



May 20, 2021

President Carvajal,

First, we thank you for your leadership and courage to assemble a Comprehensive Diversity and Inclusion Task Force in Fall 2020 with the objective of gathering broad campus and community input to create a set of recommendations for Valdosta State which can have real, tangible and lasting change for our institution. Leading this campus wide effort has been our pleasure! The experience was both challenging and rewarding during a time of virtual meetings, socially distanced gatherings, and the additional demands of campus operations during the COVID-19 pandemic. We are proud, however, to share this final report of our Task Force and the completed set of recommendations that we believe will have the greatest short and long-term impact for VSU.

The Task Force and the various working groups offered exceptional contribution to this work, proving that our campus stakeholders care a great deal about our University, and are invested in what is required for our campus community to achieve inclusive excellence. The energy and commitment to creating lasting change is very high for all stakeholders – faculty, staff, students, alumni and community – and there is great optimism, as well as an expectation, that the results of this work will be utilized in the future decisions and actions at all levels of the institution.

Attached you will find the final report of the Comprehensive Diversity and Inclusion Task Force. This report includes an executive summary of the process, a timeline of our work, the names of the Task Force and Work Group members, the Final Recommendations, and a full list of recommendations are being considered as Future Planning Outcomes. The Final Recommendations were created from agreed upon recommendations by asking the Task Force to prioritize those outcomes which could have the largest impact or could be more easily accomplished in the near future. In order to preserve the integrity of the work and all voices that contributed, a list of all recommendations have been included as Appendix A in that they can be considered in future strategic planning efforts of the University and its Divisions.

We are all enthusiastic and optimistic regarding how the work of this task force will lend to your vision and leadership in moving our campus forward. Thank you for the opportunity to serve.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Vince Miller  
Vice President for Student Affairs  
Co-Chair

Ms. Sandra Y.G. Jones  
Director of Student Diversity and Inclusion  
Co-Chair

**VICE PRESIDENT for STUDENT AFFAIRS & DEAN of STUDENTS OFFICE**

PHONE 229.333.5941 • FAX 229.245.6481 • WEB [www.valdosta.edu/studentaffairs](http://www.valdosta.edu/studentaffairs) • ADDRESS 1500 N. Patterson St. • Valdosta, GA 31698-0165  
LOCATION Room #3106 • Student Union

A Comprehensive University of the University System of Georgia and an Equal Opportunity Institution

# **Comprehensive Diversity and Inclusion Planning Task Force Recommendation**

**Recommendation for:  
Valdosta State University  
May 2021**

**Submitted by:  
Comprehensive Diversity and Inclusion Planning Task Force**

**Sponsored by:  
The Office of President of Valdosta State University**



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### A. Inception of Comprehensive Diversity and Inclusion Task Force

On Friday, September 18, 2020, Valdosta State University held its inaugural, annual Celebration of Inclusion, a campus wide, day-long event highlighting the university's efforts toward inclusive excellence and healing after a summer of tumultuous hardships of social injustice in the United States. During this event President Richard Carvajal announced the commissioning of Task Force charged with leading "a comprehensive university planning effort aimed at real, tangible, and lasting change that promotes inclusion and social justice." On Monday, September 21, 2020 Dr. Carvajal charged Dr. Vince Miller, Vice President for Student Affairs, and Ms. Sandra Y. G. Jones, Director of the Office of Student Diversity and Inclusion with co-leading the task force efforts.

### B. The Charge of the Task Force

The Charge of the Task force was to gather broad input through conducting listening sessions, gathering input from their various areas of impact and influence, identify and prioritize areas of greatest challenge, and creating a clear set of recommendations for improvement.

### C. Task Force Membership

The taskforce's composition was to include students, staff, faculty, alumni and community participants. Leaders of each college, division and student organizations were asked to recommend individuals who would be willing to serve on the taskforce. Recommendations were sent to Dr. Miller and Ms. Jones. The process produced an overwhelming number of people willing to participate in this work. As a result, the Task Force was narrowed down to 19 members with various backgrounds, expertise, and identities to represent the students, staff, faculty, alumni and community stakeholders. Additionally, four larger work groups were established which included broader membership for input in the process and to help carry out the work of the Task Force process. The work groups included the Task Force members for each stakeholder category.

