

STRONGER TOGETHER



TEXAS A&M
UNIVERSITY

A Report by the Commission on
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

January 2021

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LETTER TO THE COMMISSION FROM JUSTIN ROMACK, TEXAS A&M STAFF MEMBER

My name is Justin Romack, and I was born with glaucoma, which has always impacted my eyesight, but only to the effect of total blindness in 2008. I celebrate and value the ways in which I perceive the world because it gives me unique perspectives as I communicate and share alongside the remarkable work being done by our university and its many collaborators.

I know it would be a safe assumption to believe my greatest challenges are due to this dark veil obscuring my eyesight. But in reality, the biggest barriers I battle have been constructed, often unknowingly, by society. These include the attitudinal, communication and information access, technological, environmental and systemic policies which are designed for people with functional eyesight.

My story is not unique, however, as it is estimated one in five individuals who engage with our campus has one or more disabilities which impact a major life activity, like hearing, seeing, walking, concentrating, processing and more. But as a White male, I often traverse many barriers and am afforded access through other apparent attributes, so it is crucial to stress how intersectionality promotes even greater friction for those with a variety of other marginalized identities.

Unlike many other marginalized identities, disability can be acquired at any point in one's life. In fact, it is likely we will all encounter disability as we age, either personally or through shared experience with a loved one.

I tell students often and always how the Office of Admissions does not make mistakes. These students have earned every ounce of opportunity throughout their time at Texas A&M. It should be our imperative to welcome, celebrate, value and represent the broadest possible spectrum of identities, lived experiences and perspectives shared across the Aggie family and the global economy.

If we fail in this, we rob our institution of sharing the broadest examination and education of the world around us, and cast aside students who have earned the right to their time as contributors to this community. In doing so, we also fall short of our mission to prepare students to assume roles in leadership, responsibility and service through the highest quality educational experiences and the pursuit of life-long learning.

It is why, in this moment, we must look intently from left to right, ensuring we have the widest representation of voices, lived experiences and identities present in our board rooms, committees, policy meetings, think tanks and executive teams. We do not know the things we have not experienced, and because of this, we must ensure our decision-making groups have representation from individuals who are living, breathing and scaling barriers of which we may be entirely unaware or immune.

Diversity is about a deep awareness of the world around us, an intent and humility to listen and elevate marginalized and underrepresented voices, and ensure we make way at the table for those who have gone unnoticed or unheard throughout history.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On July 13, 2020, Texas A&M University President Michael K. Young announced the membership and charge of a comprehensive Commission on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

This 45-person commission of students, faculty, staff and former students was charged to provide findings — not recommendations, opinions or conclusions — related to diversity, equity and inclusion at Texas A&M through research and discourse across topics of racial intolerance, university policies and practices, and historical representations such as statues.

THE COMMISSION'S SPECIFIC CHARGES INCLUDED THE FOLLOWING:

- **Engage the university community** through public forums to solicit input and information from the broader university community, including students, faculty, staff and former students.
- **Assess relevant data and literature** (reports, policies and practices) related to diversity, equity and inclusion at Texas A&M and the Bryan and College Station communities.
- **Explore institutional alignment of policies and procedures** with the land-grant mission, goals and Core Values of Texas A&M.
- **Review information** across academic and non-academic units affecting the culture, climate and well-being of impacted campus communities.
- **Provide a final report with findings** to Texas A&M System's Board of Regents and President Young no later than Oct. 30, 2020.¹

"You can pick up your marbles and leave and throw in with some other school. Or you can suck up your guts and work to make A&M great. Those that choose to defect should know they leave A&M in the hour of her greatest need."

J.E. Rudder

Commission members undertook this charge with an awareness of the complex history of diversity and inclusion at the university.

Texas A&M has made many strides toward addressing diversity, equity and inclusion over its history. Examining our past teaches us of exclusion and discrimination, but also showcases an evolution and improvement toward inclusion and diversity bound by dedication to the Aggie spirit.

There is perhaps no better example than Texas A&M President James Earl Rudder's leadership in diversifying Texas A&M by opening its doors to Blacks and African Americans and by formally admitting women. Since that time, Texas A&M has flourished to become one of the nation's premier research universities, with campuses across Texas and around the world.

1. The original timeline was amended.



Still today, some students, faculty and staff from marginalized groups encounter negative experiences from intolerance, racism and other prejudices. These impede their ability to thrive in Texas A&M's learning and working environment. Even one incident of prejudice, discrimination or antagonism in Aggieland based on an individual's race, gender, religion, ability or sexual identity is too many.

There is a deep affection and pride for Texas A&M among students, faculty, staff, former students and other stakeholders. All want to see the university continue to grow in stature. This sentiment typically bookended all discussions, conversations and listening sessions hosted by commission members, even from those who had significant criticisms. Members of the Aggie family indicated a readiness to help bridge the gap between the university's aspirations for more diversity, equity and inclusion, and the sometimes difficult daily reality of incivility, racism, intolerance and disrespect.

"Throughout our evolution, our success and contemporary significance have been underpinned by strategically planning our direction and focus to always position Texas A&M ahead of the curve."

Texas A&M University 2020-2025 Strategic Plan

The data and discussions of the commission show that Texas A&M has reached an inflection point, and it is time for Aggies to do what Aggies do best: lead and serve. Deep discussions and empathetic conversations can refresh the current Aggie experience while holding true to the best traditions of the past. As one former student noted, "History should inform, but not determine, our destiny."

Our work as a commission revealed that there remains within the Aggie community a strong desire to show bold leadership in support of diversity, equity and inclusion; to commit to improving our campus climate; to trust one another; to have difficult conversations; and to ensure that ALL Aggies are welcome and respected at the school we think so grand.

We are the Aggies, the Aggies are we.

KEY COMMISSION FINDINGS

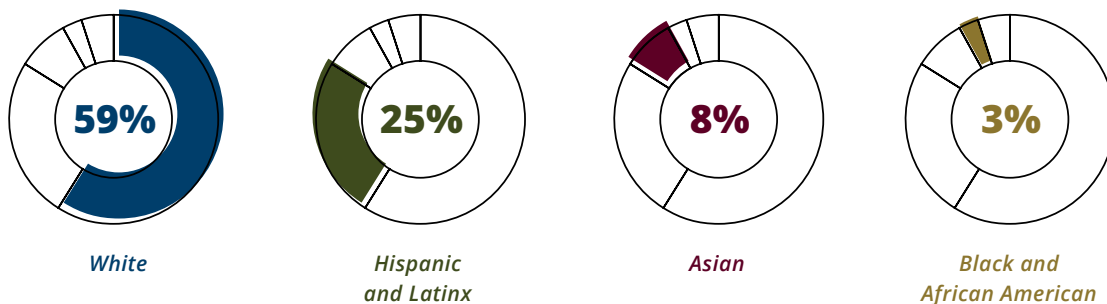
DEMOGRAPHICS

Texas A&M began admitting women and African American students nearly 60 years ago. Since then, the university has strived toward a more diverse and inclusive campus, while also rising in prominence as an academic university. Nevertheless, like other land-grant universities, it is not meeting its goal to have a student body that reflects its state's demographics.

To gain an initial understanding of the student demographics at Texas A&M, the commission benchmarked undergraduate student enrollment against 59 comparable land-grant universities. As a first exercise, data were gathered to contrast the makeup of the overall undergraduate student populations.

When compared in this way, Texas A&M largely appears average. For example, Texas A&M has a slightly lower White undergraduate student enrollment percentage than the average (Texas A&M stands at 59% while the average is 61%). Also, Texas A&M has a slightly lower Black and African American undergraduate student enrollment percentage than the average (Texas A&M stands at 3% while the average is 4.3%).

TEXAS A&M UNDERGRADUATE ENROLLMENT



One exception to this average performance, however, is the enrollment of Hispanic and Latinx undergraduate students. Here, Texas A&M is an outlier in the positive sense. Texas A&M ranks third highest of the 59 universities, with 25% enrollment. The two schools higher than Texas A&M have percentages of 26% and 27%.

