

# Texas A&M University Diversity Plan



Office of the Vice President  
and Associate Provost for Diversity



TEXAS A&M  
UNIVERSITY



## Introduction

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Diversity at Texas A&M University is an indispensable component of academic excellence. It is not an isolated concept that is separate to creating a culture of preeminence as was envisioned in *Vision 2020* or the *Academic Master Plan*. We simply cannot achieve academic excellence without paying attention to and drawing from the richness and strength reflected in the diversity in our state and nation. Empirical evidence illustrates the educational benefits of diverse learning environments (Milem, Chang, & Antonio, 2005). Diverse learning environments foster civic learning and engagement and prepare us to live in an increasingly global and complex world. Diversity is also rooted in our land grant mission and core values: *Loyalty, Integrity, Excellence, Leadership, Selfless Service, and Respect*. Our commitment to diversity, broadly speaking, encourages respect for individual differences. Respectful treatment of others affirms and encourages individuals to take pride in their identity and results in the inclusion of all in the “Aggie Family.” The Aggie family *is* diverse. Diversity involves an exploration of individual differences in a safe, positive, welcoming, and nurturing academic environment. Though we only collect federal and state-mandated data on race/ethnicity and sex, studies indicate that individuals who have been historically marginalized or underrepresented in society as well as the academic environment fall in or among several of the following identity groups (Hurtado, Dey, Gurin, & Gurin, 2003; Stanley, 2006; Takaki, 1993; Tierney, 1987):

- Age
- Cultural identity
- Gender identity or expression
- Nationality
- Physical and mental ability
- Political and ideological perspectives
- Racial and ethnic identity
- Religious and spiritual identity
- Sexual orientation
- Social and economic status

Attention to advancing the representation of traditionally underrepresented groups, both in particular fields and throughout the University, is an important *quantitative* metric of our progress in diversity. However, achievement in this metric alone will not fulfill our imperative for enhancing diversity. We have to look at other *qualitative* measures such as interactions among faculty, staff, and student groups; the curriculum, academic support for college preparation, retention and success; perceptions of the campus climate; institutional history; policies; cultural spaces; transforming classroom environments; learning outcome goals; intergroup dialogues; student organizations; residence life; the Corps; commuting and off-campus work. Therefore, we have to define and refine goals, propose strategies and indicators, and continually hold ourselves accountable so that our goals and progress toward achievement are realized.



## Background, Goals, Current, and Future Plans

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In 2006 a *Campus Diversity Plan* was developed and three major goals were identified:

- Achieve and evidence an environment where success and advancement are based on equitable standards and metrics that demonstrate advancement of the mission of the University;
- Achieve and evidence a University culture where a prominent underlying assumption is that the inclusion of participants with diverse identities is essential to excellence in any effort; and
- Achieve and evidence progress in the ranks of our faculty, students, staff, and administrators to demonstrate that we are a national leader in diversity (collecting Federal and State-mandated data on race/ethnicity, and sex).

Evidence of the progress in all three areas is shown in **Appendix 1**. Although we retained the goals listed above, after collecting qualitative feedback from many constituents on campus during 2008, we chose to reorganize the *2009 University Diversity Plan* around three overarching goals: *Accountability, Climate, and Equity*.

1. **Accountability:** Establish structures, processes, and policies that hold all units **accountable, and reward units and individuals** for demonstrating their current standing, plans, and progress in creating an environment where the diversity of individual identities and ideas are treated equitably in a climate that fosters success and achievement by all.
2. **Climate:** Promote a positive and supportive climate by identifying aspects in the climate of individual units and the University which foster and/or impede a working and learning environment that fully recognizes, values, and integrates diversity in the pursuit of academic excellence.
3. **Equity:** Integrate into the mission and goals for the University and units assurance that students, staff, and faculty (tenure and non-tenure track), regardless of identity, are all treated equitably.



## Organizational Structure

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Two major campus entities will aid in the ongoing planning, implementation, assessment, and evaluation of University and unit progress with respect to accomplishing the three goals of the University Diversity Plan: 1. a reconstituted Council on Climate and Diversity (CCD) and 2. a newly established Diversity Operations Committee (DOC).

