

Big Sandy Community and Technical College

Diversity Performance Improvement Plan

Big Sandy Community and Technical College is committed to improving the lives of the underrepresented minority populations and low-income residents in the eastern Kentucky region it serves. We appreciate the opportunity to reflect upon our recent Diversity Plan scores and to present the college's thoughts and actions designed to make meaningful improvements.

- I. Self-Reflection: What issues led to your institution not meeting the minimum required score? Please include in the description the nature of the underperformance, including an explanation of any gaps in meeting targets as well as any issues in the qualitative reporting.**

QUALITATIVE

The college scored 12/18 points on its qualitative report. We think this was due to several factors that include lack of appropriate and timely internal communication, failure to incorporate helpful suggestions from KCTCS reviewers, inadequate data collection and failure to consider the readers for whom the report was written.

First, the college did not meet its own timeline for generating the report. Writers submitted narratives late and did not allow time for revision in response to feedback. As a result, when college participated in external review from KCTCS prior to submission to CPE, it did not allow enough time to fully absorb and incorporate those suggestions. We have since returned to that feedback and mined it for opportunities for improvement. We have also closely read the feedback from CPE on the report and see a pattern emerging from the observations of those reviewers along with the suggestions from KCTCS. It is clear to us that the qualitative score reflected the college's failure to draft longer narratives that provide richer descriptions, more contextualized explanations, and clear and directly relevant data. Using all 500 words available would allow the college to give non-BSCTC audiences the details they need to understand and assess what is happening at BSCTC. In addition, the college has ascertained that the narrative assumed knowledge of the college and its processes and did not communicate well to an external audience unfamiliar with the workings of the college.

The college's initial diversity plan was developed without the participation of many of those expected to implement the dozens of strategies originally proposed by the plan. As a result, awareness of the obligation to assess each strategy consistently was not "baked in" from the beginning, and many of those engaged in implementation did not collect appropriate data prior to and during their activities that would yield robust information about the effectiveness of the activity. Failing to collect appropriate data hampered the institution's ability to conduct assessment and limited the scope of the writing process. Not capturing the right data compromised the institution's ability to demonstrate in the report that strategy implementation was done with fidelity. Also, the institution then was unable to adequately assess strategy effectiveness or decide lessons learned and next steps.

In addition, the college's reliance almost exclusively on summative data after the fact rather than formative data before or during its efforts with students created a disconnect between actions or interventions to potential results and actual students. The college missed opportunities to make mid-course corrections and adaptations that could have positively impacted student success as well as persistence, retention, and completion. After careful reflection and review of the Diversity Plan strategies by the newly formed President's Diversity Team, a body consisting of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee leadership and other officers of the college, the institution realized that the strategies of the 2019-2020 plan were not always "strategies" and that in fact some of the strategies were tactics. In response the college chose to collapse strategies and redefine them as tactics under those combined strategies. This has resulted in a more streamlined list of 17 strategies - a much more manageable number for implementation.

QUANTITATIVE

The college scored 5/16 points toward target goals. Part of this is due to a disconnect between the strategies and the results (progress to targets). Below is a review of each target, our results, and considerations.

URM retention Goal of 55% was not met. However, we are pleased to have exceeded the previous year total of 46.15% with our performance of 46.67%. We attribute that gain largely to the personal connections made by the staff member serving to communicate directly and often with URM students. Other success strategies implemented during 2019-2020 related to engagement and retention such as hosting a range of Diversity events including a Multicultural Fair had to be canceled or pivot to online which was less engaging and fewer students took part. Students did participate in other strategies aimed at engagement, student success, and retention such as the Racial Healing circles even when held remotely. We think that was largely due to the direct interaction possible in those events. Through analysis of student participation, we clearly saw the importance of live, direct interaction for our students and plan to re-implement as much in-person activity as is safely permitted.

In the meantime, during the 2020-2021 academic year we made a special effort to create student engagement with a virtual Multicultural Day. We applied lessons learned from our pivot to remote advising and added a moderated Q&A to allow students to connect directly with presenters. In addition, we maximized the power of Facebook by livestreaming. The chat function permitted students who chose to attend through Facebook to chat with the presenters and each other during the event. As we moved forward through the pandemic year, the college drew on this capacity to provide engagement virtually.

Retention Rate LSI goal of 59.7% was not met since our retention was 54.4% and down from previous year. In examining our plan, we noted that the only retention strategies developed for this group were focused on meeting financial need. In addition, as we have become engaged in guided pathways work, we recognize that we have not closely examined student success data disaggregated by LSI. We are integrating this discipline into our work moving forward and will develop additional actions to achieve this goal.