### D. The Process

The Comprehensive Diversity and Inclusion Planning Task Force followed the below schedule in order to conclude its work by May 2021:

|                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| December 2020 – January 2021 | Internal SWOT Analysis and Peer & Aspirant Review         |
| February 2021                | Conduct Listening Sessions                                |
| March 2021                   | Analysis of internal review and listening session data.   |
| April 2021                   | Draft Recommendations                                     |
| May 2021                     | Identify Top Recommendations and Future Planning Outcomes |

Each work group met more frequently throughout the process and the results of their work was carried forward to the Task Force which maintained an institution-wide focus on the charge at hand. Work group efforts were presented and discussed as a Task Force and common themes were identified for future prioritization. The draft recommendations of each work group were combined into one set of fifty (50) Task Force recommendations for edit and review. Lastly, and most challenging, the Task Force was charged with prioritizing a shorter list of Top Recommendations with the understanding the remaining recommendations will be used in future institutional strategic planning efforts.



## Comprehensive Diversity and Inclusion Task Force Members

**Dr. Vince Miller**

Vice President Student Affairs  
Co-Chairperson

**Ms. Sandra Y. G. Jones**

Student Diversity & Inclusion, Director  
Co-Chairperson

**Dr. Hoa Nguyen**

Marriage & Family Therapy  
Faculty

**Ms. Evelyn Davis- Walker**

Art & Design  
Faculty

**Dr. AJ Ramirez**

Sociology, Anthropology  
Criminal Justice- Faculty

**Dr. James Martinez**

Teacher Education  
Faculty

**Dr. M. Denise Lovett**

Africana Studies  
Faculty

**Coach Kaleigh Zoucha**

Women's Volleyball Head Coach  
Staff

**Mr. Gary Miller**

Information Technology  
Staff

**Mrs. Jeanine Boddie-La Van**

Chief Human Resources Officer  
Staff

**Major Will Leschber**

Public Safety  
Staff

**Ms. Janet Wade**

Alumni Relations  
Staff

**Mr. Jalen Smith**

Student Government Association  
Student

**Miss Laura Northup**

Student Government Association  
Student

**Mr. Christopher Griffin**

Phi Beta Sigma  
Student

**Mr. Malik McCloud**

Access Office  
Student

**Mr. Krupa Patel**

Arabic Club President  
Student

**Ms. Lawanna Barron**

Community Member  
Alumna

**Mr. Sirocus Barnes**

VSU Alumni Association, President  
Alumnus



## Work Group Members

### Faculty

A. J. Ramirez  
Arthur “Blake” Pearce  
Evelyn Davis-Walker  
Fred E. Knowles  
Hoa N Nguyen  
James “Jim” Pace (co-chair)  
James Martinez (co-chair)  
Jamie Landau  
Jiyoon Jung  
Kathy “Kate” Warner  
Marilyn D Lovett  
Meagan Arrastia-Chisholm  
Nicholas “Nick” Miller

### Staff

Danielle Costello  
Darius Anthony  
Erica Chaviano  
Gary Miller (co-chair)  
Graham Nguyen  
Jeanine Boddie-LeVan  
Kaleigh Zoucha (co-chair)  
Madison Beaumarchais  
Markaysa Robinson  
Phenix Culbertson  
Rebecca Shilling  
Robbyn DeSpain  
Sheylin Gonzales  
Stanley Jones  
Wendy Byrd  
Will Leschber

### Students

Brea Thomas  
Cassie Katen  
Christopher Griffin  
Jalen Smith (co-chair)  
Jasmin Rivas  
Jenna Tillman  
Joanna Olguin  
Justin Carter  
Laura Northup (co-chair)  
Lupita Quezada  
Nyla Williams  
Ruth Mensah  
Tommy Hampton IV  
Valencia Holcomb

### Alumni Community

Gala Jackson  
Janet Wade  
Lawanna Barron (co-chair)  
Sirocus Barnes (co-chair)  
Tyler Barker  
William Jimmerson



## **Comprehensive Diversity and Inclusion Task Force Final Recommendations**

The below list represents the final agreed upon set of recommendations from the Comprehensive Diversity and Inclusion Task Force. Task Force members were asked to each identify their top 8 recommendations from a larger list of 50 (Appendix A) in order to indicate their priority. The below listed statements received the highest priority from the Task Force and are considered the final recommendations.

### **A. Define Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion for VSU**

1. Establish a common definition for each diversity, equity, inclusion, bias, access, allyship, inclusive excellence and many other commonly used terms in this work to ensure the community shares the same understanding of each meaning. Make this resource available on [Valdosta.edu/diversity](http://Valdosta.edu/diversity).
2. Make Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion an important component of VSU's next five-year strategic plan and utilize the D&I Comprehensive Planning Task Force recommendations to help inform that work.