A notable goal of land-grant universities is to have a student body that reflects the demographics of the states they serve. It is therefore useful to look at undergraduate student enrollment as compared to state demographics. When benchmarked against the 59 land-grant universities in this manner, Texas A&M performs below its land-grant peers. Texas A&M enrolls a larger percentage of non-marginalized students than its state's population, to the point that the university is second highest in this regard; and Texas A&M enrolls a smaller percentage of Black and African American and Hispanic and Latinx undergraduate students than its state's population, to the point that it is one of the worst-performing schools in this regard.²

2. Demographic data for each of the universities are from the fall 2019 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) gathered by the National Center for Education Statistics, and the 2021 *U.S. News & World Report* on Campus Ethnic Diversity. Demographic data for each state are from the U.S. Census Bureau.

Data analysis should always be done in context. When contrasting the undergraduate student enrollment percentages of land-grant universities with their respective states' demographics, it is important to note that states with highly homogeneous populations can fare better than states with more diverse populations even if the true numbers are low. For example, land-grant universities in states with small Black and African American populations (e.g., Montana at 0.6%) can be more representative of their state's demographics even if they admitted no minorities. In comparison, Texas A&M is in a diverse state, so even if Texas A&M admits large numbers of minorities in those groups, its percentage may still be lower.

Notably, in terms of real numbers, Texas A&M admits more minority students than many of the comparison universities. Despite what the real numbers or percentages indicate, Texas A&M embraces its land-grant mission and can do better.

Aggies do not just aim to be average, or even above average — they aim for Excellence.

By further increasing minority enrollment, the university will have greater competitive advantage by preparing its students for a diverse and global workforce. Additionally, studies show that diverse organizations are more profitable and successful over time.

BENCHMARKING

Texas A&M has grown in stature over the past 60 years, as evidenced by the university's admission into the Association of American Universities (AAU) in 2001. The AAU is composed of America's leading research universities and is an important group to benchmark against, particularly as Texas A&M has additional duties as a land-grant university.

When benchmarked against the 63 AAU members in the United States, Texas A&M tends to perform below its peers. The percentage of White undergraduate students (59%) at Texas A&M ranks 12th highest of the 63 universities. Texas A&M does score comparatively well in its percentage of Hispanic and Latinx undergraduate students (25%), placing the university considerably above average.

Unfortunately, the percentage of Asian and Black and African American undergraduate students is about half of the average of AAU members. The percentage of Asian undergraduate students at Texas A&M is 8%, whereas the AAU member average is 17.1%; and

the percentage of Black and African American undergraduate students at Texas A&M is 3%, whereas the AAU member average is 5.4%.

Ethnically diverse college campuses offer students the ability to study and learn with undergraduates from racial and ethnic groups that are different from their own. Thus, another useful indicator of school diversity is the diversity index used by *U.S. News & World Report (USNWR)*.

The USNWR index is a probability measure that any two people chosen at random from a given school are different due to race and national origin. Based on this index, Texas A&M ranks higher than average when benchmarked to a pool of 111 comparable universities. Using this same index, Texas A&M scores third among schools in the Southeastern Conference and third among schools in the Big 12 Conference.

RACE AS A CONSIDERATION IN ENROLLMENT

With all these data in mind, it is useful to consider enrollment at Texas A&M. Texas A&M embraces Texas's top ten percent plan, which provides students in the top ten percent of their high-school classes with automatic admission to any public university in the state. Texas House Bill 588, which instituted this rule, was created as an answer to the restrictions of the *Hopwood v. Texas* appeals court case banning the use of race as a factor in deciding which applicants to admit in order to achieve a diverse student body.

Throughout history, racial classifications, specifically for Black and African American people, were directly used to hinder access and establish barriers to higher education. Acknowledging this truth, Texas A&M potentially may use race as a consideration in student admission as a narrowly tailored means of pursuing greater diversity if it can meet the fact-specific standards articulated in the 2013 *Fisher v. University of Texas* case. However, as evidenced by continuous federal litigation, it can be difficult to support and defend this type of admission policy under the rigorous standards of Equal Protection.

ENROLLMENT AND RECRUITMENT EFFORTS

A notable positive enrollment trend pertains to Hispanic and Latinx undergraduate students. At Texas A&M, this group has increased by 292.9% since 1999, bringing the university to the cusp of designation as a Hispanic and Latinx Serving Institution. (The designation requires 25% sustained enrollment percentage of Hispanic and Latinx students, whereas the university's current enrollment percentage stands at 24.9%.)

Data show that recruitment of the Black and African American population has been a persistent issue. For example, data on undergraduate student enrollment show that while total student numbers have increased, the percentage of Black and African American students enrolled at Texas A&M has remained mostly unchanged since at least 1999. Black and African American students accounted for 2.66% of the undergraduate student population in 1999 and 3.15% in 2019.

The Regents' Scholars Program has been a positive step toward bringing socio-economic diversity to Texas A&M. This four-year scholarship program, established in fall 2004, is designed to help first-generation college students achieve their educational goals at Texas A&M. This program provides assistance to approximately 850 students each year, and racial and ethnic minority students represent 89% of the 2019 academic year freshman cohort.

In the summer of 2020, the Texas A&M University System board of regents voted unanimously to boost the effort by creating a \$100 million scholarship fund to address diversity issues on the system's 11 campuses. The program is aligned with the board's strategic plan that articulates clearly the system's commitment to ensuring its institutions serve a diverse student body and better represent the population of the state.



THE REGENTS' SCHOLARS PROGRAM

850
Students Served Annually

Founded in
2004

Up to \$24,000
in Scholarships per Student

The program provides \$10 million annually over 10 years for scholarships to students from all socioeconomic backgrounds, particularly to low income, first-generation students and students from geographically underrepresented regions of the state.

RETENTION AND STUDENT SUCCESS

While enrollment is a critical component for student diversity, so too are retention and student success. Texas A&M's retention rates for American Indian and Alaskan, Black and African American, Hispanic and Latinx, and Asian students are at or below the first quartile when compared to other AAU institutions.

Furthermore, Texas A&M significantly lags behind peer institutions (i.e., University of Texas at Austin, University of Florida, University of Michigan and University of California, Los Angeles) in its six-year graduation rate of Black and African American undergraduate students.

As an example, a recent cohort study of Texas A&M had a 61% graduation rate for its Black and African American population, whereas the peer institutions had graduation rates ranging from 74% to 81%. When compared to land-grant universities, however, Texas A&M has an equal or higher retention rate of undergraduate students in all ethnic categories than the average of those universities.

FACULTY AND STAFF

Another significant factor for achieving a diverse student population is having diverse faculty and staff. Data indicate that the percentage of faculty and staff of color remained relatively flat from 2015 to 2019 despite policies and training (e.g., STRIDE) to help faculty search committees be more conscious of implicit bias regarding race, ethnicity and other forms of diversity.

Some explanations for the shortcomings include a lack of accountability to ensure policies for recruiting and hiring diverse faculty and staff are successful, as well as a need for additional resources related to increasing diversity.

ACES FELLOWS PROGRAM

Texas A&M is exploring several programs to address this shortfall, including the Accountability, Climate, Equity and Scholarship (ACES) Fellows Program. This faculty pipeline initiative promotes the research, teaching and scholarship of early career scholars who embrace the belief that diversity is an indispensable component of academic excellence.

In 2019, the College of Liberal Arts and the College of Education and Human Development participated in the program, and four faculty were hired. In 2020, seven faculty were hired through the program. “As of December 2019, 435 applications had been submitted to the ACES program, proving that Texas A&M can attract promising, diverse early career faculty.”³ In 2020, two additional colleges are scheduled to join the program. Pipelines like these may need to be expanded to be truly impactful.

A more welcoming and inclusive campus climate that reflects and represents the various populations at Texas A&M is strongly desired by members of traditionally marginalized groups, as well as by many others.

3. <https://diversity.tamu.edu/Diversity/media/diversity/PDF/State-of-Diversity-06-23-20-final2.pdf>

CAMPUS CLIMATE, SYMBOLS AND ATTITUDES

Evidence collected from individual accounts, surveys and reporting mechanisms (such as StopHate and TellSomebody) indicate that some students, faculty and staff from marginalized groups are the recipients of speech and behaviors from some members of the Aggie community that make them feel isolated and excluded.

Many students, faculty, staff and former students possess a posture of listening to, or exhibiting empathy toward, marginalized groups, and support initiatives toward diversity, equity and inclusion. Unfortunately, there are vocal groups that believe diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives are neither beneficial or needed, and this contributes to both a perception and reality that the university is not doing enough to welcome marginalized groups. The struggle is that some in the Aggie community view inclusion to mean joining the existing Aggie culture, whereas others view inclusion to mean expanding attitudes and activities as part of the Aggie experience.

