

Faculty Development  
and Curriculum  
Subcommittee  
Report

**Report of the Faculty Development and Curriculum Subcommittee**  
November 24, 2020

Introduction:

2020 will be known as the year Black and People of Color faced two pandemics, COVID-19 and Racial Injustice. Racial injustice was revealed in many areas of society that sought to address how they have continued to fall short of the promise of true equality and inclusion, including corporations, health care facilities and institutions of higher education. Universities around the country, including The University of Akron, are not immune to the pernicious harm inflicted by systemic racism. Following the tragic deaths of George Floyd and Brionna Taylor, along with the many protests around the world that followed, President Gary Miller was proactive when inviting members of the UA community to

“join a working group I am appointing to conduct a thorough evaluation of University policies and practices that – either directly or indirectly – shape the way in which we nurture a tolerant, diverse and inclusive campus environment.”

From this working group emerged a subcommittee to look at Faculty Development and Curriculum. The subcommittee included faculty Suzette L. Speight (Chair), Brant T. Lee, Robert L. Peralta, Mahesh Srinivasan, and Frank Ward. Over the course of the fall semester of 2020, the subcommittee engaged in spirited and frank discussions, reviewing data, and reading professional articles regarding diversity and inclusion in the USA and at The University of Akron, specifically.

After reviewing UA practice and policy and reflecting on the academic culture of UA, the subcommittee identified 3 areas the University should consider: (1) the Mission statement of the University and various colleges should be evaluated and updated to represent a commitment to diversity and inclusion, (2) the ongoing lack of representation of Black and other faculty of color along with the need for a re-evaluation of the recruitment and retention of Black and other Faculty of Color, and (3) faculty development and the enhancement of their ability to deliver multicultural curriculum. This report will address each of these issues in turn and will conclude with a list of recommendations.

---

The subcommittee members were Suzette L. Speight from the Department of Psychology, Brant T. Lee from the School of Law, Robert L. Peralta from the Department of Sociology, Mahesh Srinivasan from the Department of Management in the College of Business Administration, and Frank Ward from the School of Music. The subcommittee acknowledges the assistance of Nuha Alshabani,

**I. The Mission Statement of the University should be evaluated and updated to represent a commitment to diversity and inclusion.**

An institution's mission statement is a declaration of its "reason for being," and distinguishes it from other institutions. An effective mission statement that clearly articulates an organization's goals and core values is a prerequisite for effective strategic planning. If diversity, inclusion and equity are truly core values for The University of Akron, then its Mission Statement should reflect its commitment to those values.

The University's current mission statement can be found in the University Rules at Rule 3359-20-01, "Institutional mission and goals, affirmative action statement." There is only an oblique reference to diversity, inclusion, or equity:

(A) Mission

(1) The University of Akron maintains a commitment to:

(a) Provide learning opportunities for the full spectrum of students. (Emphasis added.)

Later, subsection (3) which is somewhat confusingly titled "The University of Akron mission statement," and contains nothing specific about diversity, inclusion, or equity:

"The University of Akron, a publicly assisted metropolitan institution, strives to develop enlightened members of society. It offers comprehensive programs of instruction from associate through doctoral levels; pursues a vigorous agenda of research in the arts, sciences, and professions; and provides service to the community. The university pursues excellence in undergraduate education and distinction in selected areas of graduate instruction, inquiry, and creative activity."

Under (B) "Goals," the rule states:

"In recognition of the above mission statement, the following goals are established for the university to:

(1) Plan, develop, implement, and evaluate its efforts in light of its major goal of teaching and provide optimal learning opportunities for students of various ages, diverse backgrounds, and different needs; ...

(3) Design programs in the teaching/learning process to fulfill the students' varied educational needs and provide opportunities for intellectual, personal, cultural, and social development on the campus so as to enhance the ability of students to participate effectively in a complex society...

Finally, under (C) "Affirmative action statement," the Rule states that the University will comply with state and federal antidiscrimination law and declares it as a policy not to unlawfully discriminate or tolerate sexual harassment.

None of the above demonstrates any articulated or meaningful commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion as core values or goals of The University of Akron.

The various schools or colleges, some departments, and several administrative offices at the University have adopted their own mission statements. We reviewed 11 mission statements from the School of Law, the Department of Polymer Science, the Construction Engineering Technology program, the Buchtel College of Arts and Sciences, Wayne College, College of Health Professions, the Sociology Department, and the School of Music. Few that we reviewed

contained any meaningful articulation of a commitment to diversity, inclusion, or equity as a core value or goal. The subcommittee members were surprised by the lack of attention given to issues of diversity, inclusion, multiculturalism and social justice in most of the mission statements. The UA mission statement is noticeably silent on issues of diversity and inclusion thus, the other mission statements are consistent with the mission statement of UA. From the current mission statement of UA, it is difficult to ascertain whether the University is actually interested in or committed to issues of diversity and inclusion.

It is a strategic function, and beyond the purview of our small subcommittee, to propose particular language to include in the University's Mission Statement. A revised Mission Statement should be developed through a process coordinated by leadership if it is to be an authentic expression of our self-conception as a public urban research university. However, we do recommend that such a provision be developed and adopted, and we suggest that the statement reflect the following principles:

- True knowledge of our world requires an understanding of diverse perspectives, particularly those that have been marginalized.
- Historical disparities, especially along racial lines, require affirmative steps to be taken in order for full inclusion and equity to be achieved.
- Our service to a complex and diverse society would be incomplete if students are not equipped to understand and engage with it.
- The University strives to achieve full inclusion and equity of diverse peoples and perspectives.

## **II. Underrepresentation of Black faculty and other Faculty of Color**

Across multiple disciplines within higher education, Blacks and people of color, generally are underrepresented among the faculty ranks. (Whittaker & Montgomery, 2013). For instance, from 2013-2017, the number of Latinx faculty at universities with doctoral programs grew by less than one percent and the number of Black faculty at these institutions grow by one tenth of a percent (Heilig et al., 2019). Similarly, there continues to be limited diversity in faculty across The University of Akron. This has been a concern for our University for many years. In fact, a subcommittee of the University Diversity Council submitted a report in 2009 regarding specific strategies for recruiting and retaining Black faculty (included in Appendix A). At The University of Akron, in 2004 Black faculty comprised 5.8% of the tenure track faculty, in 2008 Black faculty were 5.4%, in 2015 Black faculty were 4.96%, and in 2019 Black faculty were 4.3% of the tenure track faculty. The percentage of Black faculty (and other faculty of color) has been consistently low over time at The University of Akron.

