

Moving Forward Together: The University Response to the Black Unity Forum's Action Plan

SMU shares with the Black Unity Forum the goal of ensuring that the Black community at SMU is heard, valued, supported, and successful. This goal is inherent in our core values that include the embrace of excellence, integrity, intellectual freedom, open dialogue, diversity and inclusion. Our response to the Black Unity Forum action plan submitted on August 30 embodies an abiding commitment to these values. SMU recognizes that in order to make real the motto, "Every Mustang Is Valued," Black Mustangs must be valued. The University must not only rise to the fierce urgency presented in this historic moment, but work day by day to make tangible, systemic, and sustainable change. We believe that this effort will positively impact the lives of every Mustang who has felt underrepresented on our campus.

Moving forward, we acknowledge that we can only achieve this goal by increasing transparency among the SMU administration, the Black community, and our entire SMU community; through continued collaboration with the Black Unity Forum and its respective constituency groups; and through increased partnership and service to the greater Dallas community. Under the direction of the President, the University's senior leadership team (including the Provost, vice presidents, deans, Director of Athletics, and Chief Diversity Officer) sought to develop a viable roadmap for action. Each response is structured as follows: the status of the request; an overview of the implementation strategy and/or proposed procedural adjustments; and the timeline for achieving progress.

1.0 Increase University Accountability for Equitable Treatment of its Black Community

1.1 Hire a Chief Diversity Officer and Ombudsperson

The Chief Diversity Officer position and the Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI) was established on August 13, 2020, with the appointment of Dr. Maria Dixon Hall. The Operational Budget proposed by the Black Unity Forum action plan represents less than 1% of the University Budget, which is the total average investment for university Diversity and Inclusion initiatives and CDO offices.¹ SMU's initial operational investment

¹ <https://www.insightintodiversity.com/an-insight-investigation-accounting-for-just-0-5-of-higher-educations-budgets-even-minimal-diversity-funding-supports-their-bottom-line/>.

establishing the ODI is \$350,000 for fiscal year (FY) 2020-2021. Given the current budget exigencies, any increase in funding would be at a rate of less than 5% for FY 2021-22. The goal would be to reach a total operational budget of \$400,000 no later than FY 2022-2023.

1.2 Hire an Ombudsperson

The Chief Diversity Officer, Associate Vice President of Human Resources, Associate Provost for Faculty Success, and Executive Director of Institutional Access and Equity are currently preparing to begin the search for an Ombudsperson. Working with the International Ombudsman Association and alumna Alicia Booker (University Ombudsman, University of Alabama-Birmingham), this group will identify, no later than December 2020, a) best practices and standards for establishing the ombuds office; b) the talents, traits, and credentials essential in developing the job description and performance standard for the ombuds position; and c) the best practices for the ombudsperson's collaboration with multiple University stakeholders. The Chief Diversity Officer intends to complete a search and appoint an Ombudsperson in calendar year 2021.

1.3 Increase Black representation in hiring processes on campus

The Chief Diversity Officer and the Office of the Provost will implement the following procedures by fall 2021 to increase Black representation during the faculty hiring process:

- The Office of the Provost will require all members of the faculty search committee to have completed search and recruitment training provided by the Office of Institutional Access and Equity and CIQ@ SMU's Implicit Bias Training for Faculty, or another CIQ training module, within two years of search committee service, as certified by their academic unit's diversity officer.
- The Office of the Provost will work with chairs and deans to require a more proactive, intentional process to add ethnically diverse representation to its search committees.

The Department of Human Resources (HR) will implement the following procedures to increase Black representation in the hiring process for staff:

- Partner with search committee chairs to develop staff recruiting strategies for filling a position.
- Require that search committee chairs complete CIQ@SMU Implicit Bias Training, as certified by the unit's diversity officer, within two years of coordinating the search process.
- Embrace and facilitate a more proactive, intentional process to add ethnically diverse representation to search committees.

1.4 Develop or revise written faculty tenure standards and departmental accountability processes

The Office of the Provost will work to increase the level of transparency, clarity, and departmental accountability into the process of tenure and promotion to associate professor and into the process of promotion to full professor.

