

## **CPE Report 2019-20: Western Kentucky University**

### **Enrollment Narrative:**

*As such, when evaluating enrollment per the Rubrics, it is done on a pass or fail basis (2 or 0) based on the following analysis:*

*For enrollment, the institution shall demonstrate that the diversity of its student body provides its students with the opportunity to receive the educational benefits of diversity as described in the Policy. This may be substantiated by providing evidence that goals outlined in an institution's plan were generally attained or significant progress was made toward those goals, that students have been provided the opportunity to interact with diverse peers both inside and outside the classroom, and through other means identified by the institution as supported by valid research. Progress toward any one goal shall not determine whether or not expectations have been met; an institution shall be evaluated based on the entirety of its report in this area.*

As evidenced by the new strategic plan (attached), WKU is wholly committed to the recruitment, enrollment, and retention of a diverse student body and assuring the implementation of the DEI plan:

- Goal 2 of the University's new ten-year Strategic Plan: 2018-28 calls for creating "a diverse body of students" [who are] "fully prepared for a rigorous, fulfilling college experience at WKU."
- Goal 4 of the Plan mandates that we "enact and practice all aspects of WKU's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion plan."

International student recruitment plays a critical role in diversity. Unfortunately, due to global political conflicts and, more recently the Covid pandemic, WKU's International student enrollment between 2015-16 and 2019-20 (see Students by Origin attached) decreased dramatically. Additionally, in 2019, *English as a Second Language International (ESLi)*, the company employed by WKU, went out of business, leaving WKU without an *English as a Second Language (ESL)* provider. In response, WKU plans to engage in an overhaul of the newly-renamed International Pathway to Academic Success (IPAS) program and offer most services in-house. The goal is to raise the admission requirements, eliminate requirements to enroll programs for a minimum of two full semesters, and review courses and structures to support International student's academic progress. Part of this plan is to include foundational courses covering critical thinking, reading, study skills, and information literacy taught exclusively for students making the transition to education in the United States. WKU plans to package the IPAS with our Global Living-Learning Program and make it available to First-Year students.

WKU houses many social, professional, and support groups for diverse student populations including religious/faith-based, International, and those supporting students with disabilities and mental health issues. Programs include:

- Council of International Student Organization for international student organizations to collaborate and participate in cooperative activities
- ISEC Graduation ceremony for Black/Hispanic/Asia students
- Lavender Graduation for LGBTQ+ students
- The Pride Center serving the Queer Student Union (QSU), the QSU Transgender Non-Binary Association, and the LGBTQIA+ Support Group.

- The Distinguished Minority Fellows (DMF) assisting URM graduate students with masters and doctorate level educational goals by providing tuition and campus employment opportunities related to their fields of study.

In addition to student social/professional organizations, WKU has a National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Chapter, a support group for current students struggling with anxiety, depression, or other mental health issues. NAMI provides students the opportunity to connect with, and encourage other students struggling with mental health issues and is led by two NAMI certified facilitators.

New this year is the Why Knot Us? Black Male Initiative. The purpose of the program is to increase the sense of belonging of Black males through intentional programming and networking. The goals of the program are to a) increase admission and graduation rates at WKU, b) improve faculty, staff, and student relationships, c) reduce the attrition rate of black males at WKU, and d) promote black male involvement in student organizations.

These programs are a few exemplars of the work underway at WKU to provide opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds.

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**Opportunity:** Identification of specific strategies for recruitment and enrollment of underrepresented minoritized students along with the responsible partners and specific strategies are charted below as well as action that will be taken, and those responsible. The four (4) strategies to enhance opportunity are:

- **Strategy:** Actively pursue underrepresented minoritized (URM) high school juniors and seniors by cultivating relationships with families, target high schools, churches, and community agencies

***How did you implement this strategy with fidelity? (500 words or less) Fidelity is defined as faithfulness to the implementation of the committed strategies demonstrated by continued loyalty and support. Evidence of fidelity may include, but would not be limited to the following: dedicated staff, specific examples of student or staff participation, data collected on strategy inputs and outputs, participation rates of students, dedicated funding, development of implementation timetables and milestones achieved, and narrative descriptions of the implementation process.***

Recruitment of URM students is one of our top priorities at WKU. In 2018, the University hired a Diversity Recruitment Officer (DRO) in the Office of Admissions who was tasked with creating, coordinating, and implementing recruitment efforts geared specifically to communities of color within the institution's service region and the Commonwealth. As outlined in WKU's DEI Plan, the DRO is charged with "*leveraging relationships with service region high schools and community members by identifying key personnel to arrange occasions to speak with URM students, low-income students, and their families or support persons.*" Since that time, it became apparent that the position would be better utilize if housed in Cynthia and George Nichols III Intercultural Student Engagement Center (ISEC). Since ISEC, founded in 2017, has become the hub for recruiting, retaining, and graduating URM students, it was just a better fit. The office, with its five full-time staff, serves as a hands-on recruitment and retention resource for the many

cultural, ethnic/racial, religious/spiritual, and gender identity groups reflected within the WKU community.