Institutions across the United States have continually identified a need for more diverse faculty with minimal progress (Griffin et al., 2020). One potential reason that the issue of underrepresented faculty remains a concern is that the response to this problem has not been a systemic effort (Bennett, et al., 2020). Within our own institution, we have yet to implement a broad and systemic program that would increase the recruitment and retention of diverse faculty. Without a deep understanding of the unique internal and external barriers to diverse faculty

recruitment and retention, a sustainable solution will be elusive. Research shows that the problem is multifaceted including increasing enrollment of diverse persons in graduate programs, entry of diverse persons into the academia pipeline, and biases that limit the opportunities of diverse persons (Moss-Racusin et al. 2012; Sethna 2011; Whittaker & Montgomery, 2013). Further, when gender, racial, and ethnic diverse faculty enter an institution there is a lack of professional progression when compared to their male counterparts. Previous research identifies a failure to represent diverse persons on faculty that is equal to their group’s representation in the community and lack of diverse mentors to guide these junior faculty as reasons for this lack of progression (Whittaker & Montgomery, 2013). Likewise, at The University of Akron, the number of racially and ethnically diverse faculty who progress to tenure and/or leadership positions on campus is disproportionate to the number of White faculty who progress to these positions.

We were provided access to data about the (under) representation of Black faculty and other faculty of color. It is important that we clearly understand the scope of the problem, thus we will review data on both job applications and tenure vs. non-tenure positions and make comparisons over time.

**Faculty Job Applications:** The percentage of job applications coming from faculty of color for full-time faculty positions at The University of Akron has generally remained low (in the single digits) over the last few years (2015-2019). As summarized in Table 1, out of a total of 552 applications for full-time tenure track and tenured positions received by The University of Akron in the year 2015, only 49 applications (i.e. 8.88% of total) were from those who identified themselves as African American, Hispanic and Native American. These figures were 140 (out of a total 1,379 applications – i.e. 10.15% of total) in the year 2016, 54 (out of a total 742 applications – i.e. 7.28% of the total) in 2017, 73 (out of 1,008 applications – i.e. 7.24% of total) in 2018 and 88 (out of 770 applications – i.e. 11.43% of total) in 2019.

Year	African American	Asian	Hispanic	Native American	Pacific Islander	Caucasian	Total
2015	31	220	13	5	0	283	552
2016	92	449	38	10	0	752	1379
2017	29	289	21	4	1	398	742
2018	39	427	32	2	1	507	1008
2019	49	290	36	3	1	391	770

Table 1: Job Applicants by Race (self-identified) for full-time Tenure Track and Tenured faculty positions 2015-2019

As can be seen in Figure 1, the percentage of African American job applicants for tenure track positions has generally remained between 3.87% to 6.67% during the years 2015-2019. Similarly, the percentage of Hispanic job applicants has remained between a low of 2.36% in the

year 2015 to a high of 4.68% in the year 2019. The percentage of job applications from Native Americans has been generally below 1% over the years 2015-2019.

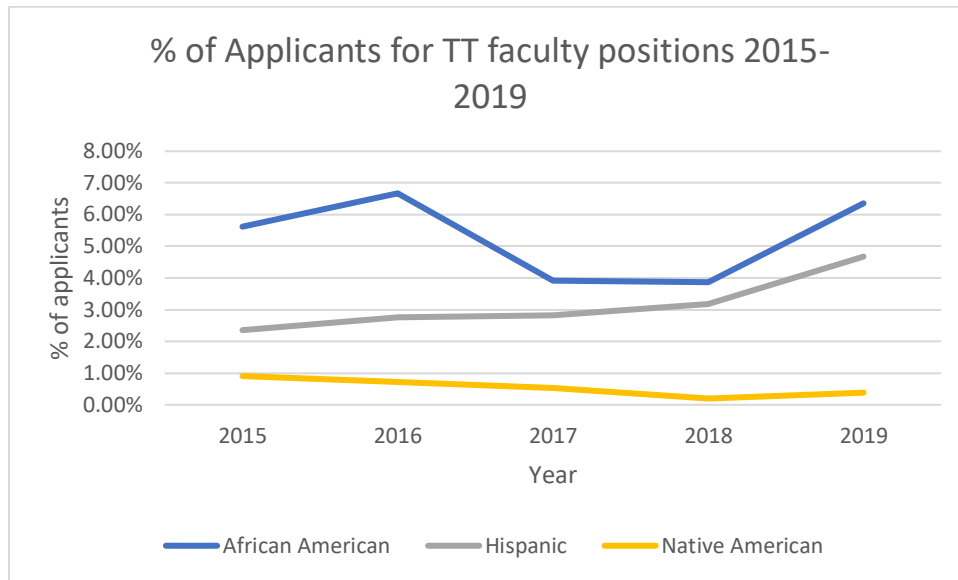


Figure 1

Summarized in Table 2 is the total number of applicants by race (self-identified) for full-time non-tenure track (NTT) faculty positions for the years 2015 to 2019. Out of a total of 2,188 applications for full-time NTT positions received by The University of Akron in the year 2015, only 254 applications (i.e. 11.61% of the total) were from those who identified themselves as African American, Hispanic and Native American. These figures were 229 (out of a total 1,672 applications – i.e. 13.70% of total) in the year 2016, 114 (out of a total 876 applications – i.e. 13.01% of total) in 2017, 88 (out of 727 applications – i.e. 12.10% of total) in 2018 and 44 (out of 477 applications – i.e. 9.22% of total) in 2019. Although the percentage of job applications for NTT positions from those identifying themselves as African American, Hispanic and Native American is slightly higher than those for tenure track and tenured faculty positions, they have fallen to under 10% of the total applicants for the year 2019.