- The Associate Provost for Faculty Success in consultation with the Chief Diversity Officer will immediately commence a comprehensive review of all University academic units' compliance with the 2016 request for all tenure and promotion standards to be written and submitted to the Office of the Provost.
- Academic units will be required to submit any revisions to their standards to the Office of the Provost for tenure and promotion on an annual basis at the end of each spring semester.
- The Office of the Provost will complete its review of all standards to ensure that all academic units' tenure and promotion materials will be available online no later than the beginning of the fall semester in 2022.
- The Office of the Provost, in consultation with the Chief Diversity Officer and in coordination with the deans, will establish a set of clear and systematic opportunities for Black faculty throughout the hiring, pre-tenure, promotion/tenure, and post-tenure processes, and receive feedback about their professional and scholarly progression from the Associate Provost for Faculty Success no later than spring 2022.

1.5 Establish clear violation protocol in Student Code of Conduct and SMU Policy Manual against acts of racial discrimination

By fall 2020, the University will convene a task force of student, staff, and faculty representatives to engage in a comprehensive examination to identify best practices in higher education around this important concern. The task force will identify and review current SMU policies and procedures, which require revision and updating to more precisely reflect the University's dedication to constitutional principles while honoring its commitment to provide a safe and respectful professional and educational environment for all of its members. The University will begin assessing the viability of revision and implementation of the Student Code of Conduct and the SMU Policy Manual no later than 90 days after the task force report is submitted, or sooner if practical. Because the Black Unity Forum action Plan seeks synchronization of policies for all SMU members, the University will complete the vetting and approval process for any necessary student code or policy manual changes within 24 months of submission of the task force report.

1.6 Establish mandatory cultural sensitivity training for faculty, staff and board members at all levels

The University will add cultural sensitivity training for all students, faculty, and staff utilizing new and existing CIQ@SMU programs including:

- The release of the course series Building Better Relationships – highlighting the cultural histories, significant relational values, and need to ensure successful communication and relationships among people of different races and ethnicities – by December 2020.
- The development of a standalone module that explores the reality of Black and White at SMU, which will include a review of the History of African Americans at SMU; Racism and SMU; What are Microaggressions; and Bystander Guidelines for Safe Anti-Racist Responses by March 2021.

The University will require all incoming staff and faculty members – tenure track or adjunct – to complete CIQ@SMU’s implicit bias training and standalone module on microaggressions no later than the end of fall 2021. Furthermore, all existing faculty and staff members will be required to complete CIQ@SMU’s implicit bias training and the standalone module on microaggressions by December 2021.

The SMU Board of Trustees will resume its discussions and dialogues on cultural intelligence that began in February 2017 and were continued during its September 2020 meeting.

1.7 Create citizen’s review board for SMU PD

Beginning in November 2020, the Chief of Police and appropriate staff will meet quarterly with the new Community Advisory Board to provide perspectives on issues related to race and campus policing. Subject to applicable law, this committee will have access to all SMU Police Department statistics including arrest, citation, and referral statistics. The committee will administer the campus community policing survey and provide advice on police-community engagement.

1.8 Establish a staff town hall meeting with President Turner

President Turner will conduct a town hall with Black staff within 30 days of the public release of SMU’s response to the Black Unity Forum action plan and will subsequently conduct at least one town hall per calendar year with the Black Staff Association.

1.9 Desired Outcome: Increase efforts to recruit, promote, and retain Black tenure-track professors so they compose at least 10% of total University population of tenure-stream faculty

The University is dedicated to increasing Black faculty to 5% by 2025. Consequently, the Office of the Provost, in consultation with the Chief Diversity Officer, will engage a two-track method for increasing the presence and retention of Black faculty, implemented as follows:

- By the end of spring 2021, the Associate Provost for Faculty Success will provide an inventory of the representation of Black faculty in all academic departments and schools.
- By the end of December 2021, the Associate Provost for Faculty Success in consultation with each academic dean will investigate systemic issues that factor into the underrepresentation of Black scholars and clinicians among SMU's tenure-track, non-tenure track, and adjunct faculty, and develop a clear strategic plan to address those issues.

The Office of the Provost will develop a post-doctoral fellowship program for two to four candidates of color to enter residency at SMU with the goal of implementation no later than the beginning of fall 2022.