In Fall 2019, WKU hired Ruffalo, Noel, Levitz (RNL) to lead the 2019-2029 Strategic Enrollment Plan (SEP), which will include increased opportunities for ISEC and the DRO. During 2019-20, the SEP steering committee, comprised of leaders across campus, worked to create a plan for increasing enrollment at WKU. The steering committee recommended the nine strategies below for inclusion in Phase 1 of WKU's SEP implementation, most of which have DEI components:

1. Adult learners
2. Financial aid counseling
3. Gateway course redesign
4. Living learning programs
5. Online outreach coordinators/advisors
6. Out-of-state recruitment
7. Transfer recruitment
8. URM recruitment events
9. URM recruitment marketing

Though most of the SEP implementation will occur in 2020-21, some of the URM recruitment events and URM recruitment marketing initiatives were adopted in spring/summer 2020 and already underway. The other strategies will be infused, in terms of DEI efforts, as we continue the process of implementing the SEP.

In 2019-20, the DRO hosted and/or participated in 27 (twenty-seven) pre-college events designed to recruit high school juniors and seniors, to explain the benefits of post-secondary education, and to provide strategies or mechanisms to access post-secondary opportunities. During these events, prospective students received individualized on-site financial aid counseling, academic and career pathway counseling, and a projected timeline to graduation (see Minority Recruitment Events attachment for specific locations). Unfortunately, the minority recruitment events were halted in March 2020 due to Covid-19, which resulted in a decrease of about half the number of events held in 2018-19. As a result, the DRO worked with the marketing team to find other ways to recruit. For example, much of the recruiting efforts were done digitally and campus events were held virtually.

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The Covid-19 recruiting approach: While not directly targeting URM students, social media advertisements for all our major recruitment events were disseminated between March and June 2020 for Head for The Hill's Virtual Open House, DiscoverWKU (virtual information fair), and virtual counselor meetings. These advertisements replaced all in-person recruitment events. WKU used a list match based on student and parent emails, reaching about 10,000 people per advertisement. Approximately 500 people clicked to sign up or learn more about the recruitment

events. The total budget spent was \$1500. In addition to general recruitment, WKU directly targeted 17,707 URM high school seniors in the service area (approximately 400-mile radius) using “Yield Calling Lists.” A “Yield” calling list is a computer-generated telemarketing list that allows users to target populations. By June 1, 2020, 6,977 of those URM students targeted either made inquiries about the University, attended one recruitment event, or enrolled at WKU. WKU used Slate by Technolutions to create lists for targeted mailings. Slate is a comprehensive platform for admissions and enrollment management, student success, and alumni/advancement, designed and developed exclusively for higher education. The higher education platform is primarily used for targeted outreach and communications, online applications, and students success and retention.

URM specific mailings and recruitment efforts from Slate included the following:

- February 12, 2020 the Office of Admissions sent digital communications to a targeted 15,207 URM students (both prospects and inquiries);
- February 21, 2020, and ISEC conducted a “Yield Calling List” to contact, via phone, 1,027 admitted URM students for Fall or Summer 2020, who were not registered for TOP (Topper Orientation Program) and had at least one Race listed as African American;
- April 15, 2020, ISEC conducted another “Yield Calling List” aimed at another 2,977 students; and
- June 4, 2020, ISEC email 629 admitted Fall or Summer 2020 students an invitation to join the “Males of Color Academy.”

The minority recruitment office, in collaboration with the ISEC, also sponsored the second annual Multicultural Preview Day that included an application fee waiver. The Multicultural Preview Day is an annual event sponsored by ISEC designed to allow students to explore multicultural students resources at WKU. This is an opportunity for guests to spend a day on The Hill touring campus, meeting with academic departments, and engaging with current students and faculty members that make up the spirit of WKU. As an incentive, all students who attend the event have the opportunity to win a scholarship. Communication about the event organized by ISEC began in early spring 2020. Information was sent to all students who identified as Black/African American, Hispanic/Latinx, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, or self-identified as two or more races within a 400-mile radius of WKU (approximately 3,860 students). Invitations for this event were sent in the form of postcards via mail and email and the event was listed on WKU’s calendar events, which was sent to local and regional counselors. There were 14 students who attended the preview day.

In 2018-19 WKU created a new scholarship structure aimed at benefiting URM and low-income students. Underrepresented minority students with a minimum 2.5 unweighted GPA qualified for a Targeted Award. The follow will be effective for incoming WKU freshmen as early as the beginning of fall 2020:

- WKU removed the ACT requirement from almost all merit-based and targeted academic scholarships.
- WKU increased the minimum merit scholarship award by \$1,000 to \$2,500.
- WKU reduced the minimum GPA requirement from 3.3 to 3.0.
- WKU created additional scholarship opportunities for underrepresented minority students through an expansion of the Cornelius A. Martin Scholarship.

The Cornelius A. Martin Scholarship is awarded to URM students as follows:

- Students who have a 2.5 up to 2.9 unweighted GPA qualify for \$2,000 per academic year.
- Students who have a 3.0 or greater unweighted GPA qualify for \$3,000 per academic year.

***What lessons were learned regarding this strategy and what are your next steps?***

While targeted advertising is difficult, it is extremely necessary in recruiting URM students. Even with face-to-face recruiting events canceled due to Covid-19, WKU did a stellar job targeting, recruiting, and enrolling URM student for Fall 2020. Much of this success was due to the University's commitment to financially support Slate, the DRO, and our marketing team to do this work. In Fall 2020 plans are being made to include the Nashville Society of African American Alumni in our mailing lists and create a recurring email to URM high school students in our region regarding ISEC and its programs. In the addition, it is crucial for admissions to collect the appropriate data needed to make informed decisions about marketing. The SEP Implementation team will also begin collecting data in Fall 2020 via random sample regarding students' experiences with the pre-enrollment process including information on interactions and communication with admissions, points of contact, experience with social media information, and pre-enrollment events.