Year	African American	Asian	Hispanic	Native American	Pacific Islander	Caucasian	Totals
2015	197	117	43	14	1	1816	2188
2016	147	247	72	10	1	1195	1672
2017	90	79	19	5	0	683	876
2018	67	81	21	0	1	557	727
2019	26	70	13	5	0	363	477

Table 2: Job Applicants by Race (self-identified) for full-time non-Tenure Track faculty positions 2015-2019

As can be seen in Figure 2, the percentage of African American job applicants for NTT positions peaked at slightly above 10% of all applicants in 2017 and has since fallen to 5.45% of all applicants in the year 2019. The percentage of Hispanic job applicants peaked at slightly above 4.31% of all applicants in 2016 and has since fallen to 2.73% of all applicants in the year 2019. The percentage of job applications from Native Americans has been generally below 1% over the years, except for the year 2019 when it barely breached the 1% mark.

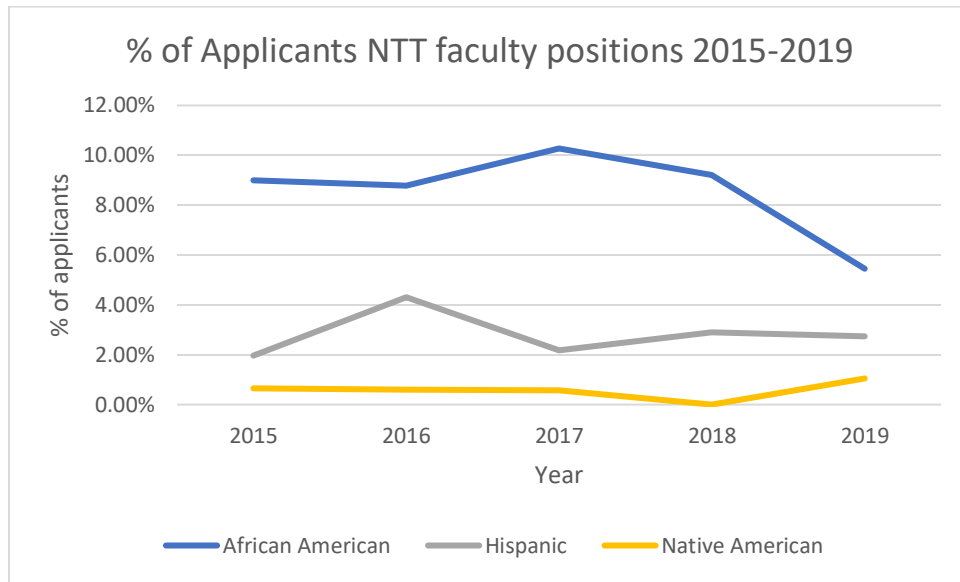


Figure 2

**Faculty Hires:** Out of the 125 full-time regular faculty hires at The University of Akron between the academic years 2015-16 and 2019-20, only 4 (or 3.2%) were Black faculty and 2 (or 1.60%) were Hispanic. We did not receive data separately specific to Native Americans for faculty hires. Please refer to Figure 3. (Please note that 5 faculty hires were reported as NS – Not Specified).

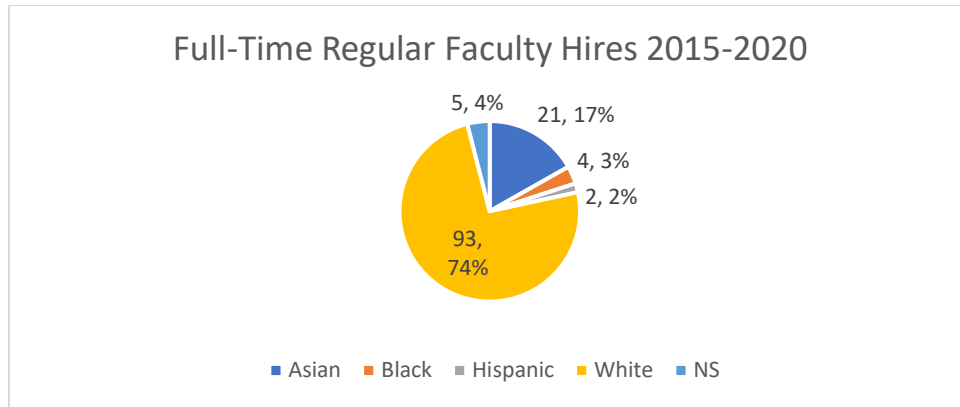


Figure 3

Faculty Demographics: Based on a request we made, we were provided faculty demographics for the total number of faculty (tenured, tenure track and NTT) at The University of Akron in the year 2015, and again in the year 2019. This enabled us to track the changes in the faculty demographics over time.

Tenured and Tenure-Track faculty: Table 3 shows the number of tenured and tenure track faculty at The University of Akron in the year 2015 and then again in the year 2019.

	African American	Asian	Hispanic	Native American	Pacific Islander	Caucasian	Totals
Total - Tenure and TT - 2015	27	106	14	2	0	378	544
Total - Tenure and TT - 2019	19	93	9	1	0	309	443

Table 3 - Number of tenured and tenure track faculty, years 2015 and 2019

As can be seen in the side-by-side comparison of the number of tenured and tenure track faculty at UA in 2015 and 2019 in Figure 4, the number of African American, Hispanic and Native American faculty decreased over the four-year period. However, this also corresponds to a decrease in the total number of tenured and tenure track faculty at UA during the same period (total went down from 544 in 2015 to 443 in 2019).



