Committee on Black Affairs (COBA)
2015-16 Annual Report to the
USF System President
COBA Charge

The Committee on Black Affairs is responsible for advising the President on matters impacting Black faculty, staff and students of the University of South Florida System. The Committee shall also be responsible for advising the President regarding the University’s relationship to the Black community. This includes monitoring “quality of life” issues as they relate to the climate within the University.

Elaboration on Terms in the COBA Charge

The charge is to advise the president on a) matters affecting Black faculty, staff and students; b) the relationship between the University and the Black community. To advise thus includes, but it not limited to, monitoring quality of life issues related to campus climate. This charge is interpreted in light of the following definitions of key terms in the charge, which are relevant to the concerns and recommendations stated herein.

Campus Climate: According to Rankin, 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 peoples. We understand that included within a grouping defined by race is ethnic diversity and subgrouping to result in diverse Black groups and communities with varied interests, affiliations, and histories that may be similar yet distinct.
Commendations

Critical Hires of Administrators - The University is to be commended for its appointment of Calvin Williams, the Vice President of Administrative Services.

Dedication to Diversity – The USF System is to be commended for establishing a Campus Diversity Officer position at the USF St. Petersburg campus.

COBA Activities in 2015-2016

During 2015-2016, progress toward COBA’s goals stymied with irregular meetings (August, November, January) due to the evolving membership and leadership transition. Nevertheless, our Committee continued efforts to assess equity at USF as it relates to Black people, which were detailed in last year’s Annual Report. Specifically, this year members of COBA have met with members of the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Equal Opportunity to reignite the committee and recommit to the charge. Additionally, its members have been able to engage in active listening to various stakeholders at events such as:

- Mobilizing the Dream Student Town Hall
- Black Faculty and Staff Association (BFSA) Breakfast
- Research Boot Camp – Hosted by DIEO for and guided by Women of Color
- Courageous Conversations – Hosted by the Institute on Black Life and Center for Africa the Diaspora, University Police Department, and the Office of Community Engagement and Partnerships.

COBA 2015-2016 Areas of Concern

Concerns Expressed by Students

During the spring 2016 semester, the members of the Black Student Union (BSU) and National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) held a town hall meeting entitled Mobilizing the Dream seeking to unify and discuss their concerns regarding the Black and minority student experience at USF. The students invited several administrators and leaders of student organization in an effort to discuss their concerns and they offered possible solutions. The major themes of their concerns are as follows:
• Lack of Black Administrators in Academic and Student Affairs in positions of power
• Diversity among faculty members
• Student Experience including:
  o Declining Black student population
  o Retention efforts targeting Black and minority students
  o Lack of Black representation during Orientation
  o Lack of visual representation in student organizations
• Climate:
  o Subtle racism and micro-aggressions
  o Overall safety
  o Having inclusivity versus physical diversity

Concerns Expressed by Faculty
The representation of Black faculty for the USF System as well as the Tampa Campus has been declining in recent years (2010-2015). This decline includes Tenured Faculty where Blacks make up 4.7% in the System and 4.9% for the Tampa campus. Tenure Track faculty who identify as Black represent 4.8% for the System and 4.9% on the Tampa Campus. Needless to say there is a significant gap in the representation of Black faculty and that of the Black student population, which has represented 9.5% for the System and 9.9% on the Tampa Campus.

Chilly college and departmental climates have been contributing factors in the low number of Black faculty. Additionally, USF leadership has not communicated that the recruitment of Black and minority faculty members is a priority.

Administrators/Staff
The hiring of Calvin Williams was an important step to having an administration representative of our students and population. Please note he is the only Black person and one of very few persons of color within the University leadership. While we praise the University for his hiring we also note there have been a declining number of Black administrators in recent years (2013-2015).

In additional to the representation of administrators, we also ask for more transparency in the hiring process and the promotion process for all employees.

Community
Several community organizations have expressed concerns regarding USF’s image in the Black community within Tampa Bay. Concern was also expressed regarding the limited engagement between Black communities, the University, and its leadership.
Summary of Concerns
Implicated in the concerns across the various stakeholders is the issue of presence and membership, and captured here 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 on the Tampa campus from 2013-2015, as depicted on Table 1, is an overarching concern.

Table 1. Black Executives, Administrators, and Managerial Roles at USF Tampa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Exec/Admin/Managerial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>8.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>7.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>7.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>5.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An overarching concern across faculty, staff, students, and community members who are Black is that Black people are not experiencing full membership in and/or affiliation within the University.

Full membership entails ideas, values, and ways of being and connecting embraced by Black peoples and their communities, which are being solicited by and integrated into all levels and ranks across the University System.
COBA Recommendations from 2015-2016

USF is now a Research I institution and is physically located in a metropolis with a demographic 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 /African American Associate and Assistant Professors. USF’s diversity and strategic plans seem to be inclusive of people of color, however, 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 2015 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:

- **Increase transparency and accountability in the University’s** hiring and promotion processes regarding applicants who are prospective Black faculty or administrators.

- Recruit a faculty body that better represents the demographic of Black people and their ethnic diversity within the metropolitan area.

- **Establish a mentoring program for junior faculty** with the endorsement of the Office of the Provost and implemented by the Academic Deans.

- Execute all necessary measures to ensure that USF has greater diversity amongst its College Deans, Vice Presidents and Associates and Departmental Chairs. **There is only one Black Dean in USF Colleges and one Associate Vice President.**

- Develop an initiative for Black students similar to that of the Latino scholarship program. Given the climate of the country and the increasing number of persons living in poverty, college participation by Black students may be on decline. A development initiative for Black students similar to that of the Latino scholarship program will be helpful to USF students. **A Development Officer, dedicated to the needs of African American students, is desperately needed in University Advancement.**
• Advertise positions, at the senior level, that reaches prospective applicants who are Black to be hired or promoted.

• **Conduct a campus climate survey** for the USF System done by an outside firm hired by the institution. As was done at the University of California System in 2014.

• **Support and expand professional development** opportunities, such as supporting fellowship applications and participation in activities for minority 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.

• **Strongly encourage the Division of Human Resources to conduct exit interviews** as part of the exit process. This information will allow the University, Colleges, and Presidential Advisory Committees an opportunity to review the exit data in order to identify trends and use the information on the ways in which COBA is advising the USF System President.

• Hire a regional Diversity Officer for each campus.

• **Develop a consistent format for forming diverse faculty/administrative & professional search committees and applicant pools** - The University needs to ensure that composition of faculty/administrative professional search committees is diverse. Too often, search committee members have such similar exposures, backgrounds and ways of thinking that they represent a narrow perspective and/or world view that unintentionally limits their appreciation for difference and precludes them from selecting a viable pool of applicants that is culturally diverse.

**COBA Goals for 2016-2017**

The Committee on Black Affairs has three goals for 2016-2017, each of which builds upon prior years’ work and the needs of the campus:

1. **Expand membership of the 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.

2. **Establish a more succinct method to communicate** with COBA members, the Black employee population at USF, and the Black Community in Tampa Bay.

3. **Collaborate with other USF Advisory Committees concerning African Americans 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, and Africana Studies Advisory Board.