### Council on Climate and Diversity (CCD)

The Council on Climate and Diversity was formed in 2007 and charged to *provide counsel to the President and the Provost and Executive Vice President for Academics on all ways of attracting and retaining culturally diverse students, faculty, and staff to Texas A&M University, and to strengthen, sustain, and promote our diversity efforts in support of Vision 2020 goals.*

This Council will maintain this charge *with the additional specific charge to aid the Vice President and Associate Provost for Diversity (VPAPD) in planning appropriate assessment and evaluation of units* defined as: colleges/schools (10), libraries (1), branch campuses (2), divisions of Student Affairs, Finance, Facilities, Computing and Information Services (4), Athletics (1), President-executive staff and support staff (1), and the Executive Vice President's units not previously listed (1), for a total of 20 units (See Appendix 3). Eleanor M. Green, Dean, College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, has accepted the invitation to serve as Chair for a two-year term during the calendar years 2010 and 2011.

### Diversity in the Bryan-College Station Community

Texas A&M will work actively to assist with addressing issues outside as well as inside the University. Although the University cannot control all of the external variables that impact the campus climate, it is to our advantage to form positive working relationships with appropriate community groups in Bryan-College Station so that we can work together to enhance our positive relationships and reduce problems such as racism, xenophobia, homophobia, religious discrimination, and Islamophobia. Research illustrates that sociohistorical forces that occur outside of college campuses can “serve as stimuli for discussions or other activities that occur on campus” (Milem, Chang & Antonio, 2005, p. 15). In addition, external forces in the community combined with internal forces on campus contribute to the campus climate. Selected community leaders will be represented on the Council on Climate and Diversity. It is the expectation that this is a mutually beneficial relationship wherein community leaders and the Council provide perspectives related to enhancing community and University relations.



### **Council on Climate and Diversity Membership:**

- Five former students from the following organizations:
  - Association of Former Students Board of Directors Chair or designee
  - Black Former Student Network Chair or designee
  - International Board Executive Committee Chair or designee
  - TAMU Hispanic Network President or designee
  - Women Former Students' Network President or designee
- Five current students:
  - Student Government Diversity Committee Chair or designee
  - Graduate Student Council Multicultural and Diversity Committee Chair or designee
  - Student who is pursuing scholarly research in diversity appointed by the Associate Vice President for Graduate Studies
  - Student who is noted for work in diversity appointed by the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Studies
  - Student who is noted for campus leadership appointed by VP for Student Affairs
- Five current members of the faculty:
  - Faculty Senate Diversity Committee Chair or designee
  - 4 faculty representatives, serving two-year terms, selected from membership of Faculty Networks (no network has more than one position and no network holds a position for one year after their term ends)
- Six administrators:
  - Dean
  - HR director or designee
  - Dean of Faculties and Associate Provost or designee
  - Vice President for Student Affairs or designee
  - University Staff Council designee
  - Department Head Council Chair or designee
- Four Community/Corporate Members:
  - Selected individuals from local organizations as well as the corporate sector

The Council on Climate and Diversity will meet quarterly, and may need to meet on an ad hoc basis to address specific issues. Alignment with other timelines in this Plan would result in quarterly meetings as follows:

- Spring (focus on outlining information to gather from units, criteria for accountability evaluations. All data and unit reports from previous year will be due);
- Fall (focus on finalizing a University Diversity Advancement Report. All University-level comparison data will be available in the Spring);
- Fall (focus on outlining information to gather from units, criteria for accountability evaluations, and issues to prioritize in next academic year);
- Spring (consider recommendations for updates to the University Diversity Plan)



### Diversity Operations Committee (DOC)

Similar to the University's major operational committees focusing on undergraduate education (AOC) and graduate education (GOC), this plan calls for the formation of an operational committee focused on diversity. The value of these operational committees has always been to gather units from across campus that are responsible for implementation of required policies and practices. Another important value of these committees has been the opportunity to share with other units the successes and failures experienced in various implementations. The Diversity Operations Committee (DOC) will consider processes for collection of equity and climate data, as well as procedures and practices for implementation of all aspects of the University Diversity Plan. The DOC will be charged to specifically work with appropriate entities to evaluate and recommend remedies to any systemic deficiencies in equity. The Committee will be chaired by the Vice President and Associate Provost for Diversity (See Appendix 4), and will comprise representatives from each unit, as defined in this plan (20), and representatives from the Commandant's Office and the University Staff Council.