### **B. Governance & Organizational Structure**

1. Hire a Chief Diversity Officer (CDO) for VSU.
  - a. The Chief Diversity Officer should be a position of importance within the institution's organizational structure and should have direct advisement to the President and institution leadership on matters of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). The position should also be empowered to act on behalf of the University to lead DEI efforts, provide support, and respond to DEI challenges.
    - i. Explore whether this position should be a cabinet level position, a President's staff position, position of faculty rank and/or tenure, etc. There are various examples across the USG in addition to peer and aspirant institutions with similar positions and different reporting structures. Need to identify best structure for VSU.
  - b. The CDO should have oversight of the following functions:
    - i. Contribute to the University strategic planning efforts for DEI.
    - ii. Synergize and strengthen campus wide efforts for DEI.
    - iii. Establish and maintain effective partnerships with CELT, Communications, HR, Student Affairs, COSA, Faculty Senate, and individual faculty, staff and other campus groups.
    - iv. Serve as an advisor to and support for employee inclusive communities such as Campus Pride Connection
    - v. Chair (or co-chair) the University's Diversity Council
    - vi. Provide content and maintain [Valdosta.edu/diversity](http://Valdosta.edu/diversity) web pages as the primary landing page for DEI content at Valdosta State University
    - vii. Ongoing support to CELT, Human Resources, and Student Affairs for training of faculty, staff, and students.
    - viii. Coordinate the delivery of a campus climate survey on DEI and prepare appropriate reporting for the President's Cabinet and Diversity Council.

- ix. Develop a database of diversity and inclusion efforts by unit, department, program, or office.
- x. Recognize and reward individuals, offices, and organizations that enhance and contribute to diversity and inclusion goals.
- c. The office area where this person is located could also serve as a physical space where employees from underrepresented groups can gather, meet, and feel a sense of community in their workplace environment.


2. Re-appoint the University's Diversity Council as per the Valdosta State University statutes:

**ARTICLE V: DIVERSITY COUNCIL**

**Section 1.** *The Diversity Council serves as an advisory group to the President and provides a platform to engage a broad representation of the campus community in institutional diversity efforts, especially in the area of recruitment of and retention of students and high-quality personnel.*

**Section 2.** *The Diversity Council shall prepare, adopt, and maintain a set of bylaws outlining its membership, committees, and reporting structure and post that document on the organization's website.*


- a. The membership of the University's Diversity Council should be further defined to utilize this group as the ongoing "DEI task force" and should be a representative body of the various areas of campus:
    - i. Suggested representation to include: Student Diversity & Inclusion; Human Resources; Access Office; Alumni Relations; Athletics; Academic Advising; Faculty Senate; Information Technology; Campus Police; Office of Communications; Council on Staff Affairs; Student Government Association; and appropriate Academic Affairs representatives once a structure is identified.
  - b. The Diversity Council shall contribute to the success of VSU's DEI efforts by ensuring the institution maintains a centralized focus, discouraging independent agendas outside an adopted strategic plan approach to DEI and champion the completion of the many approved DEI strategic outcomes. The Diversity Council should also serve in advisory capacity to the Chief Diversity Officer and mobilize as requested to respond to the needs of the campus community.
3. Academic Affairs should evaluate and determine a structure within the Division that provides a commonly focused, centralized effort for supporting DEI initiatives. Currently there is an active Faculty Senate Committee on Diversity with similarly adopted mission of the University Diversity Council. There is a separate Academic Affairs Diversity Task Force co-led by two Deans with primary focus on recruiting and retaining a diverse faculty workforce but has also sought to offer DEI training initiatives for Academic Affairs deans and department heads. Additionally, there are diversity committees or priorities within individual colleges or departments, including CELT, without any connection to the Faculty Senate nor AA Task Force efforts. The opportunity exists to establish a singular structure across Academic Affairs and faculty efforts with chair(s) serving on the University Diversity Council in order to move DEI initiatives in a consistent manner across the curriculum and faculty experience and in alignment with a comprehensive University approach.

- 
4. Representation is important. All departments should continue with diverse hiring practices and evaluate how the employees hired reflect the community they serve. Human Resources, the Chief Diversity Officer, and the University Diversity Council should assist with identifying a standard set of recruitment and selection practices which increase the likelihood of diverse applicant pools for various faculty, staff, administration, support staff, and coaching positions.
    - a. Evaluate current practices to understand current data and identify gaps, training needs, and models that have been effective both at VSU and similar institutions.
    - b. Establish initiatives to create a pipeline of qualified candidates from historically underrepresented groups. Maintain a database of qualified candidates.
    - c. Develop a faculty recruitment plan for each college and the library.
    - d. Develop a staff recruitment plan with a diversity focus.
    - e. Promote best practices for use of inclusive language in job postings and recruitment marketing materials. Require the use of advertising sources for advertising vacancies.
    - f. Review essential functions to ensure that we are not adversely impacting candidates who are within a historically underrepresented group.
    - g. Track turnover and include questions about diversity/campus climate in exit interviews.
    - h. Survey staff from under-represented groups to obtain information on decisions they choose to work at VSU and build on the positive reasons.
    - i. Monitor staff demographics, retention, and promotion; disaggregate according to race, ethnicity, gender, age, and if/as reported sexual orientation, first generation, and disability status.