Commission conversations and listening sessions revealed that each person has their own unique definition of what it means to be an Aggie, and each definition is likely shaped by one's experience with the university. The characteristics defining an Aggie were generally positive, and centered around the Aggie family and being part of something larger than themselves.

The conversations and listening sessions also revealed, however, the existence of rigid stereotypes surrounding the Aggie definition, leading some individuals on today's campus (especially those from marginalized groups) to find the historical identity of "Who is an Aggie" to be limiting and not reflective of their experience.

The six Core Values of Respect, Excellence, Leadership, Loyalty, Integrity and Selfless Service are well-known. At the same time, they are not defined, understood, adopted or uniformly lived by university stakeholders.

This is especially true of Respect. The commission found that there is an opportunity to revisit and fully define these Core Values to ensure their integration into the Aggie identity and their practice by all members of the Aggie family.

"Factors that would positively impact the campus climate would be one in which all forms of hate, racism, bigotry, etc. are not tolerated whatsoever. One in which Aggies can call each other out on such acts and are willing to stand up against such actions as they are not representative of who we are — really holding each other accountable and up to high standards."

Listening session participant

The Lawrence Sullivan Ross statue is a source of deep emotions and strongly polarized views, with proponents and detractors divided mainly along racial and age demographic lines. The commission's study of 19 other universities found that not addressing the attention or controversy surrounding symbols, names and iconography will likely result in additional reputational damage, and continue strife indefinitely.

While it is beneficial for leadership to fully address this two-sided issue, it is important to understand that legislative approval may be required to alter, move or remove the monument.

PERCEPTIONS, SUCCESSES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The university has made efforts to achieve an equitable, diverse and inclusive campus climate for Texas A&M's students, faculty and staff.

PRESIDENT'S COUNCIL ON CLIMATE AND DIVERSITY

Of note is the work of the President's Council on Climate and Diversity, whose purpose is to provide counsel to the President, Provost and Executive Vice President on methods to attract and retain culturally diverse students, faculty and staff to Texas A&M, as well as to strengthen, sustain and promote the diversity efforts in support of Vision 2020 goals.

DEANS CARE

Another more recent effort, originating from the Council of Deans, is the Deans Committed to Anti-Racism Efforts (Deans CARE). The Deans CARE initiative aims to engage in sustained, systemic, collective action for anti-racism efforts at Texas A&M and beyond, and to assist Texas A&M in making steady progress on its goals, as outlined by university leaders and as articulated by documented metrics.

LOUIS STOKES ALLIANCE FOR MINORITY PARTICIPATION

Schools in the Texas A&M System have had a direct impact on increasing the number of underrepresented minority students who complete baccalaureate and doctoral degrees in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields through the Texas A&M University System Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (TAMUS LSAMP) program.

The TAMUS LSAMP program is a partnership composed of four system schools committed to increasing the number of underrepresented students participating in STEM fields, and it is part of the larger LSAMP program of the National Science Foundation founded in 1990. In its first eight years, it helped increase the number of degrees awarded to minority students by a factor of five (to more than 20,000).



HIGHER EDUCATION CENTER AT MCALLEN

The Higher Education Center at McAllen is part of Texas A&M University and was established to provide higher education opportunities for residents of the Rio Grande Valley in Texas. The center sits in Hidalgo County, where only 18% of residents have a bachelor's degree or higher.

The center received its first students in fall 2018 and is committed to supporting the educational needs of its students by providing top-tier programs to fulfill student career goals, enhancing economic development of the region and producing a skilled workforce.

PERCEPTIONS, THEMES AND ACTION ITEMS

In spring of 2020, in response to reports about racism at Texas A&M, leadership accepted and triaged a collection of proposals from students, faculty and staff containing remedies to concerns stemming from local, regional and national events that have negatively impacted our communities.

Leadership identified common action items and organized proposed remedies by themes. Five key themes were identified comprising a total of 16 action items, such as providing funding and erecting the Matthew Gaines statue by the spring of 2021, revising the script used during student tours, funding identity-specific cultural resource centers on campus, and developing and enforcing a systemwide anti-racism policy for students, faculty and staff.

Each action item was given attention. Some items were completed, while others are in progress. A full list of the themes, action items and assessments, an outline of the actions taken to date, and contact information can be found in the appendix.

Despite Texas A&M's efforts to improve, a perception commonly expressed to the commission is that leadership has not taken any significant actions or made any meaningful changes to support diversity, equity and inclusion. This is despite having received a number of reports, recommendations and suggestions (sometimes supported by the data found in this report) from past committees and commissions that were tasked with a similar charge as this commission. It is viewed that these types of activities, initiatives, commissions and reports lead to inadequate action or follow-up.

When individuals were asked what they wanted to see from Texas A&M right now, there was an overwhelming response for more swift, frequent and effective communication and action about diversity, equity and inclusion.

THREE THEMES COMPRISING THE LISTENING SESSIONS' FINDINGS EMERGED

THEME 1: CAMPUS CAMPAIGN

First, there is a strong desire for an authentic priority campaign centered on the university's actions, commitment and responsibility in creating an inclusive campus climate where all Aggies can thrive. The university has been successful in these types of campaigns before, like Texas A&M's COVID-19 safety awareness campaign called "Don't Pass it Back" or the "Step In. Stand Up." sexual harassment and sexual violence campaign.

Texas A&M has an opportunity to lead university institutions by example through its sustained and demonstrated commitment to achieving diversity, equity and inclusion.

THEME 2: ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF ISSUES

Second, there is a strong desire for Texas A&M leaders to actively and authentically acknowledge issues around racism and talk directly about broader diversity, equity and inclusion issues. As one student noted, "I'm so sick of bland statements!"

THEME 3: COMMUNICATING SUCCESS STORIES

Third, there is a strong desire for a central and comprehensive communications and marketing strategy to highlight the many diversity, equity and inclusion success stories at Texas A&M. These include the recent Texas A&M Athletics "Aggie Commitment" initiative that was created in conjunction with student athletes and coaches, and the creation of the \$100 million scholarship fund to address diversity issues and assist first-generation students.





IN CONCLUSION

The commission deviates from the charge to provide findings with a singular recommendation: That this report be only the beginning of the Aggie community's shared responsibility and commitment to continued conversations, forward progress, and renewed commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion for all Aggies.

COMMISSION APPROACH AND PROCESS

The commission utilized a framework of empathy and problem definition. Commission members were asked to set aside their personal assumptions in order to gain insight into others and their needs, using an empathetic, listening posture. Secondly, each group was challenged to rigorously define the problem we are trying to solve through a series of steps.

The commission convened for their first meeting on July 27, 2020, and met regularly through August, September and October. At the outset, four subcommittee groups were formed to conduct the commission's work in the principal areas of mission and values, campus culture and climate, data and policies, and community engagement. The commission conducted its research through a review and study of literature, media and data, including climate surveys and university reporting mechanisms like StopHate and TellSomebody.

Additionally, the commission solicited and received input from more than 450 individual participants through hundreds of hours of discourse, including small-group and one-on-one conversations, as well as open community listening sessions. Input was also received through a commission email, an online form, letters and phone calls.

The commission completed its research on November 6, 2020, completed a draft report on November 30, 2020, and submitted a final report in January 2021.

MEMBERSHIP

The commission was co-chaired by John E. Hurtado '91 and Jimmy Williams '83, and the full list of commission members is shown below.

BOARD OF REGENTS AND DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

Elaine Mendoza	'87, Chair, Board of Regents, The Texas A&M University System
Bill Mahomes	'69, Member, Board of Regents, The Texas A&M University System
Ruth Simmons	President, Prairie View A&M University

CURRENT STUDENTS

Chante Anderson	'21, Black Graduate Student Association
Iman Ahmed	'22, Student Senate
Corniyah Bradley	'21, Black Student Alliance Council
Alexandra Campbell	'21, Texas A&M Panhellenic
Tanner Cedrone	'21, Corps of Cadets
Matthew B. Francis Jr.	'22, TAMU NAACP
Ritika Gangarapu	'21, Asian Presidents' Council
Maximiliano "Max" Lopez	'21, Hispanic Presidents' Council
Eric Mendoza	'21, Student Body President
Kellen Mond	'20, Student Athlete, Football
Fawaz Syed	'23, Class Councils, Sophomore Class
Jack Tucker	'21, Texas A&M Foundation Maroon Coats
Uthej Vatipalli	'21, Graduate & Professional Student Government
Sean Waters	'22, International Student Association

FORMER STUDENTS

Randall Cain	'82, Former Chair, 12th Man Foundation, Texas A&M Foundation
Adrian Cornelius	'93, TAMU Black Former Student Network
Erica Davis-Rouse	'95, Intervene
John F. Dickerson	'87, Association of Former Students Board of Directors
David Dunlap	'83, 12th Man Foundation Board of Trustees
Willie T. Langston	'81, Avalon Advisors, LLC

FORMER STUDENTS (CONT.)