### Goal 1: Accountability

We must hold ourselves accountable, individually as well as collectively, for the goal of becoming a campus that is welcoming to all. Accountability involves leadership at the (1) individual level, (2) interpersonal level, (3) group level, and (4) institutional level. According to Bensimon, Polkinghorne, & Bauman (2003), *institutions of higher education most often do not produce annual reports on measures of equity nor do they have equity-oriented benchmarks*. To successfully enhance the accountability of all four levels on campus, this plan calls for the development of accountability structures and processes for monitoring and evaluating progress, and the formulation of new processes, which will ensure units are rewarded and held accountable for contributing to the diversity imperative of the University.

### Procedures

As one aspect of **accountability**, *the Vice President and Associate Provost for Diversity will award money to units that excel in areas of the plan. This money will be added to the unit's base funding and the amount of funding available for distribution will be calculated based on the size of the merit allocation pool for a given year (approximately 10%)*. The phasing in of this aspect of accountability will follow the timeline below:

- FY12 – the allocation will be based upon units' progress in establishing baseline comparisons in representation and in climate. Representation will involve presenting gender, race/ethnicity, and national origin diversity of students, staff, and faculty with respect to: peers and aspirant peers, national averages, or appropriate available pools of applicants. The details of these comparisons are shown in **Appendix 2**.



- FY13 – the allocation will be based upon updating the comparisons from FY12 and studying equity issues and internal intervention strategies pertaining to climate and equity (particularly retention, salary, and satisfaction).
- FY14 and beyond – the allocation will be based on progress against comparators and major efforts to address problems in representation, climate, and equity in the units.

The process for analysis of effort and progress in each unit's actions to enhance diversity will involve the following steps annually:

### **Action Steps and Proposed Dates for Completion**

#### *Accountability*

1. Immediately, Units review and offer improvements for the plan and finalize this plan by February 2010
2. December 2009, Charge the Council on Climate and Diversity (CCD)
3. February 2010, Charge the Diversity Operations Committee (DOC)
4. March 2010, DOC makes recommendations based on climate and equity data and metrics for FY11 and training schedule for conflict management and difficult dialogue training
5. April 2010, VPAPD will provide units with current available baseline climate and presence data
6. Spring 2010, CCD Meets (focus on unit evaluations and recommendations on accountability. All data and unit reports from previous year will be due)
7. June 2010, Units report required data and analysis of progress
8. February 2011, CCD will submit recommended ratings of each unit to the VPAPD
9. February 2011, The VPAPD will recommend allocations for units based on ratings from CCD
10. Spring 2011, CCD Meets (focus on finalizing the University Diversity Advancement Report. All comparison data will be available in April)
11. Spring 2011, CCD Meets (focus outlining information to gather from units, criteria for accountability evaluations, and issues to prioritize in next academic year)
12. June 2011, DOC will recommend changes in required climate and equity data and metrics for progress
13. November 2011, CCD Meets (consider recommendations for updates to the University Diversity Plan)



## Goal 2: Climate

Peterson and Spencer (1990) define climate as “*the common patterns of important dimensions of organizational life or its members’ perceptions of and attitudes toward those dimensions*” (p. 173). Hurtado et al. (1998) describe an institution’s diversity climate as its *historical legacy* of inclusion or exclusion of various racial or ethnic groups, its *psychological climate* (perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes about diversity), its *behavioral climate* (how different groups interact on campus), and its *structural diversity* (numerical and proportional representation of diverse groups on campus). If campus community members feel a sense of belonging along these four dimensions, it will contribute to a positive campus climate.

All campus community members contribute to and are affected by campus climate (Rankin, 1998), and institutional climate is directly associated with academic and professional outcomes; when individuals feel valued, they are more productive. Thus, campus climate ranks high among our priorities for achieving our University diversity goals.

### **A Synopsis of Results of Recent Campus-Wide Climate Assessments**

Comprehensive climate assessments for faculty, staff, and students were executed during FY 2006-2008. Each instrument was tailored to the respective group, and while these studies focused on a variety of issues, the Office of the Vice President and Associate Provost for Diversity has a particular interest in the dimensions of the campus climate related to diversity, as perceived and experienced by faculty, administrators, staff, and students.