1.10 Desired Outcome: Reduction of reported racial profiling and discrimination by 50%

The University strives to reduce racial profiling and discrimination on campus by the execution of this action plan and also commits to achieving greater campus awareness of the avenues for reporting and seeking adjudication for racial bias when it occurs. The Offices of Diversity and Inclusion and Institutional Access and Equity as well as the Division of Student Affairs will work with the Black Unity Forum to develop metrics by which progress can be accurately measured, as some incidents currently go unreported and increased awareness of the avenues available for reporting bias may result in increased numbers. The University will:

- Create by spring 2021 a clear system (database and measures) for recording racial bias incidents.
- Create by fall 2021 a baseline of incidents in a more formal, systematic way.
- Begin by spring 2022 incident tracking and reporting across the first year of implementation.

1.11 Desired Outcome: Improve campus quality of life for SMU Black community

The University will conduct a biennial survey of the campus climate as seen through the eyes of students, faculty, and staff, using a measure approved by the Chief Diversity Officer, Chief Human Resource Officer, Executive Director of Institutional Access and Equity, Associate Provost for Institutional Planning and Effectiveness, Associate Provost for Institutional Research, the Office of Social Change and Intercultural Engagement, the Black Unity Forum, and leadership from other underrepresented groups on campus.

2.0 Increase Financial Aid and Work Compensation for SMU's Current and Future Black Community

2.1 Create an endowment for Black students

Effective immediately, the University will match, up to \$500,000, fundraising efforts by the Black Alumni Board of the SMU Alumni Board for scholarships or student financial support. Moreover, as a part of the leadership and public phases of a new comprehensive fundraising campaign, SMU will utilize its best efforts to raise \$10 million by 2028 (the end of the next campaign) to support the needs of underrepresented, socioeconomically disadvantaged, and first-generation students. This will increase need-based funding that will build upon existing sources, such as Mustang Scholars, and explore creation of new sources to enhance the recruitment and retention of Black and other underrepresented students. The University will seek financial support in the form of endowment resources (generating income in perpetuity) as well as operational resources (having immediate impact as endowment vesting occurs).

2.2 Create a system of incentives for departmental recruitment and retention of Black faculty, and create additional endowed chairs

In addition to the efforts listed in section 1.9, the University will continue to utilize research support, stipends, awards, salary enhancements, and travel funds to bolster the recruitment, retention and support of Black and other underrepresented faculty members and their teaching, scholarship and research endeavors.

The University will aggressively pursue operational resources that will have an immediate impact on the retention of underrepresented faculty, as well as endowment resources to increase the number of substantially funded endowed chairs and professorships to 160 by 2025 to comprise about one-third of our tenured and tenure-track faculty. These endowed positions should significantly assist in the recruitment of senior Black faculty of national prominence.

2.3 Increase compensation of faculty members working on inclusion-focused initiatives

The Office of the Provost, in consultation with deans, department chairs, the Faculty Senate, and faculty members, will review and revise faculty workload policies as well as examine means of compensation (including but not limited to teaching load reduction and financial compensation) to address the service burden experienced by Black and other underrepresented faculty by fall 2022.

2.4 Introduce a No Loan Assistance Program

SMU will convene a taskforce no later than fall 2021 to identify best practices and innovations among our peer and aspirational schools to bolster our efforts to meet the financial needs of our students. Within 90 days of submission of the task force's findings, SMU will work with its external financial aid consultants to assess the capital and structural needs for viability and successful implementation.

2.5 Desired Outcome: Increase of Black student population in all schools of study until total population reaches 12%

The University believes that culmination of the efforts taken through this plan of action will result in an increase to 6% by 2025 of SMU's undergraduates identifying as Black, and an increase of 20% by 2025 in the number of undergraduates listing "Black" among the more-than-one-racial category.

2.6 Desired Outcome: Increase 5-year graduation rate of Black first-year students enrolled in SMU by 50%

The University believes that culmination of the efforts taken through this plan of action will result by 2025 in a consistent increase in the six-year graduation rate of Black first-year undergraduates of 75.4% to approach the overall student body graduation rate of 80.9%.

3.0 Increase Opportunities for Success Offered by SMU to its Current and Future Black Community

3.1 Establish clear career paths for staff to increase retention of Black staff

Working with SMU's Department of Human Resources, each administrative unit, college, and school will develop a retention and career advancement plan for staff positions before the start of the 2022-23 academic year. The plan will include staff organizational and reporting structure, advancement opportunities and a talent review as well as clearly-defined job titles, roles and job descriptions for each position. The skills, education, and certifications necessary for selection and or promotion to these positions will be identified, updated as necessary, and made accessible to all employees.