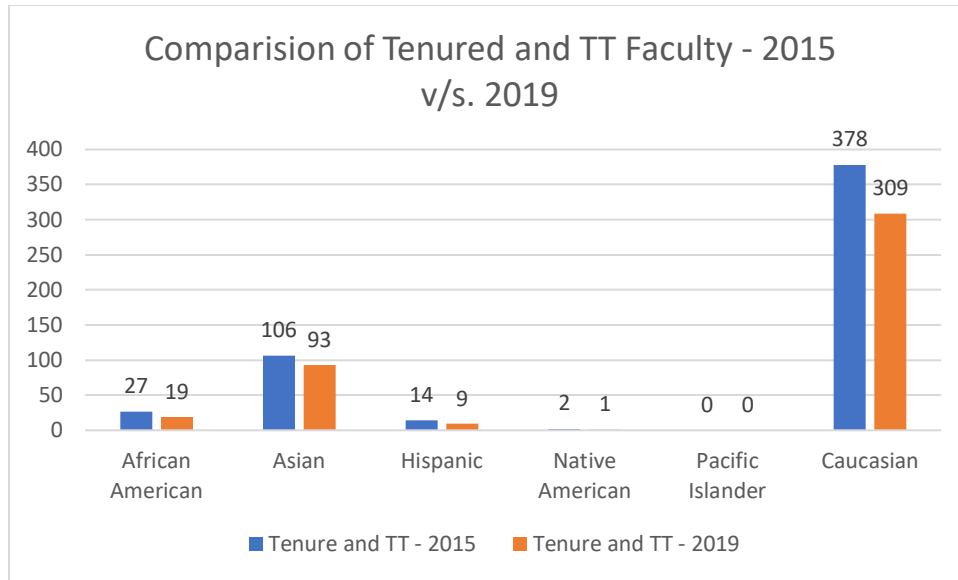


Figure 4

Moreover, looking at the percentage of African American, Hispanic and Native American tenured and tenure track faculty (as a percentage of the total tenured and tenure track faculty at UA), we can see from Figures 5 and 6 that these numbers decreased from 2015 to 2019. While the percentage of African American, Hispanic and Native American tenured and tenure track faculty being already low to begin with, in 2015 (only 4.96%, 2.57% and 0.37% respectively), these further decreased to 4.29%, 2.03% and 0.23% respectively in 2019.

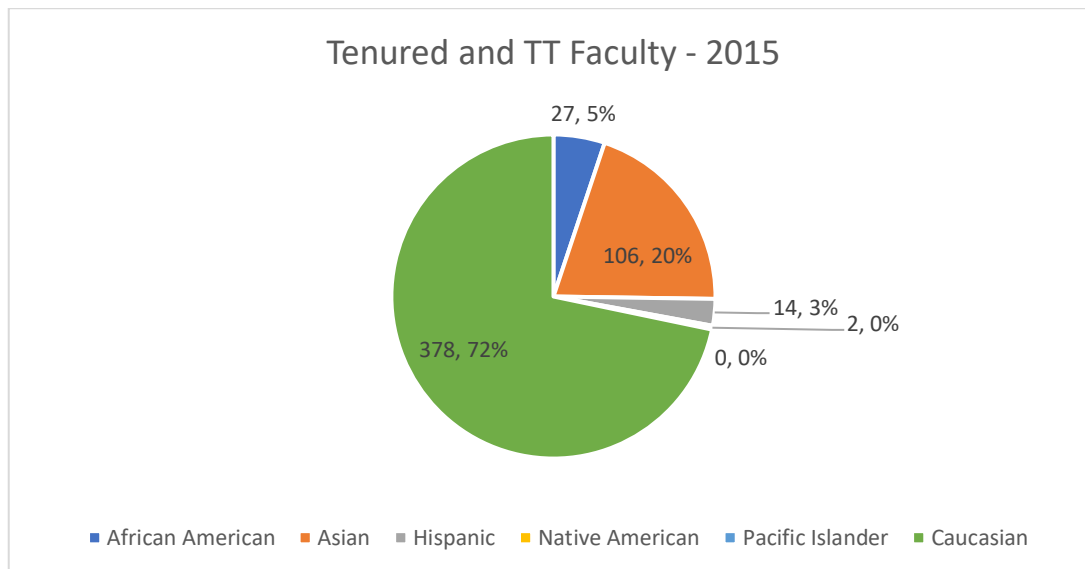


Figure 5

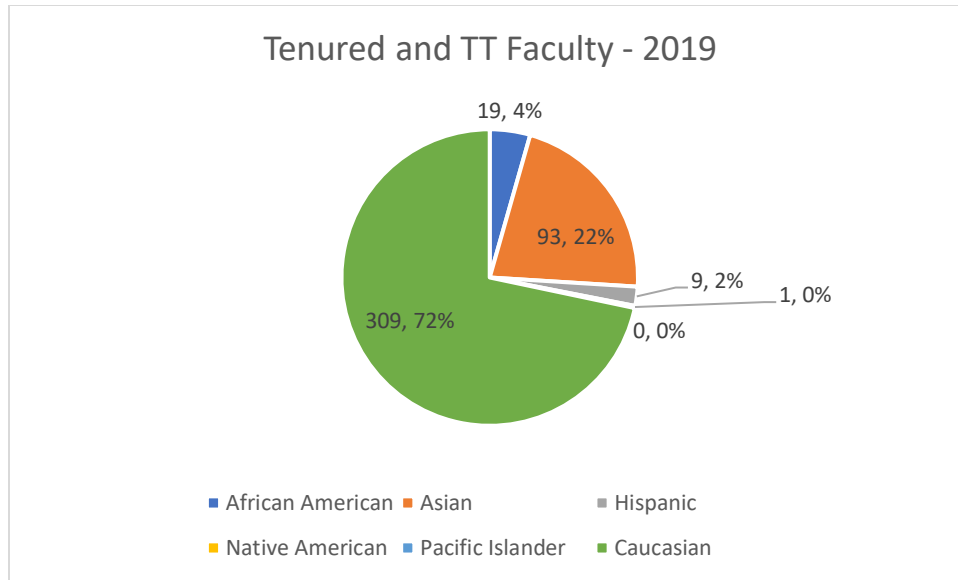


Figure 6

We also felt it was important to look at the faculty demographics at the College level to inform us where more efforts may be needed to increase the proportion of faculty belonging to African American, Hispanic and Native American groups.

As can be seen in Table 4, the percentage of African American tenured and tenure track faculty was lowest in the College of Engineering and Wayne College (1.28% and 2.70% respectively) to a relative high of 13.04% and 16.22% in the (former) College of Education and (former) College of Applied Sciences and Technology. However, the number of Hispanic tenured and tenure track faculty were present in only a few colleges (Buchtel College of Arts and Sciences - BCAS, College of Business Administration, College of Engineering, and College of Health Professionals) with a complete absence in all other colleges. There was one Native American faculty each in the College of Engineering and College of Health Professionals in the year 2015.