#### C. Training and Assessment

1. Expand and enhance current supervisory and leadership training to include high-quality experiences in diversity, equity and inclusion. This includes but is not limited to the President's Cabinet, VSU Deans and department heads and emerging leader programs such as the VSU Leadership Academy. Develop a central DEI education and training resource and/or employee certificate program designed to build cultural awareness and cultivate skills and behaviors that ultimately enhance our campus climate. Training options should be researched, considered, and recommended by HR Employee & Organizational Development and the Chief Diversity Officer.
2. Expand Annual Compliance training to include Diversity, Equity and Inclusion models pertaining to such topics as but not limited to micro-aggressions, implicit bias, managing mishaps, leading difficult conversation, allyism, understanding gender and sexuality and cultural humility, risks and resilience data regarding transgender and gender nonconforming students. Annual compliance currently addresses issues of harassment but is limited to sexual harassment. This is an opportunity to expand the information and education the university currently provides to include nondiscrimination policy; what constitutes prohibited discrimination, harassment, intimidation, or bullying; how and to whom a report of an incident should be made.





#### D. Communication

1. Develop a DEI response communication rubric that details who, when, and how responds to campus, community, and national incidents that do not align with the values of The Blazer Creed.
  - a. Use this communication plan to respond quickly to such incidents.
  - b. Where possible, address the issue directly in the communication so there is no misunderstanding as to what is being referenced.
  - c. Make the plan available for members of the campus community to know what to expect in these situations.
  - d. Communication should be directed to students, employees, and your alumni network who have a vested interest in the continued advancement of VSU.
  - e. Retain these messages on the [valdosta.edu/diversity](http://valdosta.edu/diversity) pages.

#### E. Enhance Policy and Procedures

1. Create a mechanism for employees and students to use a preferred name and pronoun choice in all places where their name may be publicly displayed or reviewed.
  - a. To include (may be more):
    - i. Email address
    - ii. Classroom roster
    - iii. Microsoft Teams & Zoom display
    - iv. VSU 1Card
    - v. Presence: Blazerlink
    - vi. Handshake: Blazer Briefcase
  - b. Places where both Legal Name must be retained but also preferred name when referencing student:
    - i. Advising portal
    - ii. Housing Assignment portal
    - iii. Health and Counseling Medical Records System
    - iv. Student Conduct System
    - v. Student Accounts Receivable
    - vi. Financial Aid
    - vii. Responses to enrollment inquiries such as verification requests
    - viii. Official Transcripts
    - ix. Diploma
    - x. International Student Status
    - xi. Student Employee/Payroll Information
    - xii. Insurance Information

#### F. Student Experience

1. Create a physical space on campus for minority population groups to gather. A place where they feel comfortable being their authentic selves. Possibly both an outdoor space and indoor space and even virtual space. This could also be a place where support is given.



## G. Faculty Experience

1. The Academic Affairs DEI Committee, once a Division structure is identified, should support faculty efforts in the following areas:
  - a. Implement best practices in recruiting, interviewing, and hiring a diverse faculty. All faculty searches should require candidates to submit a separate diversity statement (not just a mention in the cover letter).
  - b. As a “Diverse Faculty Retention Committee” that implements data-driven measures to retain underrepresented faculty (exit and stay interviews; “what do you need to succeed”; “what would’ve helped you stay” practices; mentorship coaching; continue salary study to identify gaps in income inequity).
  - c. Leadership and peer mentor support for faculty with diverse backgrounds. Administrators should encourage faculty members to seek out support and mentorships that will be beneficial to their career development and growth. Consider mentoring and coaching opportunities for non-dominant groups moving from Associate Professor to Full Professor. Determine additional strategies specifically for non-dominant groups where a disproportionate number of non-dominant faculty at the full professorship designation is identified. (Ex.VSU could pay for memberships for diverse faculty to take online leadership training and peer mentoring offered by the National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity, see: [facultydiversity.org](http://facultydiversity.org)].

## H. Alumni & Community Experience

1. Expand alumni affinity groups such as International, Black, Hispanic/LatinX, and LGBTQIA Alumni so that various alumni have additional opportunities to network with others with similar interest.
2. Create or highlight more University Alumni events and alumni recognition opportunities that attract various demographics. (ex. Homecoming step show, NPHC tailgate, 40 under 40, women’s giving circle, etc.)