In general, a great majority of faculty, staff, and students expressed high levels of satisfaction with the University and their units; however, many within all three groups had concerns about discrimination and insensitivities. The observation of insensitive comments and actions toward an individual or groups based upon individual identity attributes was correlated with individuals’ perceptions and experiences described as discrimination. Insensitive comments are most frequently heard by women, and are targeted at women, race/ethnicity, and sexual orientation. In addition, those who were concerned about the lack of visible diversity in the leadership levels of the University tended to have higher concerns about inappropriate discriminatory practices based on individual identities. Many who perceived higher frequencies of inappropriate discriminatory practices also more frequently noted dissatisfaction with how leaders (students, staff, faculty, and administrators) handle disputes and disagreements. In general, individuals from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups in comparison to individuals who are White, women in comparison to men, individuals with religious identities that were not Christian in comparison to those who identified as Christian, and individuals who identified as gay, lesbian, and transgender, more frequently found the campus and their units to be less satisfactory in the display of a welcoming, inclusive, and respectful environment.



## Procedures

This plan calls for units to continue to explore data from the previous faculty, staff, and student surveys that can enhance our understanding of how current University and unit climates are affecting recruitment and retention for diversity. The intent is for these University-wide assessments to be repeated in three-year cycles. The DOC will propose modifications to the assessment instruments and target groups for assessment by July 31 of the appropriate year (given the cyclical nature of assessments). The planned assessment cycle should be: graduate students, Fall 2010; faculty, Spring 2012; staff, Fall 2012; administrators, Spring 2013; and undergraduate students, Spring 2013. Units may accept the University climate data as applying to their unit. However, when the University data cannot be disaggregated to reflect the specific unit, they are advised to probe carefully to ensure the unit's climate is well understood. Each member of the DOC is expected to analyze and report on how the unit they represent is ensuring an appropriate understanding of the climate in the unit.

## Annual Requirements:

1. Units will be expected to implement programs and interventions informed by data from recent University-level climate assessments and/or climate assessments that were designed at the unit level. Each unit should set customized priorities by focusing on issues and strategies most relevant to their mission, address plans to sustain progress, and include timelines for completion. A plan for the ensuing year's activities to improve the unit's climate for diversity will be due July 31 to the Diversity Operations Committee. The June 2010 self report from the unit to the Council on Climate and Diversity will evaluate the effectiveness to date of these and previous years' programs and interventions.
2. Each unit will be expected to clearly communicate its commitment to diversity. Each unit should thoroughly audit existing (and planned) marketing media, including audio, print, and electronic publications, to ensure that Texas A&M's commitment to diversity is represented, as appropriate; that Texas A&M University's language regarding equal opportunity, affirmative action, and accommodation is used consistently; and that all publications are provided in accessible formats. All new job postings should clearly stress the University's commitment to equity and diversity. The Diversity Operations Committee and the Council on Climate and Diversity will review actions taken to improve media when formulating merit allocations and evaluations of climate annually by February 2011.
3. To address comments regarding "insensitivity" that emerged from previous climate assessments, all hiring supervisors, chairs of search, award, promotion, tenure, and selection committees will attend a program for education on schemas that affect hiring, inclusion, climate, and advancement. Dates for faculty, staff, and student sessions, respectively, will be made available by March 2010. Individuals will be required to attend these educational programs at least once every two years. Certification of completion is maintained by The Office of the Dean of Faculties (for faculty processes), Human Resources (for staff processes), and the Division of Student Affairs (for student processes). In addition:



*Faculty:* DOF, in collaboration with the VPAPD, will continue to offer diversity-related faculty development workshops

*Staff:* Office of Employee and Organizational Development, in consultation and collaboration with the VPAPD will roll out a comprehensive staff diversity education plan by Fall 2010

*Students:* VPAPD, in collaboration with SGA, will work with DSA to review and enhance guidelines for student organization education by Fall 2010

4. To address concerns regarding handling of disputes and disagreements, the campus will initiate workshop and classroom experiences to enhance skills with conflict management and difficult dialogues. The plans for these offerings will be presented by March 2010.