Tenure and TT - 2015	African American	Asian	Hispanic	Native American	Caucasian
BCAS	3.42%	10.68%	4.27%	0.00%	81.62%
CBA	7.69%	30.77%	2.56%	0.00%	58.97%
COEducation	13.04%	17.39%	0.00%	0.00%	69.57%
COEngg	1.28%	50.00%	2.56%	1.28%	44.87%
CHP	4.65%	16.28%	2.33%	2.33%	74.42%
CPSPE	3.70%	51.85%	0.00%	0.00%	44.44%
Law	7.69%	3.85%	0.00%	0.00%	88.46%
CAST	16.22%	8.11%	0.00%	0.00%	75.68%

Wayne	2.70%	2.70%	0.00%	0.00%	48.65%
Total	4.96%	19.49%	2.57%	0.37%	69.49%

Table 4 – percentage of tenured and tenure track faculty by race in various colleges (2015)

The number of African American tenured and tenure track faculty showed a further general decrease in 2019 (Table 5) with a significant decrease from a count of 6 (in 2015) to 2 (in 2019) in the (former) College of Applied Sciences and Technology. The BCAS saw a similar significant decrease in the number of Hispanic faculty from 10 (in 2015) to 6 (in 2019) and the College of Engineering lost the one Native American faculty they had from 2015.

Tenure and TT - 2019	African American	Asian	Hispanic	Native American	Caucasian
BCAS	3.66%	10.99%	3.14%	0.00%	82.20%
CBA	4.88%	31.71%	0.00%	0.00%	63.41%
COEducation	11.11%	22.22%	0.00%	0.00%	66.67%
COEngg	1.49%	44.78%	2.99%	0.00%	50.75%
CHP	2.78%	22.22%	2.78%	2.78%	69.44%
CPSPE	9.09%	54.55%	0.00%	0.00%	36.36%
Law	7.14%	7.14%	0.00%	0.00%	85.71%
CAST	7.41%	11.11%	0.00%	0.00%	81.48%
Wayne	3.70%	3.70%	0.00%	0.00%	48.15%
Total	4.29%	20.99%	2.03%	0.23%	69.75%

Table 5 – percentage of tenured and tenure track faculty by race in various colleges (2019)

The committee also felt it was important to look at the demographics of tenure and tenure track faculty by rank. The numbers for the year 2015 and 2019 are summarized in Tables 6 and 7 respectively. These numbers generally show a good distribution of African American and Hispanic faculty in Full Professor and Associate Professor ranks (although as discussed before, the number of such faculty itself is quite low). Further, the number of African American and Hispanic faculty in senior ranks fell from 2015 to 2019 (especially the number of African American Full and Associate Professors).

Tenure and TT by Rank - 2015	African American	Asian	Hispanic	Native American	Caucasian
Distinguished Professor	0 (0%)	3 (20%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	12 (80%)

Professor	14 (6.14%)	38 (16.67%)	6 (2.63%)	1 (0.44%)	158 (69.35)
Associate Professor	9 (4.19%)	35 (16.28%)	6 (2.79%)	0 (0%)	155 (72.09%)
Assistant Professor	4 (4.65%)	30 (34.88%)	2 (2.33%)	1 (1.16%)	53 (61.63%)

Table 6 – Tenured and tenure track faculty by race and rank (2015)

Tenure and TT by Rank - 2019	African American	Asian	Hispanic	Native American	Caucasian
Distinguished Professor	0 (0%)	2 (18.18%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	9 (81.82%)
Professor	10 (4.59%)	46 (21.10%)	4 (1.83%)	0 (0%)	144 (66.06%)
Associate Professor	6 (3.59%)	38 (22.75%)	5 (2.99%)	1 (0.6%)	119 (71.26%)
Assistant Professor	3 (6.38%)	7 (14.89%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	37 (78.72%)

Table 7 – Tenured and tenure track faculty by race and rank (2019)

Non-Tenure Track Faculty:

Similar to the analysis and summary for the full-time tenured and tenure track faculty, the committee also looked at the demographics of the non-tenure track (NTT) faculty. We were also provided the demographics for this group from 2015 and 2019, so that a comparison over time was possible.

Table 8 shows the number of NTT faculty at The University of Akron in the year 2015, and then again in the year 2019.

	African American	Asian	Hispanic	Native American	Pacific Islander	Caucasian	Totals
NTT - 2015	51	32	11	1	0	913	1008
NTT - 2019	57	15	8	4	1	746	831

Table 8 - Number of NTT faculty, years 2015 and 2019

As can be seen from the side-by-side comparison of the NTT faculty at UA in 2015 and 2019 in Figure 7, the number of African American faculty increased marginally from 2015 to 2019; Native American faculty had an increase from a count of 1 in 2015 to 4 in 2019. However, the number of Hispanic faculty decreased over the same 4-year period. This also corresponds to a decrease in the total number of NTT faculty at UA during the same period (total decreased from 1,008 in 2015 to 831 in 2019).

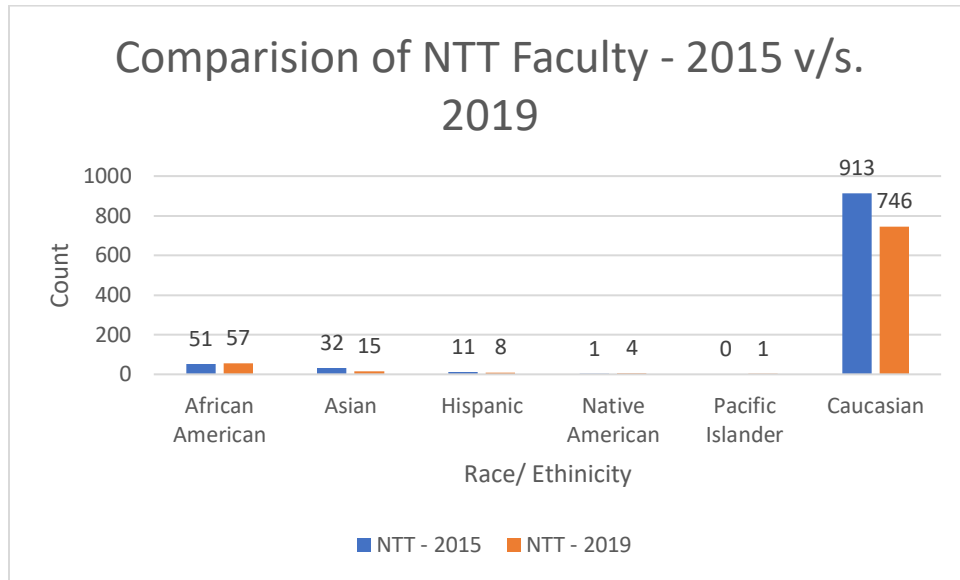


Figure 7

Looking at the percentage of African American and Native American NTT faculty (as a percentage of the total NTT faculty at UA), we can see from Figures 8 and 9 that these numbers marginally increased from 2015 to 2019, corresponding to an increase in the count of these NTT faculty. The percentage of Hispanic NTT faculty marginally decreased over the same 4-year period. Yet, the African American, Hispanic and Native American NTT faculty at UA continue to be underrepresented.