## **Appendix A**

### **Comprehensive Diversity and Inclusion Task Force Full List of Fifty Recommendations**

This list was developed from the collective recommendations of each work group and represents the full list of recommendations drafted by the Task Force.

For those recommendations not elevated by the Task Force to the final list of recommendations, the intent is for them to be considered in future strategic planning efforts of the University and its Divisions.



## **Comprehensive Diversity and Inclusion Task Force**

### **Full Recommendations Intended for Future Strategic Planning**


This list was developed from the collective recommendations of each work group and represents the full list of recommendations drafted by the Task Force. For those recommendations not elevated by the Task Force to the final list of recommendations, the intent is for them to be considered in future strategic planning efforts of the University and its Divisions.

#### **A. Define Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion for VSU**

1. Establish a common definition for each diversity, equity, inclusion, bias, access, allyship, inclusive excellence and many other commonly used terms in this work to ensure the community shares the same understanding of each meaning. Make this resource available on [Valdosta.edu/diversity](http://Valdosta.edu/diversity).
2. Make Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion an important component of VSU's next five-year strategic plan and utilize the D&I Comprehensive Planning Task Force recommendations to help inform that work.
3. Make available on the [valdosta.edu/diversity](http://valdosta.edu/diversity) webpage VSU's position on inclusive excellence and supporting statements for underrepresented populations within our campus.
4. Provide a clear understanding from campus leadership as to why DEI is important and will be further incorporated into the culture of the University.
5. Evaluate how diversity, equity, and inclusion is expressed in the VSU Mission statement and The Blazer Creed and edit or reaffirm its meaning as needed.

#### **B. Governance & Organizational Structure**

1. Hire a Chief Diversity Officer (CDO) for VSU.
  - a. The Chief Diversity Officer should be a position of importance within the institution's organizational structure and should have direct advisement to the President and institution leadership on matters of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). The position should also be empowered to act on behalf of the University to lead DEI efforts, provide support, and respond to DEI challenges.
    - i. Explore whether this position should be a cabinet level position, a President's staff position, position of faculty rank and/or tenure, etc. There are various examples across the USG in addition to peer and aspirant institutions with similar positions and different reporting structures. Need to identify best structure for VSU.
  - b. The CDO should have oversight of the following functions:
    - i. Contribute to the University strategic planning efforts for DEI.
    - ii. Synergize and strengthen campus wide efforts for DEI.
    - iii. Establish and maintain effective partnerships with CELT, Communications, HR, Student Affairs, COSA, Faculty Senate, and individual faculty, staff and other campus groups.

- 
- iv. Serve as an advisor to and support for employee inclusive communities such as Campus Pride Connection
  - v. Chair (or co-chair) the University's Diversity Council
  - vi. Provide content and maintain Valdosta.edu/diversity web pages as the primary landing page for DEI content at Valdosta State University
  - vii. Ongoing support to CELT, Human Resources, and Student Affairs for training of faculty, staff, and students.
  - viii. Coordinate the delivery of a campus climate survey on DEI and prepare appropriate reporting for the President's Cabinet and Diversity Council.
  - ix. Develop a database of diversity and inclusion efforts by unit, department, program, or office.
  - x. Recognize and reward individuals, offices, and organizations that enhance and contribute to diversity and inclusion goals.
- c. The office area where this person is located could also serve as a physical space where employees from underrepresented groups can gather, meet, and feel a sense of community in their workplace environment.


2. Re-appoint the University's Diversity Council as per the Valdosta State University statutes:

**ARTICLE V: DIVERSITY COUNCIL**

**Section 1.** *The Diversity Council serves as an advisory group to the President and provides a platform to engage a broad representation of the campus community in institutional diversity efforts, especially in the area of recruitment of and retention of students and high-quality personnel.*


**Section 2.** *The Diversity Council shall prepare, adopt, and maintain a set of bylaws outlining its membership, committees, and reporting structure and post that document on the organization's website.*

- a. The membership of the University's Diversity Council should be further defined to utilize this group as the ongoing "DEI task force" and should be a representative body of the various areas of campus:
  - i. Suggested representation to include: Student Diversity & Inclusion; Human Resources; Access Office; Alumni Relations; Athletics; Academic Advising; Faculty Senate; Information Technology; Campus Police; Office of Communications; Council on Staff Affairs; Student Government Association; and appropriate Academic Affairs representatives once a structure is identified.
- b. The Diversity Council shall contribute to the success of VSU's DEI efforts by ensuring the institution maintains a centralized focus, discouraging independent agendas outside an adopted strategic plan approach to DEI and champion the completion of the many approved DEI strategic outcomes. The Diversity Council should also serve in advisory capacity to the Chief Diversity Officer and mobilize as requested to respond to the needs of the campus community.

