

Multicultural Center Taskforce Executive Summary University of Maryland, Baltimore - Spring 2019

The Multicultural Center Taskforce was created by Dr. Perman due to feedback received from Social Work students regarding the need for resources for undocumented students, faculty, and staff and racially/ethnically underrepresented students and an increased focus on creating a more inclusive campus community. The Taskforce consisted of one or more representatives from each School and across campus. The taskforce met once a month from September 2018-February 2019 to explore the need for a “multicultural center” and its focus and structure.

The co-chairs, Patty Alvarez, Ph.D., Assistant Vice President of Student Affairs, and Vanessa Gonzalez-Wright, MSW Student, met with approximately 289 students during 10 meetings held with one or more governing bodies or leadership groups within each School and the University Student Government Association. Meetings were held with the Student Affairs Deans, Academic Affairs Deans, and Student Affairs/Campus Life Services. The taskforce learned about current diversity efforts through presentations given by individuals representing seven departments/initiatives and the Schools to avoid duplication of programming and services and to find opportunities for collaboration and synergy. Data were collected via an online survey hosted on the Multicultural Center Taskforce website. Students (383), staff (42), and faculty (13) submitted 185 suggestions. A student work group convened in January 2019 provided additional insights on key areas. A review of peer institutions and professional standards outlined by the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (2015)¹ for Multicultural Student Programs and Services was conducted. Recommendations were offered to Dr. Perman and Dr. Ward based on the data collected and a review of relevant materials.

Advancing UMB Strategic Priorities & Values: The taskforce recommends establishing a “multicultural center” to assist in advancing UMB’s priorities outlined in the 2017-2021 Strategic Plan. The proposed center would play an integral role in designing experiences in consultation and in collaboration with the Schools to foster Student Success and Inclusive Excellence. The center can make meaningful contributions in promoting UMB’s Statement on Cultural Competence by providing a space where all individuals feel valued, recognized, and affirmed and assist in creating co-curricular experiences to positively influence the cultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes of students and the campus community.

Mission: The primary mission of the center should be threefold,

1. Provide a space and programming where underrepresented students can find support. The center will assist in creating networks of support across each of the Schools to maximize the impact of these leaders and scholars. Underrepresented populations include racial/ethnic minority students and students who identify as DACA recipients or undocumented, international, LGBTQ+, first-generation college students, religiously diverse, and veterans. The center could also assist in supporting other populations where needs emerge. The Spring 2018 administration of the campus climate survey revealed statistically significant differences in how students experienced the climate based on race, sexual orientation, nationality, gender, and first-generation college student status.

¹ Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS). (2015). *Multicultural student programs and services* (9th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

2. Provide innovative co-curricular and curricular intercultural and interprofessional leadership development experiences to all students to prepare them with the awareness, knowledge, and skills needed to serve as culturally competent professionals.
3. Serve as a strategic partner with faculty, staff, and administrators interested in and charged with creating an inclusive climate and advancing priorities focused on diversity, inclusion, and equity.

The center can assist in positively shaping the climate for diversity for all students and the campus community. The center can collaborate with the Diversity Advisory Council and other leaders to advance strategic priorities.

Center Name: Referring to the office as a “multicultural center” is not descriptive or inclusive enough. There was some support for the name, Office of Inclusive Leadership. Creating a center presents a naming opportunity. The name of a prominent figure in Baltimore or an influential leader at UMB who has been a champion for diversity, inclusion, and equity could be considered in naming the office.

Programming/Services: Opportunities exist for the center to create initiatives designed to increase the sense of belonging of underrepresented students to the campus and to facilitate the learning and preparation of all students to effectively engage in a diverse society. The center staff would work with campus partners to determine where overlap and strategic collaborations may exist.

Location/Physical Space: The center should be located in a central part of campus – in a highly visible and accessible location to assist in communicating the prioritization of UMB’s values of diversity and inclusion and the mission of the center. The taskforce recommends creating a center on the first floor of the Campus Center. A strong virtual presence would also exist.

Staffing/Organizational Structure: The staff will lead the development of strategic initiatives and experiences on campus and in collaboration with the Schools to enhance the climate for diversity, student success, and student retention. To engage effectively with underrepresented students and the campus community, the lens and expertise of the staff as well as the programming offered must reflect the diversity of our population. The center would report to Student Affairs within the Office of Academic Affairs due to having a primarily student-serving mission. The Assistant Vice President of Student Affairs will continue to work with leaders in Campus Life Services to determine the best alignment for existing staff and programming to avoid duplication. The taskforce recommends that transformational funding support the proposed staffing model, which includes two new positions, to establish a comprehensive center that can advance institutional goals focused on student success and inclusive excellence.

Measurable Outcomes: The taskforce outlined outcomes that the “center” can advance over time.

Summary of Key Recommendations

1. Establish a center on the first floor of the Campus Center.
2. Create a staffing model, which includes two new positions, to execute the mission of the center.
3. Allocate the necessary funding to support the staff positions, programming, and renovation.
4. Explore naming opportunities for the center.
5. Continue to explore collaborative opportunities to prevent duplication of services and programming and to maximize campus resources.
6. Present information to the Deans regarding the programming, resources, and services provided by the center to foster understanding and use of this resource.
7. Convene a visioning committee to assist in developing the vision for the center.