Monica Menzel	'93, TAMU Hispanic Network
Stephen Ruth	'92, U.S. Army
Tiana J. Sanford	'04, Attorney and Association of Former Students Class Agent
The Honorable Ingrid M. Warren	'93, Dallas County Judge
Jimmy Williams	'83, Carnegie Mellon University
Shariq Yosufzai	'74, Accordant Advisors

FACULTY AND STAFF

Francis Achike	College of Medicine
Kristina Ballard	College of Engineering
Vernon Camus	'18, University Staff Council Galveston
David Chapman	'67, University Libraries (Retired)
Mary Ann Covey	'92, Counseling & Psychological Services
Leroy Dorsey	College of Liberal Arts
Julie Harlin	'93, Faculty Senate
Cynthia Hernandez	'94, Division of Student Affairs
John Hurtado	'91, College of Engineering
Ben Kalscheur	'13, Office of Sustainability
Serge Razafindrakoto	Division of Information Technology
Dorothy Shippen	College of Agriculture and Life Sciences
R.C. Slocum	Office of the President, Former Texas A&M Football Coach
Christine Stanley	'85, College of Education and Human Development
Arthur Watson	'15, Transition Academic Programs
Karen Wooley	College of Science

Other team members included Cady Auckerman '00, who served as the commission project manager, and Grace Tsai '19 and Kevin Johnson '84, who served as graduate student assistants.

I.

INTRODUCTION

I. INTRODUCTION

“As a state-supported institution, Texas A&M must represent Texas in our faculty, staff and students. But also to make sure that those who come feel welcome, respected and accepted. We must talk honestly and openly...and find a way to acknowledge past transgressions or failures.”

Listening session participant

IA. COMMISSION APPROACH AND PROCESS

On July 13, 2020, Texas A&M University President Michael K. Young announced the membership and charge of a comprehensive Commission on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. This 45-person commission of students, faculty, staff and former students was charged to provide findings, not specific recommendations; to evaluate diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) at Texas A&M through research and discourse across topics of racial intolerance, historical representations (such as statues), policies and practices.

The commission utilized a framework of empathy and problem definition. Commission members were asked to set aside their personal assumptions in order to gain insight into others and their needs, using an empathetic, listening posture. Secondly, they were challenged to rigorously define the problem we are trying to solve through a series of steps.

The commission convened for its first meeting on July 27, 2020, and met regularly through August, September and October. At the outset, four subcommittee groups were formed to conduct the commission’s work in the principal areas of:

- mission and values
- data and policies
- campus culture and climate
- community engagement

The commission conducted its research through a study of literature, media and data, including climate surveys and university reporting mechanisms like StopHate and TellSomebody.

Additionally, the commission solicited and received input from more than 450 individual participants through hundreds of hours of discourse, including small-group and one-on-one conversations, and open community listening sessions.

Input was also received through a commission email, an online form, letters and phone calls. The commission completed its research on November 6, 2020, and completed its draft report on November 30, 2020.

The primary focus of this effort centered on the College Station campus, while realizing that Texas A&M branch campuses such as Galveston, McAllen and Qatar and statewide professional schools in Dallas, Houston and beyond have their own unique campus cultures and needs that may not be directly reflected in this report.

“Empathy is ... communicating that incredibly healing message of ‘you’re not alone.’”

Dr. Brené Brown

IB. DEFINING A LAND-GRANT INSTITUTION

“The land-grant university system is being built on behalf of the people, who have invested in these public universities their hopes, their support, and their confidence.”

President Abraham Lincoln, 1862

Texas A&M University (originally named the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas) was the state’s first public institution of higher education. It was organized by the state legislature in 1871 under the provisions of the Morrill Land-Grant College Act of 1862. The first students were enrolled in 1876. The Morrill Act donated public lands to the states and territories to create colleges for teaching agriculture, “the mechanic arts,” military tactics, science and classical studies to the nation’s working-class citizens.

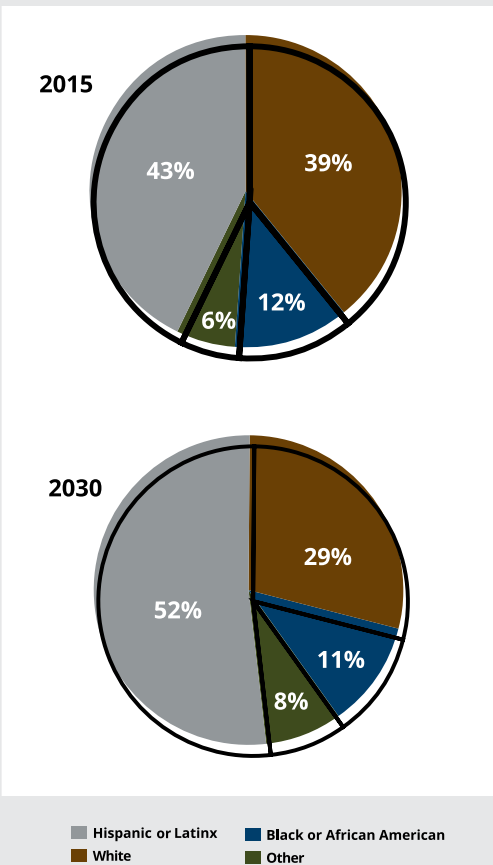
Admission at Texas A&M was initially limited to White (including White Hispanic and Latinx) males, and all students were required to participate in military training. Nearly a century after its establishment, Texas A&M opened its doors to African Americans, began admitting women and changed its name to Texas A&M University.

Today, land-grant institutions share a mission to serve all qualified students regardless of class, ethnicity, race or gender while aiding their respective states’ citizens through teaching, research, extension and public service. As such, the student bodies at land-grant institutions should reflect each state’s demographics.



2015-2030 TEXAS HIGHER EDUCATION PLAN

FIGURE 1. Race/ethnicity distribution of projected Texas population, ages 25-34.



“Texas has become increasingly engaged in a global economy dependent on skilled and knowledgeable workers. Most of those workers must come from higher education. Although Texas is improving at increasing college completions for students from groups that traditionally have not earned certificates or degrees in large numbers, the state has not improved quickly or broadly enough to keep up with changes in demographics. Completions in higher education in Texas must reflect the population as a whole.”

Given that the workforce will be more diverse in the future (Figure 1), the challenge is clear: Students of all backgrounds must complete certificates or degrees in larger numbers if the 25- to 34-year-old workforce of Texas is to be globally competitive in 2030. Failure to educate students of all backgrounds in larger numbers will result in lower incomes and a lower percentage of educated Texans in 2030 than in 2015. Those losses will spell a decline in the economic future of Texas and the opportunities available to its people. Without bold action, Texas faces a future of diminished incomes, opportunities, and resources.”

<https://reportcenter.highered.texas.gov/agency-publication/miscellaneous/60x30tx-strategic-plan-for-higher-education/>

Texas A&M has strived to create a more welcoming and diverse campus through its university mission, Vision 2020, diversity plan and 2020-2025 strategic plan. DEI drives excellence, and to deprive students of a diverse learning environment amounts to shortchanging them in terms of the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to excel in the emerging national and global workplace. Additionally, the same goes for our faculty and staff in traditionally marginalized groups, who will be more successful in an environment where there is a strong sense of belonging.

The university recognizes that fulfilling the land-grant mission is not to simply “check the box” of its obligation as a land-grant institution, but that there is a moral and ethical imperative to do this.

One example of Texas A&M’s statewide outreach is the Higher Education Center at McAllen. The center is part of Texas A&M University and was established to provide higher education opportunities for residents of the Rio Grande Valley in Texas. The center received its first students in fall 2018 and is committed to supporting the educational needs of its students by providing top-tier programs to fulfill student career goals, enhancing economic development of the region and producing a skilled workforce.