- 
3. Academic Affairs should evaluate and determine a structure within the Division that provides a commonly focused, centralized effort for supporting DEI initiatives. Currently there is an active Faculty Senate Committee on Diversity with similarly adopted mission of the University Diversity Council. There is a separate Academic Affairs Diversity Task Force co-led by two Deans with primary focus on recruiting and retaining a diverse faculty workforce but has also sought to offer DEI training initiatives for Academic Affairs deans and department heads. Additionally, there are diversity committees or priorities within individual colleges or departments, including CELT, without any connection to the Faculty Senate nor AA Task Force efforts. The opportunity exists to establish a singular structure across Academic Affairs and faculty efforts with chair(s) serving on the University Diversity Council in order to move DEI initiatives in a consistent manner across the curriculum and faculty experience and in alignment with a comprehensive University approach.
  4. Representation is important. All departments should continue with diverse hiring practices and evaluate how the employees hired reflect the community they serve. Human Resources, the Chief Diversity Officer, and the University Diversity Council should assist with identifying a standard set of recruitment and selection practices which increase the likelihood of diverse applicant pools for various faculty, staff, administration, support staff, and coaching positions.
    - a. Evaluate current practices to understand current data and identify gaps, training needs, and models that have been effective both at VSU and similar institutions.
    - b. Establish initiatives to create a pipeline of qualified candidates from historically underrepresented groups. Maintain a database of qualified candidates.
    - c. Develop a faculty recruitment plan for each college and the library.
    - d. Develop a staff recruitment plan with a diversity focus.
    - e. Promote best practices for use of inclusive language in job postings and recruitment marketing materials. Require the use of advertising sources for advertising vacancies.
    - f. Review essential functions to ensure that we are not adversely impacting candidates who are within a historically underrepresented group.
    - g. Track turnover and include questions about diversity/campus climate in exit interviews.
    - h. Survey staff from under-represented groups to obtain information on decisions they choose to work at VSU and build on the positive reasons.
    - i. Monitor staff demographics, retention, and promotion; disaggregate according to race, ethnicity, gender, age, and if/as reported sexual orientation, first generation, and disability status.

#### C. Training and Assessment

1. Expand and enhance current supervisory and leadership training to include high-quality experiences in diversity, equity and inclusion. This includes but is not limited to the President's Cabinet, VSU Deans and department heads and emerging leader programs such as the VSU Leadership Academy. Develop a central DEI education and training resource and/or employee certificate program designed to build cultural awareness and cultivate skills and behaviors that ultimately enhance our campus climate. Training options should be researched, considered, and recommended by HR Employee & Organizational Development and the Chief Diversity Officer.


- 
2. Expand Annual Compliance training to include Diversity, Equity and Inclusion models pertaining to such topics as but not limited to micro-aggressions, implicit bias, managing mishaps, leading difficult conversation, allyism, understanding gender and sexuality and cultural humility, risks and resilience data regarding transgender and gender nonconforming students. Annual compliance currently addresses issues of harassment but is limited to sexual harassment. This is an opportunity to expand the information and education the university currently provides to include nondiscrimination policy; what constitutes prohibited discrimination, harassment, intimidation, or bullying; how and to whom a report of an incident should be made.
  3. Administering a campus climate survey for DEI every 3-5 years and make available the results of our ongoing work to celebrate progress while also using the information to continue setting strategic goals and moving the campus forward.
  4. Academic Affairs should explore training for faculty in Diversity Pedagogy Theory (DPT) with the following objectives:
    - a. Increase faculty awareness of the direct relationship between culture and cognition and how this impacts the learning process.
    - b. Increase faculty ability to acknowledge cultural behavioral patterns and learn cultural competencies and skills.
    - c. Increase faculty ability on how to use cultural competencies to guide teaching decisions.
    - d. How to guard against segregating or stereotyping students when providing instruction
  5. Identify and make available a DEI training module for all students that can be added as part of their transition into VSU. Currently new students are to take EverFi's HAVEN (sexual harassment) and Alcohol EDU (alcohol and drugs). EverFi has recently released a Diversity & Inclusion model which could be considered
  6. Student Affairs should expand student certificate programs in Leadership and Career Readiness by also offering one in Diversity & Inclusion. Each of these areas are competencies employers' value and helps prepares students holistically for life after college.
  7. Expand new employee orientation to include DEI component covering topics such as VSU's commitment to inclusive excellence and all resource and support efforts for underrepresented populations.
  8. Support Safe Space train the trainer program and ensure Safe Space training is part of the annual Employee and Organizational Development offerings.