In terms of other incentives, WKU is working on what will be called The Hilltopper Guarantee; the projected date of implementation is Fall 2021. The purpose of The Hilltopper Guarantee is to close the gap for Kentucky students who may not otherwise be able to afford college. WKU will guarantee 100% tuition coverage for any first-time, first-year freshman from Kentucky who receives Pell Grant assistance and has at least a 3.0 cumulative unweighted high school GPA. The implementation of Target Scholarship program, The Cornelius A. Martin Scholarship, and the planned Hilltopper Guarantee all target some of the financial hurdles of attending college for URM and low-come students.

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**Success:** To support and achieve student success, the following strategies are proposed:

- **Strategy:** Create targeted Living-Learning Communities and Special Living Options

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During the last year, the University has invested a great deal of time and money into living and learning communities/programs (see living learning attachment). WKU Living Learning Programs (LLPs) are available at no addition cost and provide students with opportunities to connect academically (Academic LLPs) and/or through shared interests (Interested-based LLPs). The Academic LLPs include enrollment in two linked courses that count toward the major and/or General Education requirements. Students who participate in any of these programs are also given priority course registration and housing assignments.

Two LLPs within the Intercultural Student Engagement Center (ISEC), The ISEC Academy and the Pride Center's LGBTQ+ Stonewall Suites, are offered first- and second-year students. The ISEC Academy LLP is for any student who identifies as a student of color (Black, Hispanic/Latino, Asian, Native American, and Multiracial), is a first-generation college student, Pell eligible, and/or has some need with their transition, persistence, and graduation from WKU. Stonewall Suites LLP is for students who strive to promote social integration and change for all gender identities, gender expressions, and sexual orientations. In Stonewall Suites, Transgender individuals are given the opportunity to pick the gender of their roommate, which helps alleviate a host of safety concerns and stressors for these students. Students interested in this LLP must go through an application and interview process before being admitted. WKU also offers an LLP for the Chinese Flagship students. Any Chinese Flagship student is welcome to participate. Those who participate in the LLP are invited to exclusive events intended to immerse them in, and deepen their knowledge of, the Chinese language and culture.

In their first semester, most LLP participants are enrolled in two common courses, UC 175: University Experience and ENGL 100: Introduction to College Writing. Common courses for subsequent semesters vary depending on scheduling and course availability. The linked, courses are all grounded in at least one High Impact Practice – most commonly, service learning. In addition to common courses and living spaces, students in the LLPs receive intrusive peer mentoring, coaching, and academic advising from full-time staff members.

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ISEC Academy: For comparison, fall 2018 marked the second cohort of ISEC Academy students. Of the URM's enrolled at WKU in Fall 2018, 63 participated in ISEC Academy's LLC (full-time baccalaureate, n = 46; part-time, n = 17). The first semester persistence rate (fall 2018 to spring 2019) for full-time baccalaureate ISEC Academy students was 93.5% and the fall 2018 to fall 2019 persistence rate was 82.6%. For all ISEC Academy students (including part-time), the first semester persistence rate (fall 2018 to spring 2019) was 90.5% and the fall 2018 to fall 2019 persistence rate was 71.4%.

Fall 2019 began the third cohort of the ISEC Academy (n = 56). For all ISEC Academy URM students (including part-time), the first semester persistence rate (fall 2019 to spring 2020) was 100% and the fall 2019 to fall 2020 persistence rate was 95.5%. The overall retention rate for 2019-20 was quite high, 73%, but the ISEC students still did remarkable well in comparison. It's important to note the data for 2019-20 was also impacted by Covid-19. WKU set in motion several pandemic-related policies that impacted retentions rates. Two of particular contribution were the P/D/F grading that kept many from failing courses and waivers to allow student to enroll and return to school in Fall 2020 even if they owed tuition money from the previous semester.

Stonewall Suites LLP:

The Stonewall Suites LLP was new in fall 2018. For comparison, nine students enrolled in Stonewall Suites LLP in fall 2018 (full-time baccalaureate, n = 8; part-time, n = 1). The first semester persistence rate (fall 2018 to spring 2019) for Stonewall Suite LLP students was 100% and the fall 2018 to spring 2019 persistence rate was 66.7%. In fall 2019, there were 25 students

(full-time baccalaureate, n = 24; part-time, n = 1) in fall 2019 cohort, which included the nine students from 2018-19 who persisted. The first semester persistence rate (fall 2019 to spring 2020) for Stonewall Suite LLP full-time students was 91.7% (part-time 100%) and the Fall 2019 to Fall 2020 retention rate was 88.3%. There are 27 students registered for the Stonewall Suites for Fall 2020. In 2018-19, the rate persistence and retention rates for Stonewall Suites LLP were quite lower than ISEC Academy students but there were so few students in the Stonewall cohort. As the number of participants begin to increase (2019-20/2020-21), the data collected are becoming more meaningful.