The center sits in Hidalgo County, which is 91% Hispanic or Latinx. Only 18% of residents in Hidalgo County have a bachelor's degree or higher, whereas the state percentage is 29%. Some 30% of the county's population lives in poverty, whereas the state percentage is 13.4%.

Texas A&M is not immune from the racism, sexism, ableism, religious intolerance and homophobia that exists in our country and state. Evidence collected from climate surveys, campus reporting mechanisms (e.g., StopHate, TellSomebody, etc.), and individual reports indicates that students, faculty and staff from marginalized communities are the recipients of speech and behaviors by members of the Aggie community that contribute to feelings of exclusion and isolation and create a less optimal learning and working environment at Texas A&M.

Our institutional history of exclusion and lack of public DEI acknowledgements fuels the perception that Texas A&M attracts, and at times condones, this racist and intolerant culture (e.g., Keep College Station Normal, Highway 6 runs both ways, #RacismAtTAMUFeelsLike, #HateistheHiddenCoreValue, #beingapocattamu).

"As an African American former student, I want to see a legitimate attempt to try to create an opportunity to mirror the diversity of the state of Texas. Especially as it relates to African Americans... that would mean a lot to me."

Former student



"To effectively address racism in your organization, it's important to first build consensus around whether there is a problem (most likely, there is) and, if so, what it is and where it comes from.

If many of your employees do not believe that racism against people of color exists in the organization, or if feedback is rising through various communication channels showing that Whites feel that they are the real victims of discrimination, then diversity initiatives will be perceived as the problem, not the solution.

This is one of the reasons such initiatives are frequently met with resentment and resistance, often by mid-level managers. Beliefs, not reality, are what determine how employees respond to efforts taken to increase equity. So, the first step is getting everyone on the same page as to what the reality is and why it is a problem for the organization."

[Robert Livingston, Harvard Business Review, Sept/Oct. 2020 "How to Promote Racial Equity in the Workplace".](#)

IB. BENCHMARKING COMPOSITIONAL DIVERSITY

Compositional diversity is the numerical and proportional representation of diverse groups on campus, and is a key factor in enhancing an institution's campus climate. Diversifying the students, faculty and staff is the first step that should be taken to develop an environment that fosters positive cross-racial interactions.¹

For several years, Texas A&M has aimed to recruit and retain historically marginalized students, faculty and staff at levels that mirror the demographics of the state of Texas. Although we have made great strides, we still struggle to meet demographic goals across all groups.

The commission's benchmarking efforts suggest that Texas A&M has further opportunities to more closely match the demographics of Texas and strategically address our gap behind comparable universities in minority enrollment and retention.

A sample size of 111 universities consisting of Association of American Universities (AAU), land-grant universities (excluding tribal and Historically Black Universities [HBU]), Southeastern Conference (SEC) universities, Big 12 Conference institutions, military universities that also admit civilians, and comparable Texas universities were included in this analysis, which can be found in the appendix.

While various institutional categories were included in this sample size of 111 schools, the AAU institutions (n=63) and land-grant institutions (excluding HBU and tribal schools) (n=59) were primarily used to benchmark Texas A&M because 1) AAU schools are Tier-1 leading research universities in North America that are comparable academically, and 2) land-grant institutions share the common goal of serving the population of the state in which they are located and therefore the obligation to reflect state ethnic demographics.

Demographic data for each of the universities came from the fall 2019 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) gathered by the National Center for Education Statistics and the 2021 *U.S. News & World Report* on Campus Ethnic Diversity. Demographic data for each state were gathered from the U.S. Census Bureau.

THE FINDINGS ARE SUMMARIZED BELOW:

1. Compared to other AAU schools, Texas A&M's Hispanic and Latinx enrollment percentage is very high and marks the top of the 4th quartile. (Figure 2)
2. Texas A&M's White enrollment percentage is also above average at the 3rd quartile compared to other AAU institutions. (Figure 2)
3. Among the AAU institutions, both Asian and Black and African American enrollment percentages lag behind other universities in this category, falling at or below the 1st quartile. (Figure 2)
4. Compared to other land-grant institutions, Texas A&M is approximately average in the Asian, Black and African American, and White enrollment percentages. (Figure 3)
5. The Hispanic and Latinx enrollment percentages at Texas A&M is one of the highest among land-grant institutions. (Figure 3)
6. Texas A&M's enrollment rate for Hispanic and/or Latinx and Black and/or African American percentages are 14.7% and 9.9% below Texas's demographic for each ethnic group respectively (Figure 4)

1. Hurtado, S., Maestas, R., Hill, L., Wathington, H., Meador, E.W. 1998. *Perspectives on the Climate for Diversity: Findings and Suggested Recommendations for the Texas A&M University Campus*. Ann Arbor: Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education.

7. In relation to state demographics, the Hispanic and Latinx enrollment rate at Texas A&M is far below average and a statistical outlier compared to other land-grant institutions. (Figure 4)
8. In relation to state demographics, the Black and African American enrollment rate at Texas A&M is at the cutoff between the first and second quartile compared to other land-grant schools. (Figure 4)
9. Texas A&M has 17.8% more White students enrolled compared to the state demographics for this ethnic group. (Figure 4)
10. Texas A&M ranks second highest in the percentage of White students enrolled compared to state demographics among the 59 land-grant institutions. (Figure 4)
11. Compared to AAU schools, Texas A&M's American Indian and Alaskan, Asian, Black and African American, and Hispanic and Latinx retention rates are at or below the first quartile. (Figure 5)
12. Texas A&M has a near-equal or higher retention rate than the average retention rates for land-grant schools in all ethnic categories. (Figure 6)
13. Texas A&M's diversity index is slightly above average among the entire pool of 111 comparable schools (Figure 7)
14. Texas A&M has the third-highest diversity index ranking among the Southeastern Conference (SEC) and the third-highest diversity index ranking among the Big 12 Universities. (Figures 8 and 9)

The data show that compared to other AAU institutions, Texas A&M admits greater than average Hispanic and Latinx and White groups but is admitting below average in the Asian and Black and African American categories (Figure 2). When benchmarked against land-grant institutions, Texas A&M's enrollment percentages for all groups are approximately average except for Hispanic and Latinx enrollment, which is high. (Figure 3)

The enrollment percentages of Texas A&M compared to land-grant institutions alone may make it seem like we are reaching our goal. However, when the land-grant mission of matching state demographics is taken into account and is used as a part of the benchmark, Texas A&M falls behind many of its peers — particularly in the Hispanic and Latinx and Black and African American groups, which are much lower than average. (Figure 4) Meanwhile, Texas A&M is proportionally enrolling more White students compared to both Texas state demographics and other land-grant schools.

To put it in greater context, Texas A&M is behind, particularly in terms of the minority enrollment percentages compared to the state demographics, because Texas is a prodigiously diverse state. For example, Texas has a 39.7% Hispanic and Latinx population, and many states such as Vermont (2%), Maine (1.8%) and West Virginia (1.7%), among others, have far smaller Hispanic and Latinx populations. The same can be said for the Black and African American population in Texas that currently sits at 12.9%, which is much higher compared to Wyoming (1.3%), Idaho (0.9%) and Montana (0.6%). Even if universities in such states admit no minorities in either of these groups, their ranking would still be better than Texas A&M's given that the difference would produce values closer to zero.

In real numbers, Texas A&M admits more minority students than many of the comparison universities. This is partly due to Texas A&M's extensive growth since 1999 that led to a 51% increase by 2019. However, Texas A&M has room for improvement. Regardless of the different ways of organizing the data, White students are still being enrolled either at approximately average or greater than average rates, while Black and African American students are being enrolled at approximately average or below average rates in all the enrollment analyses.

Over the past five years, the percentage of Black and/or African American students admitted to Texas A&M who eventually enroll (yield rate) hovers between 41-44%. Other minority groups show similar patterns (41-47% over the past 5 years) in contrast to White students who decided to enroll at rates of 57-60% in the same time period. In commission interviews, administration officials pointed to several possible causes, including other schools offering more competitive scholarships and that Texas A&M is simply not the first-choice school for some.