#### D. Communication


1. Develop a DEI response communication rubric that details who, when, and how responds to campus, community, and national incidents that do not align with the values of The Blazer Creed.
  - a. Use this communication plan to respond quickly to such incidents.
  - b. Where possible, address the issue directly in the communication so there is no misunderstanding as to what is being referenced.
  - c. Make the plan available for members of the campus community to know what to expect in these situations.
  - d. Communication should be directed to students, employees, and your alumni network who have a vested interest in the continued advancement of VSU.
  - e. Retain these messages on the [valdosta.edu/diversity](http://valdosta.edu/diversity) pages.
2. Implement a quick response team that provides support to the campus and alumni community when incidents that do not align with the values of The Blazer Creed happen within our campus community. These responses might include a pop-up tent for talking, debriefing, and processing, in addition to Brave Space dialogues, and virtual town hall meetings.
3. Make available educational resources related to campus free expression, the parts of the student conduct that apply to unwelcomed incidents, and the role of The Blazer Creed as a value statement for our community and deliver ongoing workshops to help the campus population better understand each.
4. Create more awareness of DEI efforts that take place across campus and success of diverse students and graduates. Often groups are doing important things, but few people know about it. Examples: Diversity Peer Educator programs and AAMI offers significant experiences, but such an experience is not widely known. LGBTQIA resources and support. Locations of gender-neutral restrooms. Safety initiatives or programs for minority groups on campus. Hispanic support programs. Etc.
5. Continue increasing representation of people of color and with diverse backgrounds excelling academically, professionally, even historical difference makers (ex. First female CBO, first African American graduate, Native American professor teaching or research success, etc.) Highlight them on social media, publications, and through the Alumni Office.
6. Explore the use of gender inclusive language in campus communications. (Ex. Avoid “ladies and gentlemen)



- 
7. VSU should evaluate all affiliations with media (radio, television, newspaper, publications, digital magazines, billboards, web search advertising, etc.) where VSU content is distributed and consider adding a disclaimer regarding the separation of VSU content and all other content or advertisement produced by that medium. VSU should make available similar statements on its websites. Example: Athletics website indicates a few radio networks as “Home of VSU Athletics”. This is another place where this disclaimer can be located.


E. Enhance Policy and Procedures

1. Create a mechanism for employees and students to use a preferred name and pronoun choice in all places where their name may be publicly displayed or reviewed.
  - a. To include (may be more):
    - i. Email address
    - ii. Classroom roster
    - iii. Microsoft Teams & Zoom display
    - iv. VSU 1Card
    - v. Presence: Blazerlink
    - vi. Handshake: Blazer Briefcase
  - b. Places where both Legal Name must be retained but also preferred name when referencing student:
    - i. Advising portal
    - ii. Housing Assignment portal
    - iii. Health and Counseling Medical Records System
    - iv. Student Conduct System
    - v. Student Accounts Receivable
    - vi. Financial Aid
    - vii. Responses to enrollment inquiries such as verification requests
    - viii. Official Transcripts
    - ix. Diploma
    - x. International Student Status
    - xi. Student Employee/Payroll Information
    - xii. Insurance Information
2. Review all VSU policies, rules, and practices and adjust, where permitted by USG or state and federal law, so they do not conflict with or limit diversity, equity, and inclusion strategic goals. Ensure policies and practices exist that prevent bullying and harassment, and ensure classrooms and facilities are safe, healthy, and supportive for all students. This review should include the use of gender-neutral pronouns where appropriate. (ex. Avoid reference to he/she.)
3. Establish a formalized process for receiving and responding to complaints and concerns of a person's VSU experience related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. This should first be for mediation and educational development and not for punitive action. Ensure this process is communicated in an ongoing way.
4. Incidents that violate Human Resource policy or Student Code of Conduct should be forwarded to the appropriate office and the established procedures followed. Stronger responses should be established for persons having been found responsible for violating incidents of harassment and/or discrimination - this includes tenured professors.

- 
5. Ensure gender identity/expression is included in VSU's non-discrimination statement. Increase the number of choices when indicating gender on documents, applications, surveys, etc. Or remove gender choice if it has no bearing on the use of the information.
  6. Consider adding an opportunity for employees to express their effort in DEI learning and application on annual performance evaluations. Possibly add this as a value that employees can comment on and rate.