### **Action Steps and Proposed Dates for Completion**

#### **Climate**

1. September 2010, Units will report on current climate intervention plans and proposed outcomes
2. March 2010, Workshops to reduce “insensitivity” will be scheduled
3. March 2010, All hiring supervisors, chairs of search, award, promotion, tenure, and selection committees will attend a program for education on schemas that affect hiring, inclusion, climate, and advancement. Dates for faculty, staff, and student sessions, respectively, will be made available
4. March 2010, To address concerns regarding handling of disputes and disagreements, the campus will initiate workshop and classroom experiences to enhance skills with conflict management and difficult dialogues
5. February 2011, Specific efforts in creating inclusive communication materials will be reported in the units’ reports on progress
6. Fall 2010, The climate for graduate students will be assessed
7. Fall 2010, Office of Employee and Organizational Development, in consultation and collaboration with the VPAPD, will roll out a comprehensive staff diversity education plan
8. Fall 2010, VPAPD, in collaboration with SGA, will work with DSA to review and enhance guidelines for student organization education
9. Spring 2012, Climate for faculty assessed
10. Fall 2012, Climate for staff assessed
11. July 2011, A plan for the ensuing year’s activities to improve the unit’s climate for diversity due to the Diversity Operations Committee
12. Spring 2013, Climate for administrators assessed
13. Spring 2013, Climate for undergraduate students assessed
14. June 2010, Self report from the unit to the Council on Climate and Diversity will evaluate the effectiveness to date of these and previous years’ programs and interventions
15. July 31 (in the appropriate year), The DOC will consider results and propose modifications to assessment instruments and target groups for assessment



### **Goal 3: Equity**

To identify and eliminate evidence-supported patterns of inequity on campus, the DOC will work with the VPAPD Office, HR, DOF, DSA, and OISP to study retention, compensation, award and reward trends, performance measures, and advancement in the University and by units to identify processes, policies, and procedures that contribute to inequities, which may prevent achievement for certain groups. Recommendations to address any systemic inequities discovered will be submitted to the President and Provost for consideration. All studies on equity issues cannot be managed within a single year; therefore, aspects studied at one time will need to be reassessed to ensure that the equity achieved is maintained. The DOC will present the annual plan and design of targeted equity studies in Fall 2010. The VPAPD office will coordinate with campus offices and units where the needed data for evaluating equity may be obtained. Annual studies on equity must be completed by June 30. Each unit will identify and develop plans to eliminate institutional obstacles that may impede the progress of all individuals within their specific purview (with special attention to the advancement of women and ethnic/racial minorities expected for at least the next three years). Units' plans will be due by October 31.

#### **Action Steps and Proposed Dates for Completion**

##### **Equity**

1. Fall, 2010, The plan and design of a University-wide equity study by the DOC
2. June 30, 2011, DOC will provide a report on equity study. Results and recommendations will be presented to the President and Provost August 2011
3. October 31, 2011, Unit plans to eliminate systemic inequities will be developed (overlap with programs and interventions addressing unit climate are expected)

#### **Ownership of the Plan**

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The VPAPD office is responsible for the implementation and coordination of this University Diversity Plan. Outcomes will be reviewed annually, results shared broadly, and improvements continuously introduced. The VPAPD will serve as a resource and facilitator of our collective efforts.



## REFERENCES

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## APPENDIX 1:

### PROGRESS TO DATE

The Diversity Plan adopted in 2006 succeeded in many of its objectives during the period of its implementation. Specifically, the following were accomplished:

- Climate assessments for faculty, staff, and students were completed;
- Incoming students were exposed to an increased level of diversity education through New Student Conferences;
- *A Global Leadership Institute* was piloted;
- Progressive educational opportunities for faculty and staff were implemented;
- Work toward a comprehensive staff diversity education program grounded in “cultural competencies” began;
- Internal faculty, staff, and student data were gathered by gender and ethnicity, examined by reviewing a 5-year trajectory (using 2002 as a baseline); and
- Meetings were conducted with College Deans and their liaisons to discuss plans for progress regarding faculty and student presence and quality of life issues.

The Plan was adopted in 2006 with the expectation that it would be a living document that is periodically revised as we improve and adapt to expected and unexpected developments. It will also be adjusted as we gain wisdom from our continuing efforts.