“As a current and future leader of international teams, I emphasize the importance of DEI in creating a successful environment. We do a disservice to our current and future students if we do not provide this as part of the ‘other education.’ ”

Former student, currently at Shell Oil

The need for improvement is further emphasized when viewing the retention rates. Texas A&M’s retention rates for American Indian and/or Alaskan, Asian, Black and/or African American and Hispanic and/or Latinx students are at or below the first quartile when compared to other AAU institutions. (Figure 5)



Texas A&M’s diversity index among all 111 schools and retention rates in all ethnic categories compared to land-grant schools are slightly above average. (Figures 6 and 7) Furthermore, among the SEC and Big 12 schools, Texas A&M is not lagging behind in diversity. (Figures 8 and 9)

Despite having passable numbers in some of our benchmarks, Aggies do not just aim to be average, or even above average — we aim for Excellence. By further increasing minority enrollment and retention percentages, the university will have greater competitive advantage.

If we want to prepare our graduates to live, work and lead in a global community, we must teach them to work with individuals, ideas and concepts that are diverse.

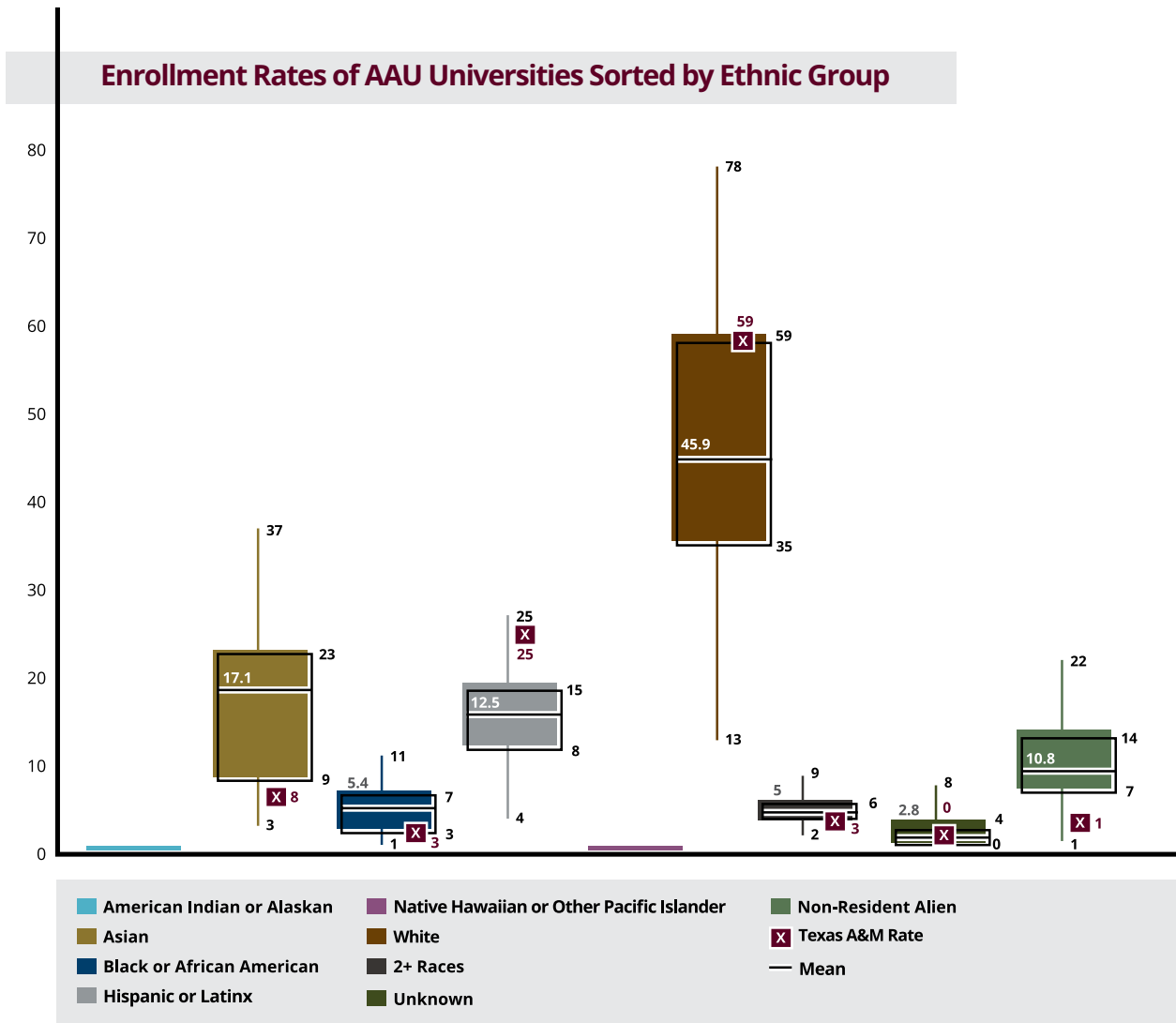


Figure 2: This benchmarks Texas A&M’s enrollment rates against other AAU institutions (n=63). The percentages were gathered from IPEDS, fall 2019 data.

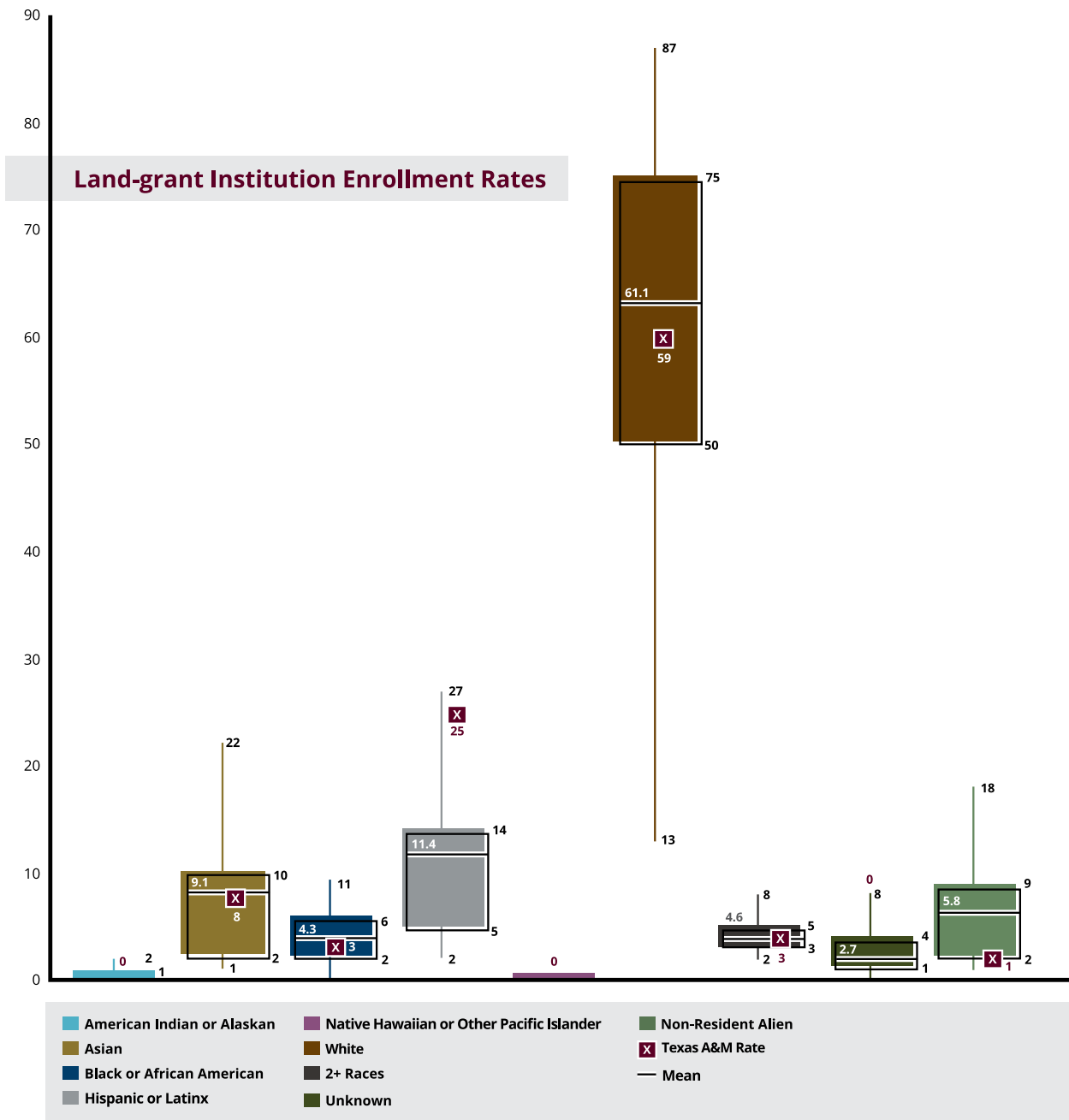


Figure 3: This benchmarks Texas A&M’s enrollment rates against other land-grant institutions (n=59). The percentages were gathered from IPEDS, fall 2019 data.

