Making Excellence Inclusive:

UCR Diversity Certificate Program

**Departmental Best Practices for Cultivating a Community of Respect**

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**May 2017**

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**Capstone Project – Team 2 (Climate)**

**Executive Summary**

Under the overall theme of “cultivating a community of respect,” our group was one of two teams challenged with conceiving actions that can be successfully implemented at UCR at the departmental level to enhance the climate for diversity and inclusion. Our group, self-named Team 2 (Climate), completed a literature and study review, examined model “ambassador-like” programs in the University of California system, and interviewed key stakeholders in developing a volunteer-based program named Leaders for Equity, Advocacy and Diversity (LEAD). The program described in this white paper is proposed as an extension of the role of the Associate Vice Chancellor (AVC) for Diversity and Inclusion to promote a “university environment that values differences among its members, fostering communication across groups, and leading strategic initiatives.” LEAD Ambassadors will provide a vital communication link at the department level, convene local activities that strengthen diversity, equity and advocacy, and comprise an advisory council to the AVC to share best practices and alert her to climate-related matters. The proposed LEAD program is deliberately designed to be implemented at very modest cost with a reasonable level of responsibility expected of the volunteer ambassadors. We believe these features, as described below, comprise a potentially valuable adjunct to UCR’s impressive portfolio of programs and services that enrich the campus environment for diversity, equity and inclusion.

**Problem Definition**

The University of California in 2014 released results of a systemwide survey to build a baseline of data on campus climate at 13 locations – its 10 campuses, Office of the President, the Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources and the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory. Not surprisingly, given UCR’s long-standing reputation as a campus of choice for students who reflect California’s rich diversity, three-quarters of UCR respondents were “comfortable” or “very comfortable” with the climate for diversity in their work environment. Nevertheless, there is much room for improvement, as nearly a quarter of the same respondents believed they had “personally experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive or hostile conduct,” with 8% reporting it interfered with their ability to work or learn. Additionally, there were wide disparities among several demographic groups, with staff, LGBTQ respondents and those with disabilities experiencing such conduct at higher rates than the overall respondent pool. Furthermore, people of color, multi-minority respondents and genderqueer respondents were less comfortable with the climate in their department, work unit, academic unit, or clinic setting.[[1]](#footnote-1)

While these results are consistent with findings among higher education institutions generally,[[2]](#footnote-2) Team 2-Climate believes UCR should strive to perform far better than the norm. In recruiting students, faculty and staff, UCR has rightfully built an external brand as an institution where diversity in all of its dimensions is embraced and valued. It is the belief of Team 2 (Climate) that the campus can strengthen its well-deserved reputation with added emphasis on improving the learning and working climate internally. It is upon these findings that the team has conceived the new proposed program Leaders for Equity, Advocacy and Diversity (LEAD).

**Description of Resource**

The proposed new program for UCR is Leaders for Equity, Advocacy and Diversity (LEAD). LEAD is modeled in part on the UCLA Equity Advisors program, comprised of individuals distributed throughout that campus who utilize their local knowledge to advise their respective deans on strategy, policy, training, climate and accountability[[3]](#footnote-3), as well as the UCR Wellness Ambassadors program.[[4]](#footnote-4)

As proposed for UCR, LEAD program participants would play a vital role in supporting the promotion of diversity, equity and advocacy among UCR staff and faculty. They would serve as ambassadors and communicators of UCR’s diversity initiatives by helping to direct employees to diversity programs, activities and resources. Additionally, they would comprise a council of advisors (“eyes and ears in the field”) to inform and alert the Associate Vice Chancellor for Diversity and Inclusion to departmentally based best practices and challenges.

Among the responsibilities of the voluntary LEAD program participants would be to:

* Market and publicize in their respective units the activities and programs at UCR that promote diversity awareness;
* Facilitate programs and activities in their units that enhance the learning and work environment;
* Identify potential ideas, strategies and programs for culture/work environment that prioritizes respect for all; and
* Participate in quarterly meetings of all LEAD program participants convened by the Associate Vice Chancellor for Diversity and Inclusion.