To further enhance visibility of career paths, HR will continue to work with individual managers across the campus including academic units, to develop a regular talent review and identify growth opportunities for Black and underrepresented staff. The Chief Diversity Officer will work with HR to identify opportunities for professional development and career coaching processes that may be hindering the advancement of Black staff. HR

will continue to maintain a diverse pool of professional career coaches to utilize for professional and career coaching. HR will work with individual managers to evaluate open staff positions and, when appropriate, will advertise internally more consistently and aggressively to ensure equal access to opportunities for advancement, before doing an external search. HR also will include in exit interviews an examination of issues that may have contributed to failure to retain Black staff.

3.2 Establish a paid internship and mentorship program for Black students

Effective immediately, SMU's Office of Alumni Giving and Relations will develop a targeted mentorship program in partnership with the Black Alumni Board of the SMU Alumni Board, promoting these efforts through additional personal and mass solicitations, alumni engagement, and promotion and marketing.

The Hegi Career Development Center, in collaboration with SMU's Office of Alumni Giving and Relations and the Black Alumni Board of the SMU Alumni Board, will launch a pilot program no later than the end of the fall 2021 semester to increase the number of paid internship and mentoring opportunities for Black students.

The University also will work to identify and connect students with financial need to virtual internships, which eliminate the need for travel and living expenses, as well as to micro-internships, which can be completed in a compressed period of time. The Office of the Provost will continue to expand efforts of the Rotunda Scholars Program, which helps first-year students achieve early success, in offering mentoring for students through the Office of Engaged Learning.

3.3 Increase representation in pivotal meetings for students and Black Unity Forum

The administrative leadership of SMU commits to four meetings per calendar year with the Black Unity Forum to review progress on this action plan and its objectives. Additionally, as campus task forces, committees, and learning groups are being organized, the University will work to ensure that there is representation by members of Black Unity Forum-affiliated organizations.

3.4 Create a new SMU multicultural admissions recruitment program

SMU will continue to enhance its multicultural recruitment efforts by increasing its focus on transfer students. Additionally, SMU will continue its emphasis on Black student recruitment efforts through yield and admission events each Spring.

3.5 Start a Black student/alumni summit sponsored by SMU

SMU will collaborate with Black students and the Black Alumni Board of the SMU Alumni Board, as well as other stakeholders, to develop by fall 2022 a biennial University-sponsored Black student/alumni summit to more effectively knit current Black students and alumni. The Hegi Family Career Development Center and school career centers will assist with networking aspects of the summit and the office of Undergraduate Admission will determine the viability of utilizing the summit as a prospective recruitment tool for Black students.

3.6 Desired Outcome: Improve access and create more opportunities to facilitate the matriculation of Black talent at all levels of our campus community

The actions discussed above should lead to greater access and engagement of Black students, staff and faculty throughout SMU.

4.0 Increase Black Student-Athlete Equity and Involvement in the General Student Population

4.1 Create a mandatory racial inequality and implicit bias workshop specific to SMU Athletics

The Athletic Department will require all student-athletes, coaches, and staff to complete CIQ@SMU implicit bias training by the end of 2021. Additionally, the Director of Athletics will commission the Office of Diversity and Inclusion to develop training for the unique context of Division I Athletics in the areas of coaching, recruiting, team dynamics, and conflict resolution with full implementation no later than the end of 2022.

4.2 Establish opportunities for SMU Athletics to serve the greater Dallas community

The Department of Athletics will work with the Black Student Athletes Committee to identify programmatic and volunteer opportunities for our student-athletes to return in service to their communities throughout the metroplex beginning in the Spring of 2021.

4.3 Hire a Black mental health professional for student-athletes

The Division of Student Affairs, in partnership with the Department of Athletics will work to increase the mental health resources for our student-athlete community through seeking to increase the diversity of clinicians available to provide clinical support no later than the end of 2021.