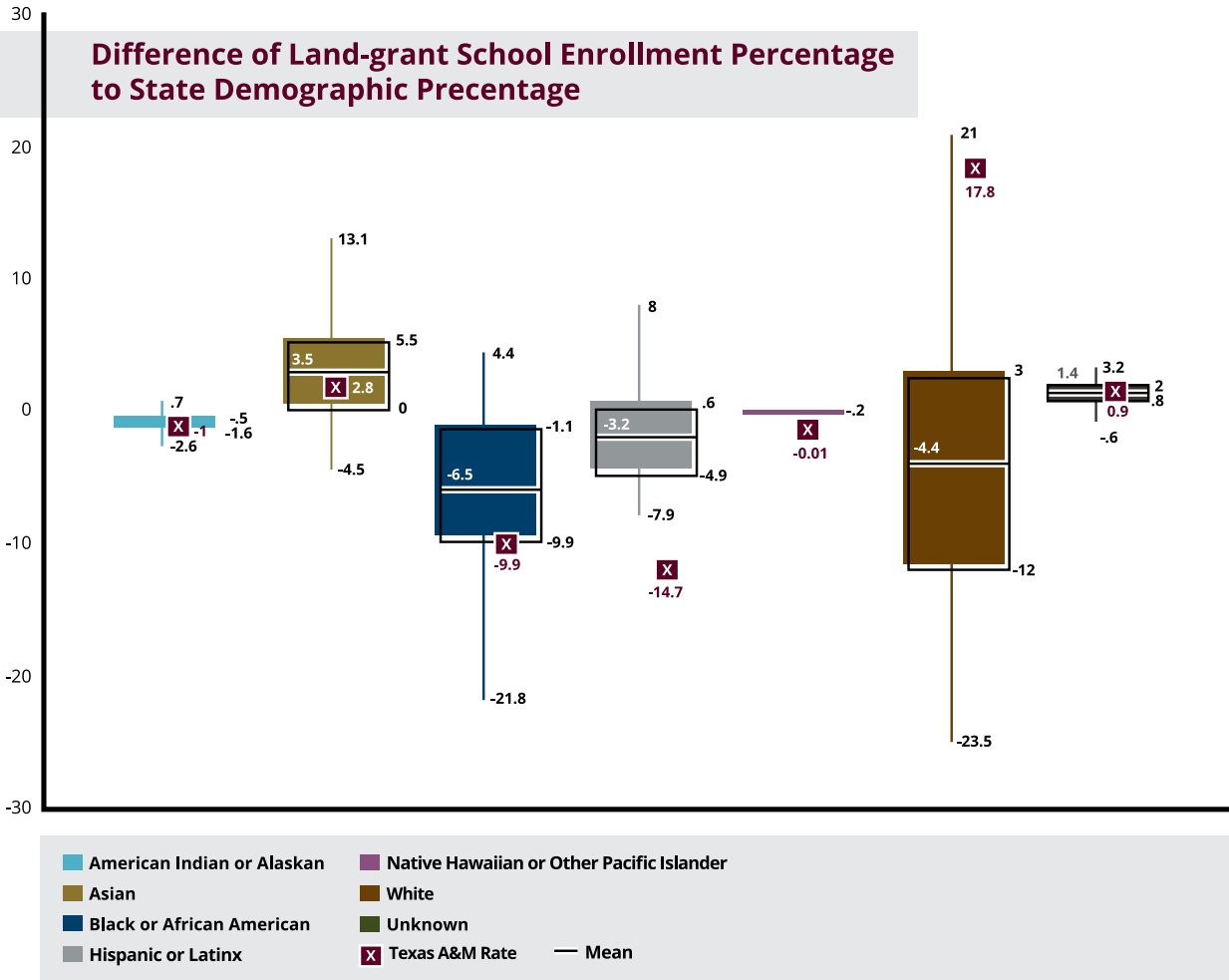


Figure 4: This benchmarks Texas A&M’s enrollment rates against land-grant universities (excluding HBU and tribal schools) (n=59). This was done by subtracting the percentage of enrolled undergraduate students in each ethnic group gathered from fall 2019 IPEDS data, and each school’s respective state’s demographics from the U.S. Census Bureau. The closer this value is to zero, the better the school reflects its state demographics.

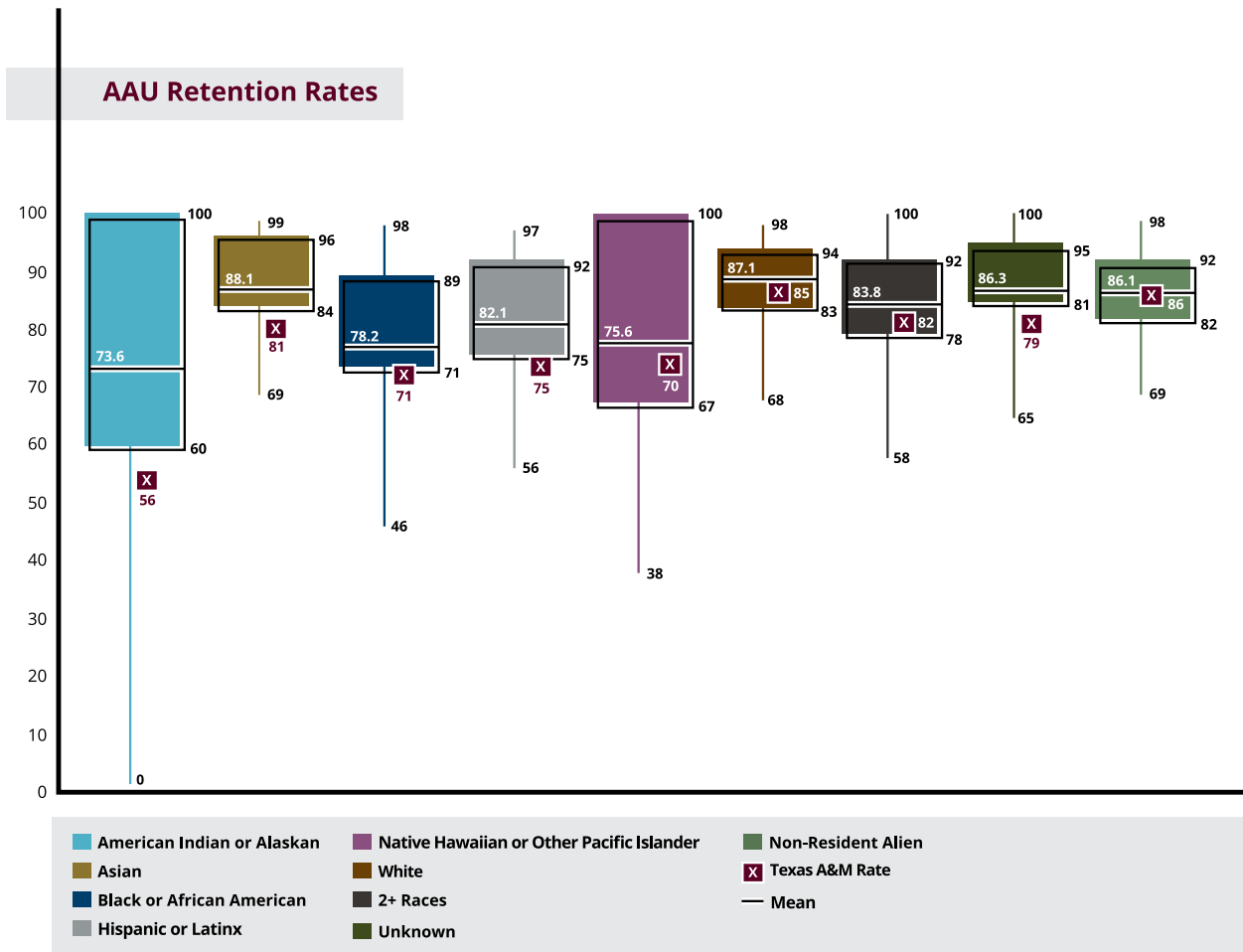


Figure 5: This benchmarks Texas A&M’s retention rates against AAU institutions (n=63) gathered from the 6-Year Graduation Rate by Race/Ethnicity from IPEDS, fall 2019.