Graduation Rate URM goal of 18.7% was met and exceeded with a graduation rate of 27.8%. **Graduation Rate LSI goal of 26.6%** was met and exceeded with a graduation rate of 29.3%. As a result of implementing and institutionalizing various initiatives to improve student success, BSCTC had experienced an increase in the overall graduation rate for the last five years from 22.4% in 2016-2-17 to 32.2% unofficially in 2020-2021. These efforts have also resulted in a rise in graduation rates for our URM and LIS student cohorts which surpassed our established targets for both groups (URM: unofficial 23.8%/target 20.1% and LIS: unofficial rate of 30.3%/target 28.0%). Those initiatives have included expanding tutoring services for online students, initiating a First-Year course (FYE105), adopting a co-requisite model with the developmental courses, and communicating with student cohorts about important graduation deadlines. BSCTC also created a Quality Enhancement Plan that focuses on academic and career advising for first-time AA/AS students and follows those students from the first semester through graduation.

Total credentials URM goal of 49 was not achieved even though 34 students completed a credential in 2019-2020, 69.3% of goal. This is an incremental improvement over the previous year in which the college saw 33 students complete a credential toward a goal of 48 students, or 68% of goal. In 2020-2021 we instituted degree progress reports and employed specialized advising specifically for URM students to assist them to persist and complete. As a result, 59 students completed a credential toward a goal of 51, or 115% of goal. We will retain this practice going forward. In addition, in our review of our practices through a guided pathways lens, we discovered that we have not focused on the programs into which our URM students are enrolling. This is another area in which we are investigating potential actions that provide additional support.

Total credentials LIS goal of 1420 not achieved since only 1,058 completed in 2019-2020. This is about the same number of student completers the year previous. BSCTC implemented the KCTCS 15 to Finish initiative in Fall of 2018 to encourage students

to take 15 credits per term through to completion. However, the \$500 scholarship offered did not meet the financial needs of students, especially as tuition rose. In Spring 2018, BSCTC began auto awarding all credentials earned by every graduating student. In 2019-2020 the college implemented Program Applicability reviews to assist students in completing only those program requirements necessary for the award of a degree. This effort should have shortened the time to completion for students and, more importantly for LIS, reduced the financial burden of degree attainment. Despite these efforts, the downward enrollment trend at the college reduced the total number of students eligible to graduate.

Workforce Diversity goal of 4.4% not met with 0.0%. The college struggles in this category due to the need to recruit URM candidates into the remote rural location at salaries that are below what can be commanded in environments with larger, more diverse populations. KCTCS is investing in a staff position that will be tasked with assisting the rural colleges of Eastern Kentucky in addressing this challenge. All positions that are advertised by BSCTC are on the Greater Kentucky Higher Education Recruitment Consortium (HERC) which is committed to advancing inclusive excellence in the higher education workforce. Even utilizing this website in addition to other advertising venues such as Inside Higher Ed we are not getting the diverse applicants we desire.

Currently BSCTC is exploring the implementation of a “grow your own” program. As a pilot we are reaching out to past graduates and any current entry level or front-line employees who have identified as URM. A focus group will be held before the end of the year to discuss their experience at BSCTC and to recruit graduates as potential employees for the college.

Full-time Faculty URM goal of 1.7% not met with 0.8%. The college also struggles in this area for the reasons stated above. In recent years we have attracted more diverse applicants into faculty interview pools. Unfortunately, salaries offered were declined by prospective hires. The college is undertaking a review of salaries in conjunction with KCTCS to be able to offer a more competitive starting salary.

II. Plan of Action: How will your institution address these issues moving forward? Please include in the description which steps are necessary to address the concerns. Include the timeline for improvement, resources necessary and persons responsible.

The college recognizes that the key to effectively address the issues we have identified (internal communication, incorporation of reviewer feedback, data collection and clearly connecting strategies to results to future actions) lies within a transparent structure of accountability for the reporting process.

Our actions below are designed to provide for all leaders a clear understanding of the goals of the Diversity Plan as it relates to specific and measurable outcomes. They also put in place methods designed to create appropriate, clear, and timely communication among those charged with leading the strategies of the Plan. And it provides for ongoing accountability for plan implementation, data collection and report writing.

Internal Communication

- President Zylka has established a weekly meeting of key personnel to track progress on the Diversity Plan 2020-2021 Report, implementation of 2021-2022 Plan and this waiver request. Weekly meetings increase accountability and ensures progress.
- The name of the committee, formerly Campus Environment Team, has been changed to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee (DEIC) to communicate its focus more clearly.
- Each of the DEIC Co-Chairs, has been assigned as lead of a Team to ensure clear leadership and accountability. Tina Terry leads the 2020-2021 Reporting Team and Joshua Thacker leads the 2021-2022 Implementation Team.
- Tina Terry partnered with Connie Estep (College Grants Coordinator) to create a timeline for actions leading through and to final report. Joshua Thacker and Denese Atkinson (IE/IR Officer) created an Implementation Timeline to include regular, brief progress check-in reports every other week to ensure momentum and to solve barriers or other issues. The two timelines are merged in the document attached to this plan.

