu](mailto:anna_barone@uri.edu)>



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*This message is sent on behalf of the URI Senior Leadership Team.*

## An update on the University's diversity initiatives

July 12, 2021

Some of you may have heard about a suit against the University with disturbing claims about our record on social justice, equity and inclusion. While we will not comment publicly on active litigation or personnel matters,

we want to assure you that the claims lack merit and the University is prepared to defend itself vigorously against them in the appropriate forum.

While there is still much work for us to do to continue to advance our strategic diversity goals, we have been and remain steadfast in our commitment to social justice, equity, access, and inclusion and we are seeing results from our efforts. For example, since 2008, the percentage of historically underrepresented students of color at URI has risen from 12 percent to 21 percent, which represents growth from about 1,900 to more than 3,700 students of color in the URI community. Further, since 2012, the proportion of full-time faculty of color at URI has risen from 15 percent to 22 percent.

The expanded diversity of our community is the result of focused efforts over the past decade aligned with the President's Transformational Goals for the 21st Century, the clearly articulated goals of URI's Academic Strategic Plans, and the strong commitment of the URI community to embracing and advancing diversity and social justice as a top institutional priority.

In January, we provided the campus community with an update on the University's diversity initiatives, and today we would like to share the progress made and highlight some of the many initiatives currently underway.

We are moving forward with significant investments emerging from the [URI Anti-Black Racism: Academic Affairs Action Agenda for Change](#), spearheaded by the Office of the Provost. Initiated at URI during the summer 2020 national resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement and further advanced at the University's 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Academic Summit focused on *Anti-racism at URI: Academic Curriculum and Pedagogy*, this effort has as its primary focus advancing "actionable strategies." Such actions include:

- Searches are underway and finalists are being selected for the first-ever URI cohort of three Distinguished Multicultural Postdoctoral Fellows within the College of Arts and Sciences;

- Hiring four new Assistant Deans for Diversity in the Graduate School of Oceanography, College of Arts & Sciences, College of Health Sciences, and University College for Academic Success, who will join diversity leaders in the College of Engineering, the College of Business, and the College of the Environment and Life Sciences;
- Hiring an additional new inclusive pedagogy specialist position in the Office for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning (ATL);
- Funding a tenure track faculty cluster hire of three new faculty in the College of Arts and Sciences;
- Investing in a series of diversity, equity, and inclusion-related curriculum and ongoing professional development opportunities for faculty;
- Hiring additional faculty in positions specifically focused on diversity, equity and inclusion content areas across multiple colleges and departments;
- Completing a national search and hiring a new full professor and chair to lead the recently approved Africana Studies Department.

The Division of Student Affairs has created a committee on justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion. Its focus is on action steps aimed at enhancing search processes, by reviewing and infusing justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion and anti-racism into policies and procedures. The committee will work to expand upon existing University-wide professional development opportunities for all staff.

- A new position has been created in the Multicultural Student Services Center focused on creating culturally relevant student programming.
- The University will also soon bring on board new directors of the Multicultural Student Services Center and the Women's Center, and is hiring a new multicultural specialist in the Counseling Center.

In order to increase allyship, promote education, and create significant change on URI's campus, a committee will meet next week to focus on planning events and developing services that will enhance success and

inclusion for trans and nonbinary students, staff, and faculty on campus. The College of Arts and Sciences; Community, Equity, and Diversity; Gender and Women's Studies; the Gender and Sexuality Center; and the Division of Student Affairs are all working in collaboration on this project.

Our student-led Diversity Dialogues program received both regional and University recognition, including an award from the Northeast Greek Leadership Association (NGLA) for multicultural initiatives and programming.

In March, URI became an institutional member of the National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity (NCFDD), an independent professional development center dedicated to helping faculty make successful transitions throughout their careers.

Taking an active leadership role in social justice efforts, the Faculty Senate Executive Committee developed ambitious charges for each Senate standing committee with explicit goals and objectives that promote racial justice and diversity. In April, all committees submitted reports on their progress and developed recommendations for how each committee may continue this work moving forward. In addition, the Faculty Senate approved a Commitment to Anti-Racism Resolution.

The first Campus Climate Survey was completed in April. One out of five members of our community responded, sharing their truth about their experiences at URI. In the fall, we will host town hall meetings to share our findings with the campus community and post the report on the [survey website](#).

Across departments we are working to proactively reach out, transform search procedures, and expand pipeline programs to increase Black, Indigenous, and Latinx faculty and staff. The November Academic Affairs Department and Program Chairs Forum was focused on this topic.

There is still much work to be done on our campus and in our society. Diverse faculty and staff recruitment and retention and curriculum transformation continue to be top priorities for the University. We remain firmly committed to an intersectional approach to address inequities relating to all groups and community members whose rights and liberties may be at risk, including LGBTQ+ communities on our campus.

We thank all those who continue to advance these and other initiatives as we pursue inclusive excellence in our teaching, research, co-curricular, and professional endeavors.

Your voices and perspectives are important to us and we are committed to amplifying and acting upon the information you share with us. All are invited to participate in any and all of the [open forums](#) Community, Equity and Diversity hosts throughout the academic year.

Additionally, campus resources and support can be found [here](#).

For more information, please contact [uriced@etal.uri.edu](mailto:uriced@etal.uri.edu).



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