During the closure of campus due to Covid-19, Stonewall was one of the LLPs that remained open to give students who had nowhere to go a place to stay. The Topper PRIDE Alumni Association collected money to give LGBTQ+ students who remained on campus \$100 gift cards so they could purchase food and necessities not provided by campus during that period. Similar programs were created for ISEC Academy students and others across campus.

### ***What lessons were learned regarding this strategy and what are your next steps?***

#### Data Issue:

Chinese Flagship LLP data were not available for number of participants, persistence, and retention rates. Because of Covid-19, many of the LLPs were interrupted in Spring 2020 and data was hard to collect. Going forward, systematic assessment data will be collected for all LLPs on campus, including ones related to Global Learning & International Affairs (GLIA).

Even during the pandemic, ISEC programs and LLPs experienced great successes related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. The work ISEC does continues to serve as one of the University's primary vanguards to students of color success (recruitment, retention, graduation, and beyond), as well as University and community wide DEI programs, initiatives, and strategies (see ISEC attachment). Data from the ISEC Academy and Stonewall indicate that participation in these LLPs has a significant impact on the persistence of URM students. Since these LLPs have a positive impact on retention, exploring the creation of similar LLCs aimed at URM, low-income, and LGBTQ+ students might prove to impact the overall persistence rate at WKU. Two diversity-focused Academic LLPs, Criminology and Citizenship & Social Justice, have already been identified for Fall 2020. Unfortunately, due to Covid -19, enrollment in both is down because participants who were initially interested decided not to move to campus.

Despite the obstacles, target programing seems to be making a difference in recruitment, persistence/retention, and graduation among URMs. From 2015-16 and 2019-20, enrollment of African American students has declined only slightly each year (8.9% and 8.0%, respectively); Hispanic student enrollment, on the other hand, has risen from 3.1% to 4.1%. The overall percentage of ungraduated URM students increased from 14.9% in 2015-16 to 15.9% in 2019-20 and graduate URM enrollment went from 12.6% to 15.9%; several of whom were ISEC graduates. In that same time period, the 6-year graduation rate for URM students increase by 3.0% and low-income by .5%. The most dramatic increase, however, was in 1st year retention of URM students – from 63.7% in 2015-16 to 73.0% in 2019-20. The 1st year retention rate for low-income students also increased from 63.7% to 69.9% in that date range. Over the past five years, WKU's enrollment of students who identify as American Indian/Alaskan, Asian, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and two or more races has also increased incrementally (from 4.1% to 5.8%).

Construction began in 2019 on a new student “village” in the lower hub of the campus that will house 635 first-year, full-time students in two new residence halls that will utilize space in a way that enables deep faculty and peer engagement around important ideas connected directly to student success and learning. The Center for teaching & Learning (CITL) and staff from Housing and Residence Life are working together to identify LLPs to be launched in the Fall 2021 semester. LLPs are proven high impact practices that, if done well, can lead directly to an increase in student retention, persistence, and success especially for URM students. This is a key example of an initiative that is jointly developed and programmed by both faculty and HRL staff.

**Success:** To support and achieve student success, the following strategies are proposed

- **Strategy:** Create Micro-financial assistance Initiative

Approximately 4,640 WKU students received Pell Grants in 2019-20. Of the number, 1,060 identified as African American/Black, 463 identified as Hispanic, and 422 identified as two or more race. In terms of full-time, first-year students, 314 identified as African American/Black, 131 identified as Hispanic, and 122 identified as two or more races. The average amount of Pell money granted to students each semester is approximately \$15,500 per academic year, which leaves most students at WKU in need of additional funding to cover all expenses. According to Fain (2016), a small amount of financial assistance, micro-funding, can go a long way for students in financial crises. Data from WKU indicates most students who are in danger of dropping out due to financial assistance usually need less than \$1,000 in emergency funding and between \$2,000 and \$6,000 in assistance for tuition, course fees, books, housing, transportation, or other relevant needs. In response to one of the new Strategic Plan 2018-28: Climbing to Greater Heights metrics, WKU’s Alumni Association created a micro-lending program called the Opportunity Fund. The Opportunity Fund was created as a back-fill to the shortfall in renewable resources available for scholarships and to assist students with financial emergencies. Since financial problems are often the only impediment hindering students from continuing their education, removing financial, needs-based barriers to education can improve recruitment efforts, retention rates, and promote participation beyond the classroom (i.e., unpaid internships, study abroad, etc.). In addition, the Opportunity Fund was also used as an emergency fund for students during Covid-19 to supplement CARES Act funding. The Alumni Center ran a campaign asking for donations for students during the pandemic (see Emergency Covid Fund attachment).

The Alumni Association had previously been an untapped source of funding for URM and low-income students. The WKU Alumni Association’s Board of Directors created the Diversity & Inclusion Task Force in 2018 with a focus on identifying how alumni can impact diversity initiatives and have an impact on campus efforts, including financial support. In addition to the task force, the Society of African American Alumni (SAAA) also continued to financially support URM students as they have in the past. For example, SAAA hosted virtual Homecoming activities that raised \$2,750 for the URM scholarship program. The SAAA also created a strategic planning committee to specifically evaluate opportunities to enhance engagement of African-American alumni in ways that will result in greater philanthropic investment in WKU. Our new affinity chapter, The Topper PRIDE Alumni, founded in spring 2019, also contributed to micro-funding efforts. Topper PRIDE Hosted Spring Social to bring together students from the Queer Student Union, the Pride Center, faculty/staff from the Pride Network, and alumni for a Spring Social; over 85 attended. The goal was to raise awareness and identify potential donors.



