Committee on Black Affairs (COBA)

Annual Report 2019-2020

Submitted July 2020

Committee Charge

The Committee on Black Affairs (COBA) is responsible for advising the President on matters affecting Black faculty, staff, students, and alumni of the University as well as the Tampa Bay Community. The Committee shall also be responsible for advising the President regarding the University's relationship with the Black community. This includes monitoring "quality of life" issues relative to the climate within the University.

This charge is interpreted considering the following definitions of key terms in the charge, which are relevant to the concerns and recommendations stated herein.

Campus Climate: According to Rankin Citation, campus climate involves "the current attitudes, behaviors and standards of faculty, staff, administrators and students concerning the level of respect for individual needs, abilities and potential." S. Rankin: http://campusclimate.ucop.edu/what-is-campus-climate/

Quality of Life: Quality of life generally entails the sense of satisfaction felt by those in an environment and self-assessments of their well-being.

Black Faculty, Staff, Students and Community: The use of an all-encompassing racial term (Black) does not negate the heterogeneity among Black people. We understand that included within a grouping defined by race is ethnic diversity which can result in diverse Black groups and communities with varied interests, affiliations, and histories that may be similar, yet distinct (i.e. Haitian, Jamaican, etc.).

Initiatives and Accomplishments

The Committee on Black Affairs had four major goals for 2019- 2020, each of which builds upon prior years' work and the needs of the USF Campuses:

1. **Expand** membership of the COBA Committee by engaging with various faculty, staff, and student groups and redefine the membership slots. For instance, designate specific membership slots for leaders of faculty, staff, student, and community organizations (ex. BFSA, BSU, BGPSA, NAACP, African American Advisory Committee, etc.). This will allow the committee to be informed by multiple constituency groups where the mission of all is to serve the Black population (in progress).

2. **Establish** a more succinct method to communicate and exchange information and ideas with COBA members, the Black employee population at USF, the Black student population and the Black Community in Tampa Bay (in progress).

3. **Collaborate** with other USF Advisory Committees regarding Black Issues and Concerns –Foster more collaboration to monitor issues concerning Black affairs and relationships with the leadership of the five African American Advisory committees (external and internal): Black Faculty and Staff Association, Institute on Black Life (IBL) Community Liaison Committee, IBL Black Leadership Forum, Chancellor's Advisory Council on Issues of Diversity and Inclusive Community (CADIC) and Africana Studies Advisory Board (in progress).

4. **Strengthen our connection to students** by forging relationships with student organization groups with the goal to mentor students and facilitate a relationship where students see COBA as a resource.

Outreach and Community Engagement

Members of COBA have continued to participate in the USF Black Faculty and Staff's Mentoring Program both formally and informally which is premised on the need for USF faculty, staff, and students to have meaningful mentorship, utilizing a multi-tiered mentorship model. COBA also co-hosted, along with the USFSP College of Education monthly and bi-weekly Speaker Series' that featured scholars in critical race theory, urban education, and culturally responsive pedagogy and research. The purpose of the series is to enhance the teaching and research agendas of faculty across the three campuses in preparation for one consolidated university. Additionally, COBA supported a new NSF federal grant to recruit and prepare women of color for careers in STEM in partnership with Florida International University, Bethune-Cookman University, and Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University. Lastly, COBA hosted the first of a series of forums for students across the three campuses, "Real Talk:" Systemic Racism and The Murder of George Floyd. The Forum was held on Juneteenth (June 19, 2020), also known as "Freedom Day" to provide students a virtual space to process their thoughts and experiences relative to systemic racism that cuts across law enforcement and every segment of society. Additional outreach and engagement activities that COBA members have been involved in are listed in the Appendix.

Accomplishments

The Committee on Black Affairs aimed to engage with its varied stakeholders ranging from faculty, staff, students, and other internal organizations to external entities concerned about quality of life issues among African Americans at USF. As a testament to the relationship building and service undertaken by members of COBA across the three campuses, we highlight the following select COBA accomplishments that were achieved by the entire Committee or by individual COBA members (see the Appendix for a more exhaustive listing).