Incorporation of Reviewer Feedback

- On May 24, 2021, President Zylka, Provost King, DEIC Co-Chairs Tina Terry and Joshua Thacker among other college personnel met with Dr. Carrie Hodges, a reviewer of the college's 2019-20 report, and CPE staff members Dr. Deverin Muff and Dr. Dawn Offutt in a session facilitated by Dr. Natalie Gibson in which additional feedback on the 2019-20 Diversity Assessment Report was shared.
- In June 2021, the college submitted a revision of a failed narrative to CPE reviewer, Dr. Carrie Hodge. The revision was the result of careful review of all previous feedback in addition to that shared in May. Dr. Hodge read the revised narrative and offered additional and positive feedback, encouraging the college to apply those effort to future reports.
- In July 2021, report writers (stewards/partners) of the 2020-2021 report presented their initial findings to each other in a group meeting. Feedback was provided for each steward for ways to use the data collected, to gather additional information, to deepening analysis and considering additional future actions to further the impact of the strategy.

- Stewards will submit multiple drafts of their narratives for review through Tina Terry to the President's Diversity Team. Feedback will flow back to the stewards for revision. One revision cycle has already taken place as of this writing.
- The college will submit a full report to KCTCS for review and has scheduled subsequent sessions for additional revision and internal review based on that feedback.

Data Collection

- Connie Estep and Tina Terry created a repository in MS Teams for the Reporting Team to deposit data and drafts of sections of the report. This repository is accessible to all stewards/partners of both teams.
- Joshua Thacker and Denese Atkinson have followed up with all 2021-2022 stewards and partners to consider how assessment is built into their implementation of each strategy.
- 2021-2022 stewards are assembling relevant previous year data sets and will replicate them as the year progresses. Several are gathering new forms of information that points more directly toward the outcomes each strategy attempts to accomplish as we develop a more systematic assessment process.

Connecting Strategies to Results to Future Actions

- The Reporting Team held an organizational meeting of all 2020-2021 report-writers (stewards and partners) in which the CPE scoring rubric was reviewed and connections between the report and the desired results were discussed.
- Tina Terry and Connie Estep have regularly scheduled individual sessions with writers on the Reporting Team to review drafts in process using the CPE rubric.
- Joshua Thacker partnered with Denese Atkinson to create professional development for stewards and partners implementing strategies during the current academic year, 2021-2022 that included an introductory session in which the connections between each strategy and the desired results were discussed.
- Joshua Thacker and Denese Atkinson plan to present the CPE rubric to the Implementation stewards and partners to reinforce the gathering and analysis of data on the effectiveness of strategies. Individual and group intervention sessions are scheduled to take place at junctures throughout the year.

III. Diversity Plan Modification: How does the improvement plan impact the institutional diversity plan? Please include in the description if your Plan of Action will lead to any changes in the institutional diversity plan. If so, please identify those modifications and the underlying rationale.

BSCTC submitted a revision to its Diversity Plan for 2021-2022 to the Committee on Equal Opportunity of the Council on Post-Secondary Education. The revisions below were approved at the June 28, 2021, meeting.

Opportunity		
Current Strategy (old strategy, combined strategies, etc.)	Proposed Strategy #1 (the new proposed strategy will go in this section)	Justification (the reasoning behind changing the strategy)
Current Strategy	Proposed Strategy	Justification
1. Implement usage of Radius Software to identify and track potential URM students within geographical area.	1. Use Radius Software to identify and follow up with URM students who have applied for admission.	We propose clearer language to guide actions.
2. Develop and promote scholarships specifically for Black/African American and Latino/Hispanic students.	2. Develop one new scholarship specifically for Hispanic/Latinx students.	We propose to separate the former strategy to provide focus for our actions for both Black/African American and Hispanic Latinx students.
	3. Promote John T. Smith scholarship to Black/African American students.	We propose to separate the former strategy to provide focus for our actions for both Black/African American and Hispanic Latinx students.
3. Utilization of minority recruiter.	Combined with Strategy #1, #2, #3, #4 and #6.	This strategy has been implemented and is now a regular practice. The college's minority recruiter's personal outreach has been instrumental in the enrollment of diverse students as noted in our last report. The position and activities are ongoing and will be reported under proposed Strategy 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6.
4. Partner with public secondary schools within the BSCTC five-county service area to host events showcasing BSCTC academic programs, financial aid, and support services. Also encourage local public schools to participate in college diversity events.	4. Host Financial Aid events at regional public secondary schools focused on Financial Aid, assisting URM and LIS students to complete FAFSA.	This revision focuses our efforts on activity that better serves the population we are seeking to support.