4.4 Create access to educational classes for student-athletes

Working with the Office of the Provost and the Chief Diversity Officer, the Department of Athletics desires to create and implement a holistic framework for successful student-athlete development from recruitment through graduation. With implementation scheduled for no later than fall 2022, the Department of Athletics will work to address both life skills and professional development needs of its student-athletes including but not limited to:

- Emotional and cultural intelligence
- Interpersonal and leadership communication
- Leadership and group formation
- Transitioning to the college culture: Managing faculty and coaching relationships
- Building healthy relationships and connections with non-student-athletes
- Managing home and family transitions
- Financial literacy and management
- Civic responsibilities

4.5 Mandate Election Day as a day off for all athletic teams

The Department of Athletics supports the civic engagement of its student-athletes. In partnership with Development and External Affairs, SMU Athletics has secured approval for Moody Coliseum as a polling place for Dallas County on Election Day, November 3, 2020. November 3, 2020 will serve as a day off from athletics activities for all University sports. Because of football's scheduling conflict, the Athletics Department will provide early voting opportunities for these student-athletes.

4.6 Cease the stifling of student-athletes' academic breadth and opportunity for the sake of scheduling simplicity

The Associate Provosts for Student Academic Engagement and Success, and for Curricular Innovation and Policy, will work closely with departments and student-athletes to promote identification, understanding, and engagement with faculty on degree requirements, attendance policies, prerequisite scheduling, and any other barriers to major selection and degree completion. Toward this end, the Office of the Provost will work to:

- Assign all student-athletes a University Advising Center (UAC) advisor who is well versed in athletic academic eligibility. Student-athletes will be expected to meet with that advisor in the UAC prior to major declaration by fall 2021.
- Utilize student-athletic academic counselors to begin working immediately with athletics personnel to identify innovative solutions – including the development of fully online options – for courses that are difficult to schedule around student athlete practice schedules.

4.7 Enforce a zero-tolerance policy for racist behaviors in academic or athletic settings

SMU Athletics commits to providing student-athletes, particularly those of color, an environment that is welcoming and safe and creates opportunities for them to excel on the field, in the classroom and life. The Department of Athletics will actively participate in the efforts of the larger University on this issue as noted in section 1.5.

4.8 Create a space for the fellowship of student-athletes beyond study hall requirements, as well as opportunities to connect with student-athlete alumni

SMU Athletics will begin to identify potential spaces which may serve as a student-athlete lounge, with a goal of providing such a space in fall 2021. Athletics will work to strengthen the connections between our student-athletes and alumni by adding an event to SMU's annual Black Excellence Week schedule that will allow for networking and open discussion.

4.9 Desired Outcome: Create a more welcoming culture for Black student-athletes within the SMU Athletic Department

SMU Athletics has established an internal Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Council which aims to further the athletics department's dedication to diversity, inclusion and gender equity. The Council supports programming to educate student-athletes and staff on the importance of an inclusive environment for all members of our community. The Department of Athletics will champion diversity by being an exemplar for other SMU departments while creating a sense of trust throughout athletics, the University, and surrounding communities.

4.10 Desired Outcome: Encourage the equal development of student-athletes' academic, athletic, and career goals

In addition to working cooperatively with the Provost's Office on academic support of student-athletes, SMU Athletics offers life skills programming through the Office of Student-Athlete Development and its MustangYOU curriculum, supplementing the programming offered by SMU's Hegi Family Career Center. SMU Athletics seeks to equip our programs with the resources required to pursue championships while promoting the health, safety and well-being of our student-athletes.

4.11 Desired Outcome: Strengthen ties within the SMU Black community both within Athletics and the greater campus community.

Working with the University Diversity Council and the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, Athletics will begin immediately identifying opportunities to strengthen the connections between student-athletes, Black students, faculty, staff and alumni. Such opportunities include Athletics participation in SMU's annual Black Excellence Week and the development of mentorship relationships with Black faculty and staff that will allow for networking and open discussion.

Closing Remarks

We believe that the Black Unity Forum's action plan and SMU's response establishes a partnership that will positively shape our University for decades. Thank you to every member of the Black Unity Forum who worked tirelessly to bring this plan forward. Some of the University's responses are underway, and others will require multiple semesters to make systemic change. Dr. Maria Dixon Hall, as Chief Diversity Officer, working with the Provost, vice presidents, deans, Athletics Director, students, faculty, and staff of the University, will coordinate the activities needed to implement this action plan. If we commit to the fulfillment of this plan with mutual respect and a shared vision of a truly inclusive University community, we will provide progress not only for our Black students, faculty and staff, but for our entire campus community.