The organization also produced three virtual Pride Month livestream events to showcase alumni and campus efforts, which generated gifts totaling \$1,000 for the Chapter and \$2,500 for the Pride Center Fund.

\*Fain, P. (2016). Small Grants, Big Impact. *Inside Higher Ed*, 22.

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The efforts of the Alumni Association resulted in the following funding:  
Opportunity Funds by Race and Ethnicity (URM ONLY: See Financial Assistance by Gender and Ethnicity attachment)

<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	<b>Number of Student Recipients</b>	<b>Total Amount Awarded</b>
Asian/ Pacific Islander	20	16,532.00
African American Black	38	41,151.09
Hispanic	9	9,150.00
Two or more races	10	9,775.00

The WKU Alumni Association has proven to be one of the greatest sources of micro-lending for URM/low-income students. In addition to the Opportunity Fund, the Alumni Association Chapters contributed \$158,239 in charitable gifts designated for supporting financial assistance and programming for WKU DEI effort, including Global Learning, ISEC, Minority Teacher Education, and General Diversity Programs, in 2019-20. As part of this distribution, ISEC received \$60,000 Grant from Jessie Ball duPont Fund. In 2019-20, the following table shows contributions to diversity funding efforts at WKU:

<b>Recipient Group</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Number of Students Assisted</b>	<b>Number of Donors</b>
Intercultural Student Engagement Center	6174.74	127	50
Julie Harris Hinson Opp. Fd. for ISEC	7000	14	1
Pride Center Fund	6237.5	67	8
Why Knot Us- Black/Brown Male	16000	2	2
GLIA	78,150	18	7
Minority Teacher Programs	8,450	4	4
Diversity Programs	104,561	20	17
Minter Lavender Graduation Fund	1,007	39	2

***What lessons were learned regarding this strategy and what are your next steps?***

As the percentage of Pell grant dollars declines, student tuition debt rises, and colleges are forced to raise tuition, more programs like the Opportunity Fund will be needed. Since studies show that students in minoritized groups are at greater risk for dropping out of college due to small budget shortages, these microgrant programs should positively impact retention and student success. When students are concerned about funding for basic necessities such as food, housing, and transportation, their academic success suffers. Unfortunately, correlative information on retention for those who received funding through these microgrants was not collected at WKU in 2019-20, but plans to create systems for collecting this data in underway.

It is important moving forward that WKU become proactive rather than reactive in micro-funding. In other words, most of the funds collected in 2019-20 were granted to folks who were in emergency situations. Some of this was related to Covid-19 and the University's need to ensure URM and low-income students had what they needed during the crisis. In just a few short weeks, the University was forced to make housing and food service availability decisions, convert parking lots to wi-fi hubs, and pivot all offices and classrooms to online formats. This crisis, however, has given WKU insight into problems that existed before the pandemic hit; Covid-19 just magnified the issues. Perhaps the return to "normal" in the next academic of year will be accompanied by a paradigm shift in the way we assist student financially.

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**Impact:** Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, are designed to influence organizational change. The strategy measured was:

- **Strategy:** Increase representation of faculty and staff of color through a formalized recruitment and retention process

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To recap, due to state budget short-falls, WKU was forced to eliminate approximately 140 faculty and staff positions, cut over 100+ programs, and dismantle a multidisciplinary college and its departments in 2018-19. In 2019-20, WKU lost an additional 27 full-time faculty, 42 part-time faculty, and 49 full-time staff due to attrition and retirement. The University also implemented a hiring "pause/frost," meaning that only positions deemed essential were filled between 2018-20; many were hired in temporary or short-term positions. Despite these losses, the percentage of URM in tenure-track faculty positions decreased only slightly from 9.6% (2018-19) to 9.2% (2019-20). Unfortunately, the majority of positions eliminated or vacated among staff from 2018-20 remained unfilled, which resulted in a yet another .8% decrease in management occupation positions held by URMs in 2019-20. In fact, the number of staff, in general, has decreased more than 17.9% over the last five years (see Employees attached). It is important to note, however,

that some of the data for essential hires during 2019-20 is not included in the previously mentioned data because of lag-times in reporting processes. In summary, the most recent data on the following shows increases in the following (see attachments beginning with “Hiring”): (a) full-time positions; (b) part-time positions; (c) waived positions (individuals hired for six months to one year); (d) less than six month positions (individuals hired for less than six months); and (e) assessments conducted by EEO, in which minorities were not part of the initial pool of candidates selected for interviews but after EEO contacted the appropriate departments, the individuals were added to the list of interview candidates. This pool resulted in the following URM employees being added in 2019-20 at least on a temporary basis: 1 American or Alaskan Native; 12 Asian/Pacific Islander; 12 Black/African American; 5 Hispanic; 1 Two or more races. Fortunately, budget concerns have diminished, resulting in lift on the hiring pause. As a result, over 60 searches for new permanent faculty and staff positions are planned for 2020-2021.