Departmentally-based or unit-based activities shall be planned and carried out at the discretion of individual LEAD ambassadors. Examples might include, but are not limited to, lunchtime potlucks with discussion of diversity-related issues and introductory building respect activities. A selected list of more innovative activities our team explored included “Proverbs” (exploration of how people of different backgrounds/culture often hold the same values), “Pipe Cleaner Similarities” (discovery of commonalities), and “What Do You Know or What Have You Heard?” (stereotype recognition activity).[[5]](#footnote-5)

Desired attributes of LEAD program participants include:

* Enthusiasm about promoting diversity, equity, and advocacy for all UCR community members;
* Ability to advocate for working toward an improved culture of respect;
* Good communication skills, motivational and interpersonal skills, and ability to facilitate group discussions around sensitive topics;
* Capability to devote a minimum of one hour per month to LEAD-related responsibilities, in addition to an annual one-hour orientation/training and quarterly meetings of the LEAD advisory council; and
* Concurrence of supervisor.

We anticipate there will be high motivation among interested UCR staff members to participate in LEAD. Program participants will have the opportunity to be informed on the latest diversity and inclusion programs and events and will be recognized within their work environments as campus leaders in diversity and inclusion. They will receive training and tools to assist them in their roles as being active participants in fostering an enhanced culture of respect on campus, and they will develop new cross-campus networks as they interact with peers and campus leaders.

**Resource Implementation**

Team 2 (Climate) conceived and designed LEAD with the express intention that it require minimal resources (budget and time) to enact. Voluntary LEAD ambassadors shall initiate modest, largely departmentally based, activities to enrich the “local” environment with respect to diversity and inclusion. Scheduled mandatory program elements are the quarterly meetings (~2 hours in length each) with the Associate Vice Chancellor for Diversity and Inclusion and the annual orientation/training. LEAD ambassadors will be informed of a variety of optional, existing campus programs available to improve their knowledge and skills (e.g., Chancellor’s Diversity Education Program – Making Excellence Inclusive and facilitator training).

***Proposed Implementation Timeline:*** It is proposed the program initiate planning in summer 2017 for a fall 2017 launch. The summer would be spent refining elements of the program, in close consultation with the Associate Vice Chancellor for Diversity and Inclusion, and recruiting the first cohort of LEAD ambassadors. Issues for further deliberation include: whether or not to assign officers for the LEAD ambassadors’ cohort; whether or not LEAD ambassadors would interact with counterparts in the undergraduate and graduate student population; and what specific resources (e.g., funding, training) would be required to implement the program. The program would kick off in fall 2017 with the first quarterly meeting among LEAD ambassadors and the Associate Vice Chancellor for Diversity and Inclusion.

**Risks and Benefits**

While LEAD is designed as a low-cost, volunteer-based value-added supplement to UCR’s extensive diversity and inclusion resources, we recognize there could be potential obstacles in its launch. These include the challenge of recruiting a critical mass of LEAD ambassadors to build a viable program. For some LEAD ambassadors, the learning curve may be substantial. For instance, few are likely to have received training in facilitating meetings and discussions, especially around potentially sensitive topics. Finally, there may be resistance from some unit heads and a general lack of interest among staff in the LEAD program.

Potential benefits of LEAD include: infusing in the UCR community on a deeper level than ever the campus’ values of diversity and inclusion; fostering greater open dialogue in campus sub-communities on issues of diversity and inclusion; and breaking barriers to discussion of other difficult topics.

**Measures**

The LEAD program is deliberately designed as a low-cost, volunteer-based initiative. Nevertheless, our team suggests that a few basic metrics to report outcomes and measure program effectiveness. At minimum, the number of LEAD ambassadors, number of training sessions and number of department activities with number of attendees should be tracked and reported to the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Diversity and Inclusion. LEAD ambassadors could be equipped with a sample log sheet for this purpose. More ambitious evaluation of program outcomes could be accomplished by developing a pre- and post-activity survey for attendees to complete. Finally, should the UC Campus Climate Study be repeated, results can be compared to the 2014 study to ascertain the effectiveness of all of UCR’s diversity and inclusion initiatives.

1. UC Campus Climate Study: UC Riverside, Executive Summary Prepared by Rankin & Associates Consulting. Available at: <http://campusclimate.ucop.edu/_common/files/pdf-climate/ucr-summary.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. University of California Riverside Campus Climate Project Final Report, March 2014. Available at: <http://campusclimate.ucop.edu/_common/files/pdf-climate/ucr-full-report.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. UCLA Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, Equity Advisors. Description available at: <https://equity.ucla.edu/about-us/our-teams/equity-advisors/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Wellness Ambassador Program. Description available at: <https://wellness.ucr.edu/wellness_ambassador_program.html>. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences, Agricultural Research and Cooperative Extension. Diversity Activities for Youth and Adults. Available at: <http://extension.psu.edu/4-h/members/projects-resources/diversity/diversityactivities.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)