- Participated in the securing of a NSF FL-AGEP Grant (Principal Investigator, Consultant, Research Board Member)
- Participated in the Tampa Organization of Black Affairs (TOBA) Community Breakfast
- Participated in COQEBS Annual Breakfast USFSP-Concerned Organization for Quality Education of Black Students (Pinellas County). Also, we sponsored the Dr. Martin Luther

King Jr. Legacy Award Banquet in January. College of Education won the 2019 Inspiring Programs in STEM Award from Insight to Diversity

- Joined the Tampa, Sarasota-Manatee and St. Pete MLK Parade Foundation Gala which honors USF employees
- Served on the Board of Directors for MLK Parade Foundation Gala
- Participated in the United Negro College Fund 14th Annual Tampa Bay Black History Month Luncheon
- Participated in the Racism Conference with People's Institute of New Orleans
- Selected for a pivotal role on the new Hillsborough County Superintendent Addison Davis' Transition Team
- Chaired a Community Partnership School in Manatee County
- Appointed to the Florida African American History Task Force
- Conducted Focus Groups with students as a follow up to Climate Survey at St. Petersburg campus
- Supported a virtual Summer Camp for adolescent students to target African American youth
- Launched successful Diversity Lecture Series. Eric Rubin (Former US Ambassador) and Courtney Williams (WNBA) at USFSM

Keynotes and Awards received by members of COBA

As an indicator of the engagement of COBA across the three campuses, COBA members earned the following select awards and recognitions:

- Sarasota-Manatee-Darren Gambrell Staff Diversity and Inclusion Award
- Sarasota-Manatee-Corey Posey, Keynote Speaker, Sarasota Memorial Hospital Black History Month program
- St. Petersburg-Dr. Brenda L. Walker-2020 Onyx Magazine Woman on the Move
- Tampa-Frank Pyrtle https://assets.speakcdn.com/assets/2204/tidetalksflyer_2020_1pg.pdf
- Tampa-2020 USF Black Faculty and Staff Association's (BFSA) Outstanding Black Staff/ Administration Member of the Year - Dr. Devona F. Pierre

<u>Continued areas of focus for the 2020/2021 year</u>

1.) Address faculty and staff concerns related to equity, inclusion and race including the:

- Lack of Black Administrators in Academic and Student Affairs in leadership positions
- Declining Black faculty and administrators on campus-stagnate at approximately 5% (at least two faculty members and one campus administrator left the University due to a lack of support and the discriminate way in which they were treated)
- Lack of voices and perspectives from the St. Petersburg and Sarasota campuses
- Need for ore racial and ethnic diversity among faculty members
- Need for more Black representation on all search committees

2.) Address student concerns related to equity, inclusion and race including the:

- Declining Black student population-approximately 9%
- Retention efforts targeting Black and minority students
- Lack of Black representation during University Orientation
- Limited COBA presence with student organizations
- Need for mentoring student black organization leadership and create a community for those groups
- Need for Black representation on the admissions committee
- Need for Black professional staff in the Victims Advocacy Office

3.) Address concerns of Black faculty, staff and students regarding campus climate including:

- Anti-Black racism and micro-aggressions
- Overall safety
- Increasing and supporting the inclusivity of physical diversity
- Concerns of Black faculty, staff, students in the LGBT community
- Concerns of Black faculty, staff, and students who identify as having a disability (visible and invisible)

4) Emergency Response Measures for Acts of God:

- Financial support for faculty, staff, and undergraduate and graduate students
- Essential needs support for faculty, staff, and undergraduate and graduate students
- Technology support for faculty, staff, and undergraduate and graduate students
- Mental Health Services for faculty, staff, and undergraduate and graduate students

Concerns

Expressed by Faculty:

Faculty are extremely concerned with the recruitment, hiring and retention of Black Faculty. The absence, decline and lack of growth of Black faculty and administrators runs counter to we believe is commiserate with a preeminent University. In our current system (One USF), Tenured Faculty who identify as Black make up 4.28% in the System and 4.26% for the Tampa campus, 2.53% for the St. Petersburg campus, and 8.57% at the Sarasota-Manatee campus (USF Info Center, Fall 2019). Tenure-Track Faculty who identify as Black represent 7.35% for the System and 7.41% on the Tampa Campus, 9.68% for the St. Pete campus, and no employee of this designation for the Sarasota-Manatee campus (USF Info Center, Fall 2019).

Needless to say, there is a significant gap in the representation of Black faculty and that of the Black student population, which is 9.1% for the System as of Fall 2019 with 9.4% on the Tampa Campus, 7.1% on the St. Pete Campus, and 6.5% at the Sarasota-Manatee campus (USF Info Center, Fall 2019). There is room for improvement for search committees, diversity within the candidate pool, on-campus interviews, hiring, diversity, equity and inclusion training, nuances of

recruitment and retention, orientation processes, etc. Often college and departmental climates have been contributing factors in the low number of Black faculty. Finally, USF leadership has not communicated that the recruitment of Black and racially and ethnically diverse faculty members is a priority.

Expressed by Administrators/Staff:

In addition to increasing the Black representation of administrators, administrators and staff also ask for more transparency in the hiring process and the promotion process for all employees.

Expressed by the Community:

Several community organizations have expressed concerns regarding USF's image in the Tampa Bay Black community. Concern was also expressed regarding the limited engagement between Black communities, the University, and its leadership. Further, there are concerns about the access of Black students to the University in light of the preeminence status. Finally, the community is keenly interested in the University adopting low-performing schools in the Tampa Bay area to ensure student success and a pipeline to the University.