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In light of the anticipated push to begin filling much-needed positions, the Co-chief Diversity Officers, Associate Provost for Faculty & Academic Excellence, Manager of Organizational Development (HR), and Director of Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action joined forces to restructure the hiring process at WKU, with an emphasis on recruiting candidates of color. The initial task in fall 2019 was to renew WKU’s membership with HERC (Higher Education Recruitment Consortium). HERC is a leader in providing training and resources for recruiting and retaining URM faculty and staff. Since WKU has entered full implementation of our new RCM (Responsibility Center Management) Budget Model, we first had to create a permanent shared and reoccurring responsibility chain for paying the annual fees. Our second task was to revamp the recruitment and application process. We spent several months collaboratively creating contemporary, boiler-plate language for job advertisements aimed at attracting a diverse pool of applicants. For example, the old language made no mention of the diversity in the community or on campus. Additionally, during the open call for applications period, search committees now have the opportunity to request a preview of applicant demographics at any point of the process. In the past, this was not possible until after the top three or four candidates had been selected for interview. The new requested report only gives the committee aggregate demographic information, but it provides a “snap-shot” of applicants at any point, so the committee can make informed decisions about the pool in terms of diversity. This will allow search committees to determine if applicant pools have adequate representation of URMs for the position and provides committees an opportunity to cast a wider net, if needed, in order to reach a more diverse audience. The third, and last objective was to provide search committees with “best hiring practices” trainings/workshops/webinars. Integrating HERC resources and information about the hiring process, the team built two, one and half hour training modules – one for faculty and one for staff. The intent is to use the modules in face-to-face workshops to address biases and micro-aggressions during all phases of the hiring process. The WKU HR website has also been updating to include a hiring “toolkit” that houses resources for equitable and inclusive hiring practices.

***What lessons were learned regarding this strategy and what are your next steps?***

While the hiring pause did not lend itself to dramatically increasing the representation of faculty and staff of color in 2019-20, it did give us a much-needed chance to formalize a new faculty/staff recruitment and retention process. In the past, there was no centralized mechanism for the recruitment of diverse faculty and staff or “best practices” training for search committees; we now have that system in place. Our Employment Specialist (ES) in Human Resources will act as point-of-contact and gatekeeper for searches on campus, since all positions filter through this office. The ES assists with job advertisements, postings, the recruitment and selection process in Interview Exchange, and onboarding. As we worked on the new “hiring toolkit,” we kept the campus community in the loop and solicited feedback via short surveys (see Search Reports attached). Since this is something WKU has wanted to do for quite some time, the campus community was genuinely thrilled to have the opportunity to contribute ideas. While this strategy was not fully implemented in 2019-20 because there were relatively no active searches, having a system in place going forward is crucial in attracting, hiring, and retaining faculty and staff of color. In early summer 2020, WKU began using the recruitment process but we will not have actual hiring data until all searches are completed in 2020-21.

Though 2020 proved to be a challenging year due to Covid-19, there are some positive take-aways. The hiring pause gave our DEI Workgroup time to create systems and structures in which to drive the much-needed change in culture and climate at the University. To truly shift a paradigm takes time, planning, and forethought. The Covid-19 pandemic gave us the opportunity to use our time and talents to build the foundation necessary to actually do some planning. Much of our time was spent in meetings identifying issues and crafting solutions; without that time, it would have been much more difficult and less productive.

In terms of next steps, participation in these new trainings will be required for all search committee participants going forward. Our plans for 2020-21 include 1) workshops for determining target percentages for search pools in specific disciplines, 2) implementing onboarding programs for new URM faculty and staff, and 3) creating mentoring programs for tenure-track faculty of color. Since the last year has proven that having a backup plan is a good idea, we also plan to record virtual webinars for search committees. Using materials from past workshops, the videos will be separated into three segments: 1) Before the search; 2) During the search; and 3) After the search. The recorded webinars will give search committees the option of doing the workshops face-to-face or virtually if/when needed.

WKU recognizes it is not enough to simply recruit employees of color. As outlined in our DEO report, we are in the process of restructuring our new employee orientation to include cluster orientation practices through connecting new hires with each other to share the common experience and orientation.

**Impact:** Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, are designed to influence organizational change. The strategy measured was:

- **Strategy:** Promote equity and inclusion on campus in order to create a positive campus climate that embraces diversity

***How did you implement this strategy with fidelity? (500 words or less) Fidelity is defined as faithfulness to the implementation of the committed strategies demonstrated by continued loyalty and support. Evidence of fidelity may include, but would not be limited to the following:***

***dedicated staff, specific examples of student or staff participation, data collected on strategy inputs and outputs, participation rates of students, dedicated funding, development of implementation timetables and milestones achieved, and narrative descriptions of the implementation process.***

In alignment with Western Kentucky University's DEI Plan, the Center for Innovative Teaching & Learning (CITL) hosted 12 (6 Covid-related) professional development opportunities for faculty and staff targeting online resources and workshops to address development and awareness in diversity, equity, and inclusion in classroom spaces (see attached for list). Approximately 843 faculty participated in these workshops. As part of these DEI-targeted workshops, CITL embarked on two efforts in conjunction with outside partners and WKU academic units. The first effort was a continuation of a partnership with ACUE (Association of College and University Educators) in providing an online course titled "Course in Effective Teaching Practices" for WKU faculty members as a professional development opportunity. The course began in the spring of 2019 and ended in January 2020; a total of 32 faculty members enrolled and completed the course. Topics in the course covered an intensive look at inclusive strategies to help students, at all levels of learning, achieve success through faculty-students mentorship, promotion of civil learning environments, and use of feedback to improve teaching. Another effort was our campus-wide book club series on "So You Want to Talk about Race" by Ijeoma Onuo in partnership with the WKU Office of the Dean of Students and the Department of Sociology and Criminology. The book club consisted of intellectual discussions on the topics addressed in the book as well as practical suggestions for how to apply these lessons in personal and professional lives. The book group was scheduled for three sessions, but added a fourth due to high demand. The overwhelming interest sparked plans to host a line-up of DEI Book and Media clubs for the 2020-2021 academic year.