**APPENDIX 2:**

**MINIMUM DATA FOR ACCOUNTABILITY**

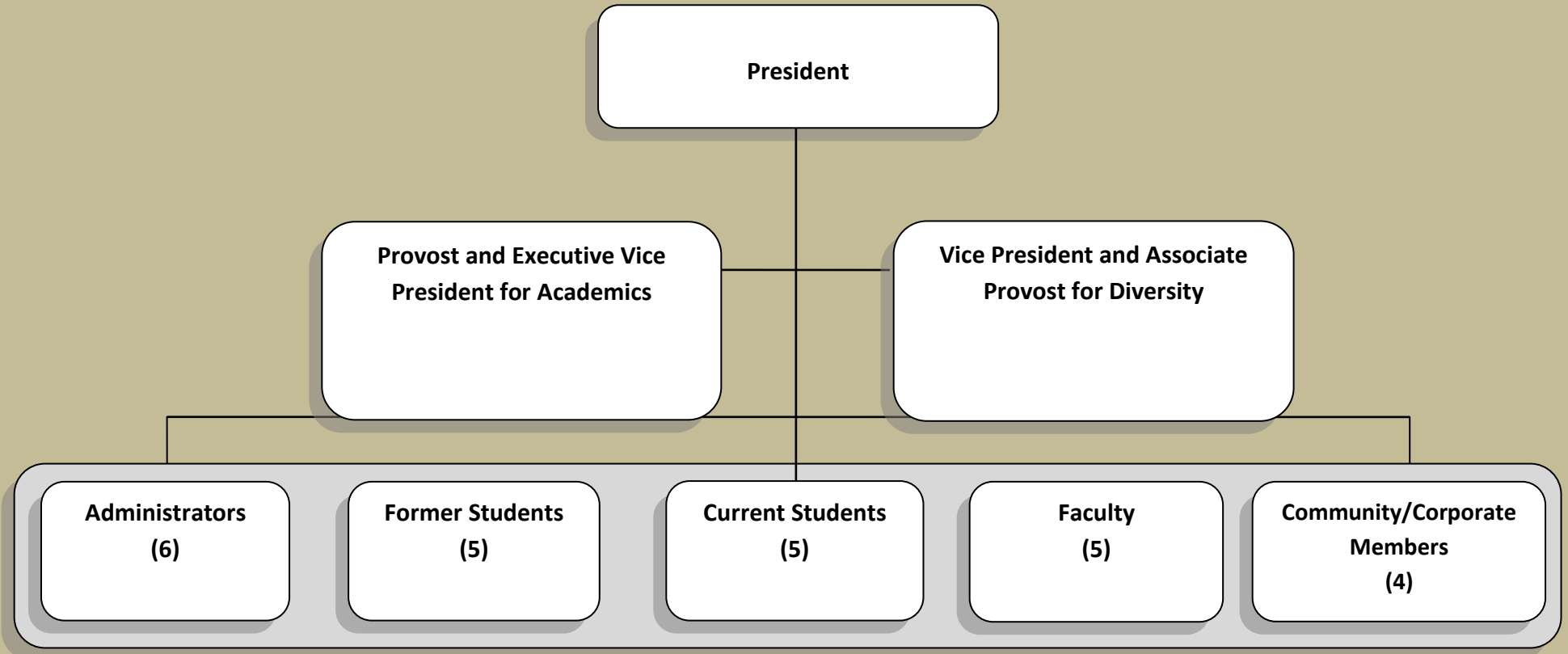
**Colleges/Schools Comparisons will be:**

- By degree program area and compared with peers and aspirant peers (or national norms) as determined by each program and approved by the Dean
  - Faculty by rank (including the Libraries)
  - Undergraduate student FTIC, enrollment, graduation
  - Graduate student FT at A&M, enrollment, graduation
- By college/schools/libraries in comparison with appropriate set of aspirant peers or national norms
  - Administrators
  - Advisory boards
  - Professional staff
- By college/schools/libraries staff diversity compared to local or regional pools, as appropriate.

Vice President and President areas will compare administrators and professional staff with peers and aspirant peers, and all other staff with appropriate local or regional pools.

APPENDIX 3

**Council on Climate and Diversity**



APPENDIX 4

Diversity Operations Committee