Summary of Concerns:

Implicated in the concerns across the various stakeholders is the issue of access, presence and membership, as captured by the term representation. Additionally, concerns regarding the extent to which Black faculty, staff, and students have the opportunities and outcomes associated with advancing through the academic pipeline have been noted in reports from COBA since 2002. The representation of Black faculty who are advisors, mentors, educators, researchers, staff, and/or administrators is implicated in how students and staff experience life on campus and gauge its climate. Furthermore, leadership by Black people on campus is key in building the organizational culture, which affects campus climate. As such, the decline of Black people in leadership roles within the University System, is an overarching concern.

Recommendations

USF is a Research I institution and is physically located in a metropolis with a demographic that that is becoming more diverse. Unfortunately, the racial profile of USF's faculty is still not reflective of the racial composition of the student body, and, in the last year or so, the Equity Accountability Plan has indicated a decline of Black Associate, and Assistant Professors. There is also a limited number of Black Full professors in the USF System. There is a need for greater accountability with regard to people who are Black.

COBA offers the following recommendations, following from the data generated during 2018 and 2019 and our own beginning analysis of USF policies, practices, and climate assessment. In order to improve our image and identity as a Research I institution, we should be **inclined to:**

Students

- **Recruit, retain,** and **graduate** Black students, while maintaining preeminence status.
- **Provide** timely access to data on administration, faculty, staff, and students from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Faculty and Staff

- **Recruit, retain** and **promote** a faculty body that is more representative of the demographic of Black people and their ethnic diversity within the metropolitan area.
- **Incorporate** COBA as a part of the recruitment process: COBA is willing to serve as a "welcome committee" to provide culturally appropriate insight for candidates and hires from racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds.
- **Execute** necessary measures to ensure that USF has greater diversity among its Department Chairs, College Deans, and Vice Presidents and Associates.
- **Require** Human Resources to conduct exit interviews, which are currently optional. Gathered information can be reviewed and used by the University, Colleges, and Presidential Advisory Committees to identify trends and to justify actions taken in response to COBA recommendations to the USF System President.

Communication

- **Articulate** an accessible channel of communication for continual dialogue and accountability of the Principles of Community
- **Establish** at least two annual "standing" meetings with the President or the designee to allow collaboration and strategizing of the President-appointed committees throughout the year.
- **Advertise** senior-level positions in places that reach prospective Black applicants for hire or promotion
- **Increase** transparency and accountability in the University's hiring and promotion processes regarding applicants who are prospective Black faculty or administrators.

Data Gathering

- **Conduct** a climate survey for USF System preferably by an outside firm hired by the institution for faculty, and staff.
- **Conduct focus groups across the three campuses regarding perceptions of student, faculty, and staff quality of life.**
- **Conduct** a faculty and staff salary equity study

Professional Development

- **Incorporate** implicit bias and cultural competency training in search committee hiring processes, tenure and promotion committees, and other university reward system decision-making bodies.
- **Establish** a mentoring program on all three campuses, managed by the Office of the Provost, which also rewards senior faculty for mentoring junior faculty (i.e. travel support, course release, GA/RA assistance).
- **Support** and **expand** professional development opportunities to address issues of invisibility, anti-black racism, systemic oppression and other forms of vitriol directed at faculty of color and students of color by students and colleagues, such as fellowship applications and participation in activities for underrepresented faculty, staff, and administrators. For example, the Research Bootcamp and the Community of Scholars events hosted by DIEO to promote women of color in the professoriate.

- **Develop** consistent procedures and training for constituting diverse faculty/administrative and professional search committees and applicant pools. The University needs to ensure that the composition of faculty/administrative professional search committees is diverse. Too often, search committee members have such similar exposures, backgrounds, and thought processes that they represent a narrow perspective and/or world view that unintentionally limits their appreciation for difference and precludes them from selecting a viable culturally diverse pool of applicants.
- **Require system-wide sensitivity training** to educate faculty, staff, and students on anti-black racism.

Resources

- **Provide** more fiscal and other support to carry out the University's mission for the Principles of Community initiatives
- **Provide** more fiscal and other support to carry out the University's mission for faculty.
- **Provide** more consistent fiscal support for programs that retain minority faculty, such as the USF Research Bootcamp.
- **Restore** and **enrich** the funding and support for the USF Institute on Black Life.
- **Provide** resources to research AAU institutions regarding effective diversity initiatives.
- **Re-establish** meetings with minority community groups and organizations to discuss issues related to the University and to authentically understand and capture internal and external community perceptions of the University.
- **Restore** funding for students to attend the Hillsborough Community College Black, Brown & College Bound Summit.
- **Establish** a chapter of the Bouchet Conference on Diversity and Graduate Education, using Yale University as a model.
- **Eliminate** the need for staff to use annual leave time to participate in University-related activities (i.e., Presidential Advisory Committees).
- **Reinstitute** the mission of the Kente Awards which were intended to acknowledge the efforts of faculty and staff who bridge the University with the African American community.