***How would you describe the effectiveness of this strategy? The institution shall provide an analysis of the effectiveness of each strategy with a sufficient level of detail. If a strategy was not fully implemented or implemented at all, a thorough analysis and justifiable explanation of why this did not occur should be provided.***

In the spring of 2020, CITL hosted four of their own professional development webinars covering the topics of: teaching diverse content, creating more inclusive classrooms, creating community/engagement in online/hybrid classrooms, and identifying at-risk students with Blackboard. The participation in those four events were as follows:

**Category: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Event Data:**

- Total Unique Events: 6
- Total Number of Sessions: 10
- Total Number of Faculty/Staff participants attended across all events: 161

With the onset of the global COVID-19 pandemic, universities were required to quickly develop a plan to shift courses to online formats. In response, CITL staff supported WKU faculty and instructors in the transition to online teaching formats by creating a centralized site of online resources and developed several workshops/trainings to facilitate faculty/staff in strategizing ways to make the transition equitable and inclusive for all students. CITL hosted six unique events spanning topics of: teaching when the classroom is not possible, Blackboard basics,

lecturing with Zoom, grading during COVID-19, exploring blackboard test options to reduce cheating, and others. The participation in those six events were as follows:

**Category: COVID-19 Equity and Inclusion Event Data:**

- Total Unique Events: 6
- Total Number of Sessions: 30
- Total Number of Faculty/Staff participants attended across all events: 682

**Overall Workshop Participation across both categories:**

- Total Unique Events: 12
- Total Number of Sessions: 39
- Total Number of Faculty/Staff participants attended across all events: 843

***What lessons were learned regarding this strategy and what are your next steps?***

Limitations in the data were as follows:

- Due to varying formats of attendance reports, it could not be determined across all attendance reports provided the distinction of faculty versus staff participation types.
- It could also not be determined the number of unique participants across all attendance reports provided.

As part of the next steps for CITL, the unit will continue to provide professional development workshops and trainings for faculty and staff in the areas of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) for 2020-2021. In order to enhance and assess the impact of these workshops, the unit will work to create assessment tools, continue to utilize the WKU professional development system to track events/workshops, and begin work developing a stand-alone CITL Event reporting system in conjunction with Asana to provide more aggregate data in event attendance/participation. To assist with this goal, CITL will implement the inaugural DEI Community of Practice beginning in the fall of 2020 by identifying six Faculty Fellows through an application process based on their proven commitment to teaching and learning innovation and relentless pursuit of addressing DEI at WKU and beyond. The Faculty Fellows will be charged with cultivating professional development programs that address issues of DEI as they relate to teaching and learning. Over the next three years, the six fellows, in collaboration with colleagues across campus, will advance new directions in teaching with the goal of enhancing the learning experience for all WKU students. The Faculty Fellows will 1) conduct an audit of course offerings to identify existing courses with a focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion and listing these courses on the university webpages in a central location; 2) incorporate a mechanism for faculty development in inclusive pedagogy; 3) design an evaluation and assessment plan for DEI workshops and trainings; and 4) create mechanisms for special recognition and monetary awards for innovations in the area of diversity, equity, and inclusion linked to the curriculum. Through workshops, seminars, colloquia and institutes, these fellows will create space for faculty to discuss how to ensure our classrooms remain equitable learning spaces for WKU's student-scholars.

In 2019-20, the CDOs created the “We Are ONE WKU” Campaign (see ONE WKU Press release attached). In Fall 2020, the campaign will pilot the ONE WKU Academy. Participants in pilot Academy will include all new employees ( $n = 11$ ), all CITL DEI Faculty Fellows ( $n = 6$ ), and member of the DEI workgroup ( $n = 14$ ). The first semester will include three, two-hour sessions: a) Microaggressions/biases, b) Intercultural/Interracial Communication, and c) Allyship. These cultural competence workshops will use the book, “*What it I say Something*

*Wrong? 25 Habits of Culturally Effective People*” as a text. In addition, participants will be asked to attend three other events offer by the ONE WKU Campaign (Deliberative Dialogues, Book & Media Groups, CITL Inclusivity Workshops, etc.). At the end of the Academy, those who completed all the workshops and attended the requisite events will receive a micro-credential badge.