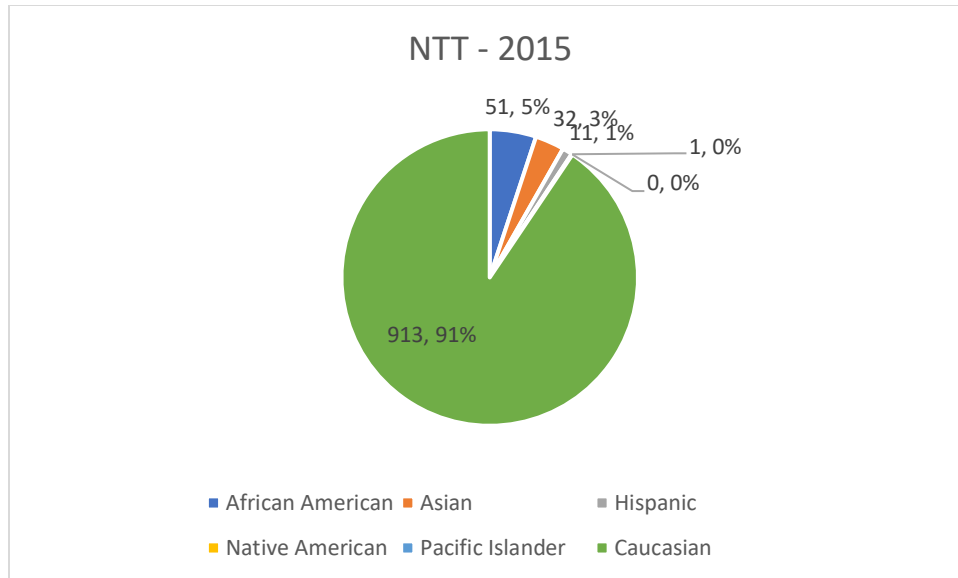


Figure 8

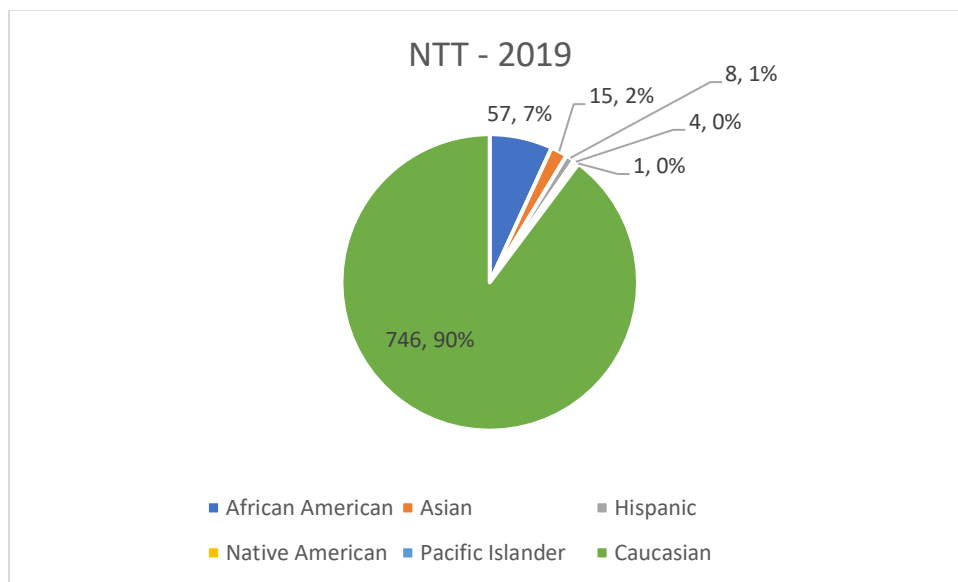


Figure 9

As with the full-time tenured and tenure track faculty, we also felt it was important to look at the NTT faculty demographics at the College level to inform us where more efforts may be needed to increase the proportion of faculty belonging to African American, Hispanic and Native American groups.

As can be seen in Table 9, there were no African American and Hispanic NTT faculty in a number of colleges in 2015 (Table 9) and this trend continued into 2019 (Table 10). The proportion of Native American NTT faculty continues to be very low in the few colleges they are present. It is notable that the proportion of African American NTT faculty were relatively higher in the (former) College of Applied Sciences and Technology [14.56% (count of 30)] in 2019. It

may be worth following up to see how these faculty were re-distributed with the re-organization of colleges in 2020 and how that impacted the proportion of African American NTT faculty in the colleges that absorbed them.

NTT - 2015	African American	Asian	Hispanic	Native American	Pacific Islander	Caucasian
BCAS	3.13%	3.13%	1.57%	0.00%	0.00%	92.17%
CBA	2.27%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	97.73%
COEducation	0.00%	2.17%	2.17%	0.00%	0.00%	95.65%
COEngg	0.00%	25.00%	8.33%	0.00%	0.00%	66.67%
CHP	6.34%	0.37%	0.75%	0.00%	0.00%	92.54%
CPSPE	0.00%	80.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	20.00%
Law	0.00%	5.88%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	94.12%
CAST	17.24%	0.86%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	81.90%
Wayne	1.00%	2.00%	0.00%	1.00%	0.00%	96.00%
Total	5.06%	3.17%	1.09%	0.10%	0.00%	90.58%

Table 9 – percentage of NTT faculty by race in various colleges (2015)