F. Student Experience

1. Create a physical space on campus for minority population groups to gather. A place where they feel comfortable being their authentic selves. Possibly both an outdoor space and indoor space and even virtual space. This could also be a place where support is given.
2. Expand the Brave Space Conversation program to broader topics around DEI.
3. Explore adding additional Living Learning Communities or ongoing mentor support for diverse groups and allies. (Ex. LGBTQIA, LatinX in Biology)
4. Expand education and support for members of the neurodiversity community (ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia, and autism spectrum disorders).
5. Expand support for international students and students where English is not their first language.
6. The Student Government Association, as well as other student fee funded organizations (such as CAB and Residence Halls council), should continue to make efforts to collect student input on various projects and events and ensure there is diverse representation among membership in these groups. These groups should also use existing Blazer Link data to better understand what groups of students are being reached and develop ways to attract and support those that are not yet engaged in their efforts.
7. Students generally should not be grouped based on sex for the purpose of instruction or study, but rather on bases such as student proficiency in the area of study, student interests, or educational needs for acceleration or enrichment.
8. Utilize athletic events to support minority staff and students (ex. Pride Night at a baseball game.)

- 
9. Promote and raise awareness for the LGBTQIA+ community more on campus and in the classroom. Ensure adequate resources are available for students who come out or transitioning while at VSU. Explore the possibility of LGBTQIA+ or transgender student being able to request LGBTQIA+ or ally roommate.

#### G. Faculty Experience

1. The Academic Affairs DEI Committee, once a Division structure is identified, should support faculty efforts in the following areas:
  - a. Implement best practices in recruiting, interviewing, and hiring a diverse faculty. All faculty searches should require candidates to submit a separate diversity statement (not just a mention in the cover letter).
  - b. As a “Diverse Faculty Retention Committee” that implements data-driven measures to retain underrepresented faculty (exit and stay interviews; “what do you need to succeed”; “what would’ve helped you stay” practices; mentorship coaching; continue salary study to identify gaps in income inequity).
  - c. Leadership and peer mentor support for faculty with diverse backgrounds. Administrators should encourage faculty members to seek out support and mentorships that will be beneficial to their career development and growth. Consider mentoring and coaching opportunities for non-dominant groups moving from Associate Professor to Full Professor. Determine additional strategies specifically for non-dominant groups where a disproportionate number of non-dominant faculty at the full professorship designation is identified. (Ex.VSU could pay for memberships for diverse faculty to take online leadership training and peer mentoring offered by the National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity, see: [facultydiversity.org](http://facultydiversity.org)].
2. Encourage a centralized DEI statement in all course syllabi (add to Provost Office’s website collection of “Faculty Resources- Syllabus Statements”).
3. Fundraise for and establish a grant fund for to apply for support of DEI guest speakers on campus and for recurring faculty fellowship/scholarship/awards dedicated to DEI topics. Consider a common read and author experience.
4. Establish a required Diversity and Inclusion Component to the annual faculty AFARAP that show’s growth and direction supplemented with Diversity/Inclusion performance goals. (Ex. teaching innovation question prompt faculty to reflect on inclusive pedagogy (participation in DEI training could be an action toward the goal).
5. Incorporate D&I initiatives within the Tenure/Promotion process (Ex. a component of the point system to encourage motivation for faculty to participate).
6. Ensure consistency in the tenure/promotion evaluation standards among the Colleges and Library.
  - a. Utilize proactive strategies to ensure that those making Tenure and Promotion decisions are aware of the research regarding applications for promotion among non-dominant groups, especially within the black faculty population.

- 
- b. Create junior faculty focus groups to get ideas and suggestions of what would be useful for them to receive tenure and/or promotion.
  - c. For Tenure candidates, consider adding the 3<sup>rd</sup> year review in the packet.
  - d. Candidates should be given the correct interpretation of the standards as part of their orientation and offer packet.
  - e. All T&P independent reviewers should receive training on the correct interpretation of the College/Library standards. All independent reviewers should be trained on objective rating skills to minimize the possibility of rater error. Consider implementing a system and process to mitigate the effects of rater error and contrast effect. External T&P reviewers within the candidate's specialization should be required.
  - f. To ensure increased transparency, require that candidates receive specific feedback about the reasons for the decision at each stage of the process.

#### H. Alumni & Community Experience

1. Expand alumni affinity groups such as International, Black, Hispanic/LatinX, and LGBTQIA Alumni so that various alumni have additional opportunities to network with others with similar interest.
2. Create or highlight more University Alumni events and alumni recognition opportunities that attract various demographics. (ex. Homecoming step show, NPHC tailgate, 40 under 40, women's giving circle, etc.)
3. During the next Capital Campaign fundraising effort elevate the importance of supporting DEI strategic priorities and student aid.
4. Recognizing it takes time for employee vacancies and transition, University Advancement and Alumni Relations should consider the use of other campus partners and alumni leaders when connecting with diverse alumni and prospective donors. (ex. In meetings with NPHC Alumni Group, not one person of color is represented from VSU.)

#### I. Staff Experience

1. Continue Public Safety's community approach to policing and campus engagement and assist with their ability to connect and build community within campus.
2. Monitor employee turnover rates and include a question about diversity in exit interviews.