**Impact:** Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, are designed to influence organizational change. The strategy measured was:

- **Strategy:** Formalize mechanisms to infuse cultural competency within all aspects of the institution

***How did you implement this strategy with fidelity? (500 words or less) Fidelity is defined as faithfulness to the implementation of the committed strategies demonstrated by continued loyalty and support. Evidence of fidelity may include, but would not be limited to the following: dedicated staff, specific examples of student or staff participation, data collected on strategy inputs and outputs, participation rates of students, dedicated funding, development of implementation timetables and milestones achieved, and narrative descriptions of the implementation process.***

Much of the DEI work at WKU in the past five years, including 2019-20 (outlined in other sections of this report) has fallen on Students Affairs, Enrollment & Student Experience, Financial Aid, Admission, and Housing & Residence Life. While those programs are crucial in our DEI efforts, there has been some concern over what is done in the classroom to create inclusivity – in addition to co-curricular efforts. There is growing concern, not only at WKU but nationally, about the D/F/W rate in “gateway” courses among URM and low-income students. Gateway courses are those required for admission to professional programs and are usually a part of the general education curriculum. For example, Anatomy & Physiology is a common gateway course for nursing students in the United States. Since the pass rate, or D/F/W rate, in these gateway courses is lower for marginalized students, they act at yet another barrier to career opportunities and higher paying jobs.

The D/F/W rate for a just *few* common gateway courses with high D/F/W rates at WKU for 2018-19 were as follows (see Gateway Initiative attachment for other courses):

World History 101: All Students = 29.4%, URM 49.1%  
English (writing) 101: All Students = 23.2%; URM 33.0%  
Math (algebra) 116: All Students = 40.6%; URM 53.7%  
Chem/Health Sciences: All Students = 37.7%; URM = 61.2%  
Anatomy/Physiology: All Students 27.2%; URM 39.9%

In response, and as part of the Strategic Enrollment Plan, WKU started a Gateway Initiative Pilot Project in collaboration with the Center for Teaching & Learning (CITL), the Kelly M. *Burch Institute* for Transformative Practices in Higher Education, the Department of Mathematics (MATH), and the Department of History. The team focused on an informed, evidence-based course (re)design that addressed common impediments to success in these gateway courses. The objective of the initiative is to provide students with more frequent, lower-stakes assessments (tests) and adjusting grading schemes. The constituents agreed that for the pilot they would move from three tests and a cumulative final exam to six tests and no cumulative finals; although the sixth could cover more than one chapter. In terms of grading, out of the six tests, the lowest score

could be dropped leaving five scores at 18% with homework and quizzes comprising the remaining 10% of the grade. Research indicates that this model of lower-stakes testing and grading provides more opportunities to bring up grades and results in less stress for students.

***How would you describe the effectiveness of this strategy? The institution shall provide an analysis of the effectiveness of each strategy with a sufficient level of detail. If a strategy was not fully implemented or implemented at all, a thorough analysis and justifiable explanation of why this did not occur should be provided.***

Two faculty from the math department and two from the history department were recruited as Gateway Initiative faculty for Fall 2019 and Spring 2020. Unfortunately, only one semester of valid data was collected from math because Gateway Instructors did not teach MATH 116 that semester as WKU pivoted to an online format in March 2020 due to Covid-19. Additionally, all D/F/W rates in MATH were low (16.9% overall) in spring 2020, most likely due to the implementation of a D/F/W Covid-19 grading option. However, preliminary data from MATH 116 in Fall 2019 indicated the adjustment to courses by gateway instructors had a tremendous impact on D/F/W rates. The overall D/F/W rate in MATH 116 was 41.1% and 36.5% for Gateway Initiative Pilot Program courses, which represents a marked difference. In Fall 2020, the difference was even more dramatic; 40% overall and 25% for Gateway Initiative courses. Even more promising was student responses to the class in terms of confidence and stress. Students in Gateway Initiative courses reported lower rates of uncertainty and stress about grades in terms of frequency of exams, weight of exams, amount of content, and alignment of content. While success in History was not quite as dramatic, the D/F/W rate in Gateway Initiative course shows a downward trajectory over those two semesters (Fall 2019 = 40%; Spring 2020 = 23.7%). It is also important to point out that 80% of students in Gateway Initiative courses believed their writing skills improved and 93.7% believed the course (re)design supported the acquisition and refinement of skills like reading, writing, thinking, and questioning (see Gateway Initiative attachment for data).

***What lessons were learned regarding this strategy and what are your next steps?***

A great deal of the work done by the WKU campus community in terms of DEI during 2019-20 targeted the DEI Plan's strategy "Formaliz[ing] mechanisms to infuse cultural competency within all aspects of the institution." We truly believe this is one of the most important strategies outlined in our DEI Plan. Communication and shared initiatives between Academic Affairs and Enrollment and Student Experience provided the crux of our efforts. Having two CDOs, one for each side of the house, will help WKU bridge the DEI efforts across our campus. While student support services are critical in recruiting, retaining, and graduating URM and low-incomes students, what happens in our classrooms is equally important. In terms of the Gateway Initiative, we will be expanding the project to include more courses and faculty, particularly in the STEM fields (chemistry, anatomy & physiology, biology, astronomy, and psychological sciences). Pedagogical shifts at a university are difficult and often provoke arguments over academic freedom. Our goal is to recruit faculty who are committed to these efforts in hopes that they can, in turn, act as advocates for the project. We will also begin offering pedagogical inclusiveness trainings and workshops through CITL in spring 2021; an approach to creating equity and inclusion that has not been explored in the past. It is our hope that the combined efforts of our teams can infuse cultural competence across the entire campus.