NTT - 2019	African American	Asian	Hispanic	Native American	Pacific Islander	Caucasian
BCAS	3.26%	2.79%	1.86%	0.93%	0.00%	91.16%
CBA	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%
COEducation	8.33%	3.33%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	88.33%
COEngg	0.00%	12.50%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	87.50%
CHP	6.25%	0.96%	1.44%	0.48%	0.48%	90.38%
CPSPE	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Law	4.35%	4.35%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	91.30%
CAST	14.56%	0.00%	0.00%	0.49%	0.00%	84.95%
Wayne	1.52%	3.03%	1.52%	0.00%	0.00%	93.94%
Total	6.86%	1.81%	0.96%	0.48%	0.12%	89.77%

Table 10 – percentage of NTT faculty by race in various colleges (2015)

It will also be worth comparing The University of Akron demographic faculty profile (both full-time tenured and tenure track faculty and NTT faculty) based on race, with other peer institutions. Unfortunately, we were unable to do the same due to lack of time and lack of access to such data. The bottom-line remains that there is much scope to increase the proportion of African American, Hispanic and Native American faculty in all faculty ranks at UA. None of the

data presented reflects the significant reduction in the faculty force during August 2020 where more than 90 faculty were terminated across the University.

### The Importance of Diversity at a Public Urban Research University

Diversifying the faculty at The University of Akron would have many benefits for the students, University, and Akron community. First, student diversity in terms of age, gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, gender expression and sexual orientation has been on the rise for years and only will continue to rise as higher education becomes more accessible. Research repeatedly demonstrates that students from diverse backgrounds learn best from faculty who come from similar backgrounds (Palmer et al., 2013; Rodriguez et al., 2012; National Academies, 2016) or from faculty who have committed to inclusive education (Griffin et al., 2020). Many of these students may have multiple responsibilities such as jobs, family or childcare, may be first generation college students, and may feel that current campus climates are incongruent with their own cultural values (Arana et al., 2011; Castellanos & Gloria, 2007; Gonzalez, 2012). Diverse faculty have been shown to develop curricula and teaching strategies that appropriately meet the needs of these students (Capers, 2019). Additionally, when students do not see themselves represented in the faculty, they may discontinue their education at that university (Asare, 2019) given their low sense of belonging.

Beyond supporting students, diverse faculty would benefit the University through advances in science and innovation, contribute a variety of perspectives to the academic discourse, and cultivate knowledge to support an educated global citizenry (National Academies, 2007). In addition, diverse faculty meet the University's goals of better serving their communities (Griffin et al., 2020). Though there is no single solution, however, research indicates that there are necessary fundamentals that can increase recruitment and retention of diverse faculty (Griffin et al., 2020). These fundamentals should address a) the commitment and investment the institution will make to diversifying staff, b) short and long term retention efforts, c) the onboarding process between initial welcome and employment start date, and d) retention efforts that keep faculty supported and satisfied with the institution (Griffin, 2020). Strategies should be interconnected to promote a culture of change, in fact, sustainable change requires that policies become normal university practice rather than temporary initiatives (Whittaker & Montgomery, 2013). Finally, institutions tend to focus on numbers without considering the experiences of faculty of color. Faculty of color commonly report feeling a lack of inclusion and support during their time at primarily white institutions (French et al., 2016). Nationally racial and ethnic minority faculty reported loneliness and negative feelings toward the university when they were aware of racial stigma (Bazemore, 2012). UA could benefit from hearing the voices of current racial and ethnic minority faculty to understand their experiences at the University.

### **III. Faculty Development and Curriculum**

While it is critical that UA have a diverse faculty corps, it is equally important that all faculty are able to deliver a multicultural curriculum to prepare students to be culturally competent. We value a climate of awareness, critical thinking, and inclusivity that challenges the conditions that enable systemic racism to remain unchallenged in our society and institution. Across the country, many academic institutions are engaging in conversations and searching for concrete ways to be



more diverse and inclusive across all aspects of their institutions. We must consider the curriculum if we want to have a more diverse and inclusive environment for our students, faculty, and staff. Drexel University's School of Education has a page on their website titled "*The Importance of Diversity & Cultural Awareness in the Classroom.*" The helpful statement below might prove beneficial in guiding UA as it begins to think and act more inclusively:

“Incorporate Diversity in the Lesson Plan. The classroom environment is important for fostering cultural awareness, but you also should ensure diversity is represented in your actual lesson plan. For example, broaden history lessons so that they encompass the world beyond United States history and culture. Or use references and analogies to other cultures in your lessons and assignments to help students with diverse backgrounds personally connect. Another great strategy is bringing in diverse speakers to add varying points of view and real-life context to different subjects. There are several ways you can ingrain cultural awareness and diversity into your lesson plan, and it will vary depending on the cultures represented in your classroom and the course you're teaching. Regardless of the subject, always try to present and connect lessons to real-world issues. It's easier to promote cultural awareness within your lessons when there's a real example for students to relate to.”

Providing faculty with the tools necessary to cultivate a more inclusive classroom and curriculum while simultaneously educating faculty on why this is critical to the mission of the University should be a top priority for UA. Our recommendation is to provide faculty with learning opportunities and workshops designed to further our goal of valuing diversity and to address gaps in our efforts to be more inclusive. Such opportunities will inform students and the community about the seriousness in which UA is addressing systemic racism in higher education.

The University must also identify and support units and departments that are already doing the important work of inclusive education and social justice related scholarship. Celebrating, providing financial support, promoting the successful efforts of programs and departments that are culturally aware, diverse, and engaged in social justice work informs students and the community at large that UA is working toward a more inclusive and equitable educational experience for all learners.

Diverse faculty often bring unique expertise, experiences and scholarly interests to their universities. It would be advantageous for departments and colleges to develop, fund and support the educational experiences in which marginalized students and faculty are interested, such as criminal justice reform, social determinants of health, or social activism. UA should determine what students of color are interested in, what they are majoring and minoring in, what the career objectives are for students of color, and support the programs and departments that address the educational needs of ethno-racial minorities. Supporting the interests of faculty of color will engage students of color as well. This support at the University level will inform students and the community at large that UA is interested in supporting the needs of ethno-racial minority learners, their faculty mentors, ethno-racial minority faculty at UA in particular, and The University of Akron leaders who support and invest in diversity and inclusion.