Closing Statement

In closing it is important to note that COBA has been involved in the workgroups for the President's Principles of Community initiative where a diverse group of faculty, staff and student co-constructed, with input from the USF community, a set of guiding principles for campus/community inclusion, civility and respect. COBA appreciates being able to function as a university wide committee with participation from USFT, USFSP, and USFSM; welcomes the opportunity to meet with the president to discuss the report and determine next steps, etc.; and is looking forward to working with the new president in continuing to make the university a world class institution.

Submission by

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APPENDIX

Outreach and Community Engagement

- Supported and participated in President Currall's Principles of Community Initiative and encouraged our stakeholders to participate in the Town Hall meetings. A COBA co-chair participated on the Principles of Community Committee
- Supported and participated in the well-received Research Bootcamp conducted by the USF Office of DEIO and the Sisters of the Academy (SOTA)
- Participated in Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings workshop in which USF faculty and staff were challenged to engage critical race theoretical frameworks. Dr. Ladson-Billings is a renowned scholar and leader in urban education
- Development of the "Call Me Mister" project at USFSP COE to recruit and retain African American men to become elementary teachers in urban and high-poverty schools
- Participated in Black and Brown College Bound Summit held at Hillsborough Community College for men of color enrolled in higher education
- Participated in the Dr. Martin Luther King Breakfast in Sarasota-Manatee County and the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Citizen Scholar Banquet on the USFSP campus
- Informed students impacted by COVID-19 of the University's resources to provide technology and the CARE Act funding

Accomplishments

COBA participated in the following activities:

- Inspiring Programs in STEM
- Staff Diversity Award at the Sarasota-Manatee Campus
- Journey to Success Activities
- USF Presidential Advisory Committee Meetings
- USF Black Alumni and Society Reunion
- WE-CARE Community Advocacy Meetings and Minority Health Lunch N' Learn Series
- Autism workshop at St. Pete Campus
- Support of Interim Dean Dr. Brenda Walker for the College of Education at the St. Petersburg Campus
- Lecture Series at the Florida Aquarium on oceanography and the environment
- McKnight Doctoral Students Conference
- Florida Fund Symposium planning committee
- College of Nursing integrated with BEST Academy
- Dr. Roman and Dr. Wright attended BEST Academy Scholarship Dinner
- USFSM - Journey to Success Partnership with Gamma Xi Boule-Journey to Success Participants - Corey Posey, Darren Gambrell, Haywood Brown, and Cecil Howard

- USFSM - EMBRACE (Effectively Removing Barriers and Raising Awareness through Cultural Exchange. Consortium of community leaders that meet quarterly at USFSM. Featured on ABC - Empowering Voices
- USFSM - Black History Month Program - Screening of Veterans of Color DVD. Film featured veterans from Sarasota Manatee including oldest Buffalo Solider. Partnership with DEIO, MAC, and Veteran Services
- USFSM - Formed Cross College Alliance Diversity Officer subgroup. Leadership Retreat
- The PAInT Center hosted "Undoing Racism Workshop" with the People's Institute at USFSM
- The PAInT Center hosted and was a featured actress in the play, The Mothers" by Dr. Nikki Yeboah at the USFSM focusing on the impact of police brutality on Black lives
- PAInT Center hosted a Creativity and Innovation camp for Rising 7th Grade students from a Title I school in Sarasota, focusing on STEAM Education
- Two COBA members from the Sarasota-Manatee campus held a PAInTing the Picture of Autism with Easter Seals and local students from the community to discuss Autism and feature the talents of students along the spectrum
- A COBA member was named as Chair of a Community Partnership School in Manatee County
- USFSM - Launched successful Diversity Lecture Series. Eric Rubin (Former US Ambassador) and Courtney Williams (WNBA)
- COQEBS Annual Breakfast USFSP-Concerned Organization for Quality Education of Black Students (Pinellas County). Also, we sponsored the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Legacy Award Banquet in January.
- USFSP College of Education won the 2019 Inspiring Programs in STEM Award from Insight to Diversity.
- Accomplishment: Support the establishment of the Feed-A-Bull Food Pantry on the St. Petersburg campus (served on the planning committee)
- Dr. Michelle Madden serves on the Leadership Council for LEAP Tampa Bay https://www.leaptampabay.org/
- One of the COBA members is the advisor to the Black Student Union on the St. Petersburg campus