5. Create a specialized learning community to encourage math non-completers in the cohort who have stopped-out to re-enroll.	eliminate	We no longer plan to pursue this strategy. The college is seeing greater success in its co-requisite model of mathematics instruction. The numbers of students who fall into groups that could be organized as learning communities are small and not conducive to schedule effectively for students across the multiple campuses of the college.
6. Increase Ready to Work (RTW) program participation.	5. Improve the success of Ready to Work participants by requiring specialized study skill sessions and other supports.	This revision builds on the increased number of participants by supporting their success. It will move into the Success category.
7. Develop close/inter-connective groups of cross-cultural leaders/students for the purpose forming and sustaining a more equitable community.	eliminate	We have subsumed this strategy into other actions within the college as part of the development of the college's new Strategic Plan. As we implement the Strategic Plan, we will develop a clearer strategy to include in the Diversity Plan that has clearer, better defined outcomes that may be measured for reporting purposes. As it currently is written here, this strategy is ill-defined, and we are unable to report on it. We request that it be eliminated.
Success		
Current Strategy	Proposed Strategy	Justification
8. Establish an at-risk advising process to facilitate student success.	6. Establish specialized advising process for URM students to increase retention and completion.	This revision more clearly focuses on URM students' academic progress.
	7. Develop mentorship program in which URM students are assigned a mentor from staff or faculty.	This is a new strategy to support URM student success, especially in creating a sense of belonging.
9. Track academic progress through development of student cohorts.	Combined with Strategy #6	This strategy has been implemented and is a regular activity of the minority recruiter who monitors student progress. The activity of tracking will be a part of the advising process of the proposed Strategy #6.
10. Embed diversity module within the First Year Experience course.	Combined with Strategy #13	We have moved this strategy to proposed #13 in the Impact area and provided greater clarity.
11. Provide scholarship funding for students' emergency needs.	8. Provide funding for students' emergency needs.	This revision acknowledges the broader sources of funding that is used to support emergency need.
12. Provide financial and advisory support for student and staff-initiated conferences, projects, and events focused on equity, inclusion, and diversity.	Combined with Strategies #8, #11 and #12	This breaks apart the various pieces of this strategy for improved focus in implementation.
Impact		

Current Strategy	Proposed Strategy	Justification for Revision
13. Increase advertising in such nationally known employment sites as Higher Ed Jobs by submitting all regular, full-time positions (including staff) to the national sites. National advertising in 2018-2019 was only utilized for administrative and faculty positions, not staff positions.	9. Invest in advertising in employment sites that target minority educational professionals to increase the pool of applicants.	This revision refines the strategy to focus on publications that may yield diverse applicants
	10. Implement unconscious or implicit bias training for search committee members.	This is a new strategy.
14. Hire temporary part-time staff and adjunct faculty minority positions in an effort to "grow from within" to begin training minorities to better qualify for regular, full-time positions in the future as the need and funding becomes available.	eliminate	We are no longer pursuing this strategy. We do not have the capacity at this time to give this strategy the time and attention that it needs to be successful in our market characterized by extremely limited pools of populations that qualify as URM.
15. Develop an annual Multicultural College Fair.	11. Reassess and revise the college's annual Multicultural Day.	Given the events of the past year it is timely that we examine the intended outcomes for our Multicultural Day and ensure we are providing relevant engagement.
16. Create a diversity award for faculty and staff who best promote diversity efforts.	12. Recognize faculty and staff who best promote diversity efforts in the classroom or college community.	The award has been created and has been awarded. This revision pushes us to publicly recognize nominees and awardees. This will serve to inspire and encourage others to consider what they could do in this arena.
17. Implement best practices in equality, inclusion, and diversity on campus and in the classroom by facilitating cross cultural interactions amongst students through the utilization of THRT (Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation Campus Center) and the Student45 college events.	13. Embed TRHT Rx Racial Healing Circles as part of a diversity module within the First Year Experience course.	This revision focuses the college on the implementation of the Rx Healing Circles at scale.
	14. Identify a space dedicated to conducting our Rx Racial Healing Circles for the TRHT Center.	This new strategy will ensure that the Rx Healing Circles can be implemented at scale appropriately. As we implement Healing Circles as part of all FYE Courses, it is important that the activity be scheduled into a conducive setting for intimate

		and open discussion rather than the classroom used for everyday conduct of the course.
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