We suggest that UA support the urban research and community-based learning objectives of UA by supporting, developing, and celebrating active learning opportunities that occur in Akron and in the surrounding area. In order to showcase to the Akron community what our professors and students can do to address systemic racism and injustice in the Akron community, active learning support needs to be a feature of the curriculum at UA. Active learning opportunities can include health, criminal justice, and educational institutions in the greater Akron and Northeast Ohio region. Leveraging the talent of existing faculty committed to addressing social inequality, students can get hands on experience in health disparity/social determinants of health, criminal justice inequities, and educational roadblocks caused by systemic racism. Recognizing, promoting, and valuing these efforts should be a goal of The University of Akron.

Finally, accountability is necessary within the area of Faculty Development and Curriculum. For example, we could make better, more complete use of existing teaching evaluation data. Individual faculty and department chairs are encouraged to critically examine existing items in teaching evaluation data that pertain to inclusivity and openness to diversity. This would allow faculty and their supervisors to identify strengths and weaknesses in our collective teaching capabilities in order to address systemic racism that may exist in our classrooms.

Because we live in an increasingly diverse world, a more inclusive curriculum is required. It is the hope of this subcommittee that a more diverse curriculum will directly address aspects of systemic racism and reflect the diverse population that is UA and bring a sense of inclusiveness to the campus. Faculty, staff, and students want to feel a sense of belonging; one of the ways to achieve that is to see one's self reflected in the curriculum. When we do not see ourselves reflected in the conversation, part of the connection is lost. Not only is the connection lost for students of color, but also White students are denied a more complete understanding of our world and are hence denied a moment of growth. Culturally competent faculty make all of this possible.

## **I. Action Recommendations for Mission Statement**

1. Starting with upper administration including the Board of Trustees and the President begin a process to evaluate and re-write The University of Akron mission statement that reflects its valuing of diversity and inclusion.
2. As a University community, consider what we value and how diversity, inclusion and equity contribute to the excellence of our endeavors. Diversity is a matter of educational quality.

## **II. Action Recommendations for Underrepresentation of Black faculty and other Faculty of Color**

1. Make a purposeful, deliberate attempt in hiring faculty of color. Positions can be advertised to institutions graduating a higher proportion of students of color (e.g., masters and doctoral degree granting programs at HBCUs, HSIs).
2. Incorporate practices in faculty search committee training that will help identify and recruit faculty of color while also addressing bias (implicit and explicit) built into the job description, the expectations of the search committee, and outreach to racial and ethnic minority colleagues.
3. Conduct focus group(s) with Faculty of Color to hear and document their voices in order to capture their experiences at The University of Akron and take action where necessary.
4. Provide competitive initial offers, start-up funding, and counter offers to attract and retain faculty of color.
5. Strategic hiring
  - a. Hire senior faculty of color to build and strengthen promising programs
  - b. Multidisciplinary cluster hiring across departments to provide focused scholarship, teaching, and collegiality for a cohort of Black faculty or faculty of color. Potential themes include violence in society, social determinants of health, critical race theory, criminal justice reform, or climate science
6. Develop a post-doctoral Teaching and Research Fellowship. This 2/3 year appointment would allow new PhDs to gain experiences teaching one course per semester, receive mentoring from UA faculty, and could develop into a tenure tack position.
7. Provide financial support for community-based research projects focused on social justice, social inequality, and racism.
8. Regularly conduct a climate survey across the University that includes Black faculty and faculty of color. This will help the University to address problem areas so that we can nurture a welcoming environment for all.
8. The subcommittee recommends that the University administration continue to protect tenure as a guiding principle of academic freedom and advancement in higher education. Having a strong and meaningful tenure track system is a major structural strength that will aid in the retention and recruitment of faculty of color.
9. Review and implement the strategies recommended by the Subcommittee on Diverse Faculty Hiring from the University Diversity Council. (see Appendix A).

### **III. Action Recommendations for Faculty Development and Curriculum:**

1. Support Faculty Enrichment. Support the development of culturally competent faculty to ensure that the importance of diversity in curriculum is standardized across the University.

Strategies to Support Faculty:

- a. Provide learning opportunities for faculty to enhance their cultural competence within their field.
- b. Provide ongoing workshops on topics such as creating an inclusive classroom, diversifying your syllabus with expected participation (e.g., every 2-3 years).

2. Support programs and departments/units. Recognize programs and departments that are composed of culturally competent faculty. Specific strategies to provide support are:

- a. Reward programs and departments that are composed of culturally competent faculty.
- b. Incentivize programs and departments to become more culturally competent.
- c. Hold programs and departments accountable that are not achieving diversity goals.

3. Support underrepresented students. Meet marginalized students where they are by supporting the academic needs of students of color. Support programs and departments where marginalized students major/minor in and graduate from with a cadre of mentors who are Black faculty or faculty of color.

4. Support community-based learning initiatives, especially from faculty of color, that focus on structural inequalities and social justice concerns in the city of Akron and surrounding region.

5. Hold faculty accountable (with supports). Utilize teaching evaluation questions about diversity and openness from current teaching evaluations to be aware of the strengths and weaknesses of our faculty. Good teaching includes attention to issues of diversity and inclusion.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

Obviously, The University of Akron does not employ enough Black faculty and faculty of color. Consequently, UA faculty do not represent the student body nor the broader Akron community. This is problematic. Universities are at their best when they provide learning opportunities for students to interact, dialogue, and exchange ideas with faculty (and peers) from varying cultural backgrounds.

“If their mission is to remain viable, colleges and universities can ill afford to operate under policies and procedures that perpetuate monocultural views, beliefs, and values. Colleges and universities, in the future, will need to serve an increasing ethnic minority population base. Thus, institutions of higher education who most successfully serve a culturally diverse constituency will prosper; those who refuse to participate in the challenge will suffer financial losses contingent on student enrollment. To serve their

culturally diverse constituency successfully, however, colleges and universities must aggressively recruit a culturally diverse faculty---one that reflects the cultural[ly] diverse population base of those they serve” (Plata, 1996, pg. 227).

The first step in recruiting and retaining diverse faculty comes from a commitment to institutional diversity from the highest levels of the University’s administration. There has to be a clear message from the leadership that diversity, inclusion, and equity are a priority at The University of Akron.