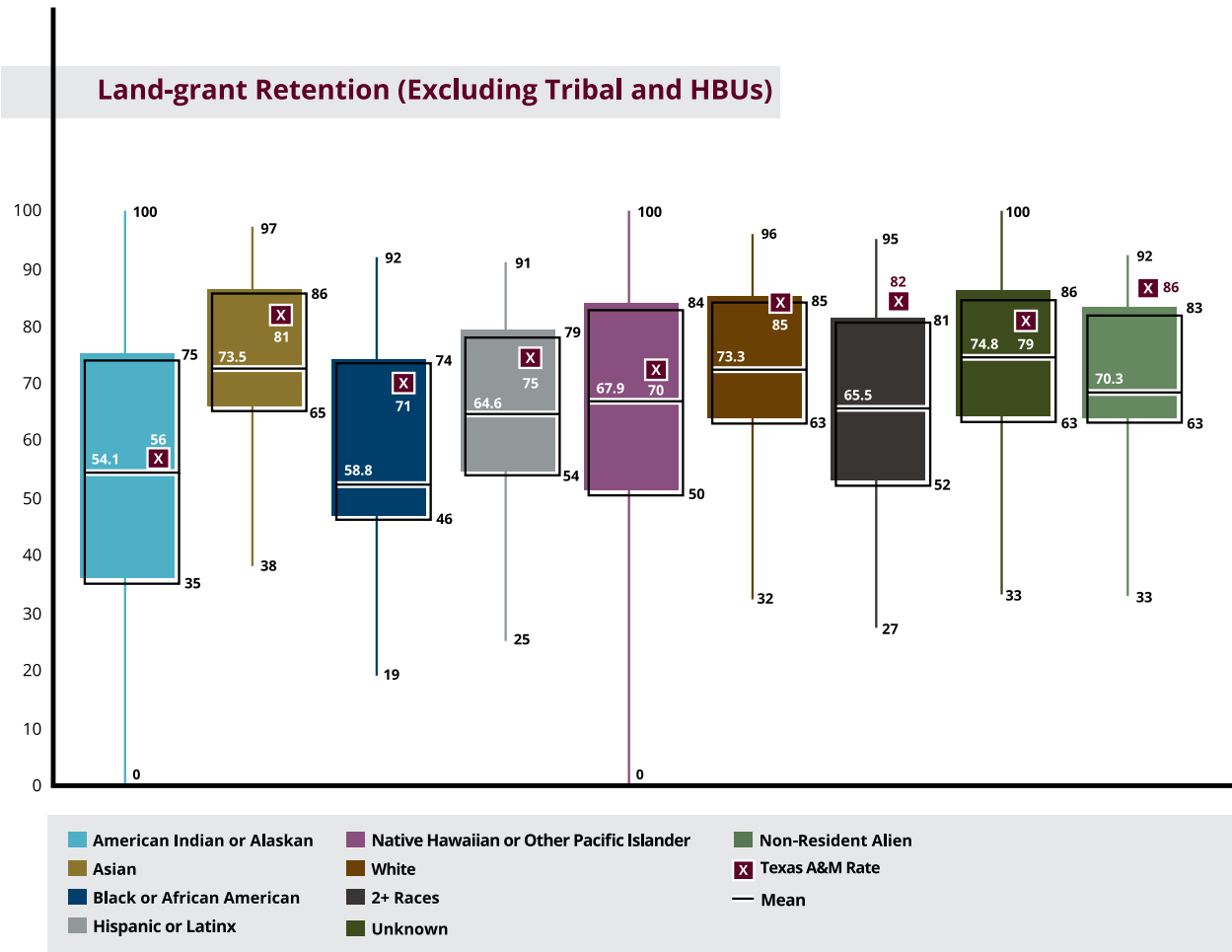


Figure 6: This benchmarks Texas A&M’s retention rates against land-grant institutions (excluding HBU and tribal schools) (n=59) gathered from the 6-Year Graduation Rate by Race/Ethnicity from IPEDS, fall 2019.

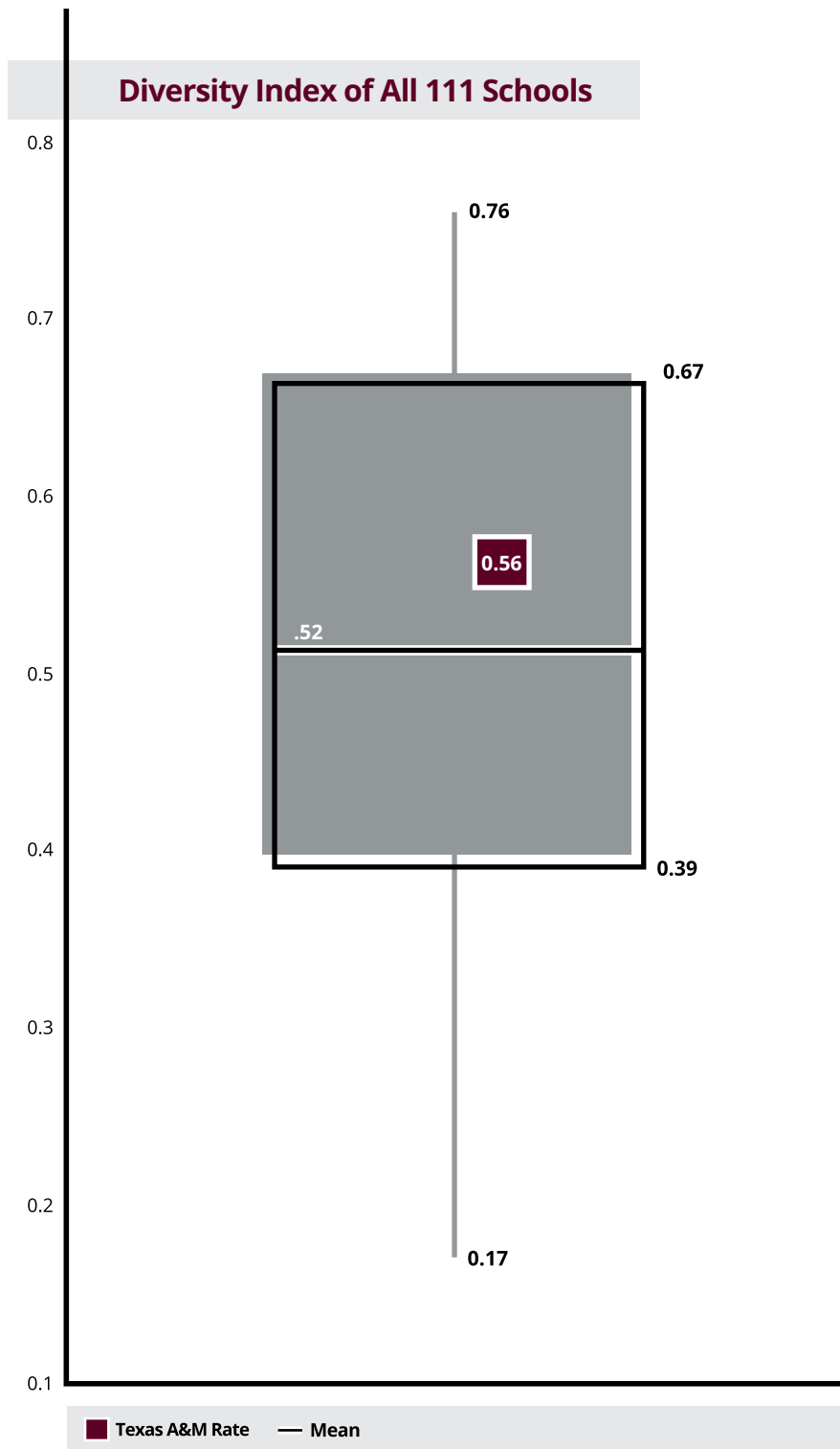


Figure 7: This benchmarks Texas A&M’s diversity index (0.56) against all universities on the list of comparable schools (n=111). This index measures the probability that any two individuals chosen at random from a school are of different ethnicity. The index ranges from 0 to 1, with 0 indicating there is no diversity (every person on campus is the same) and 1 indicating that the entire population is heterogeneous (everyone on campus is different).

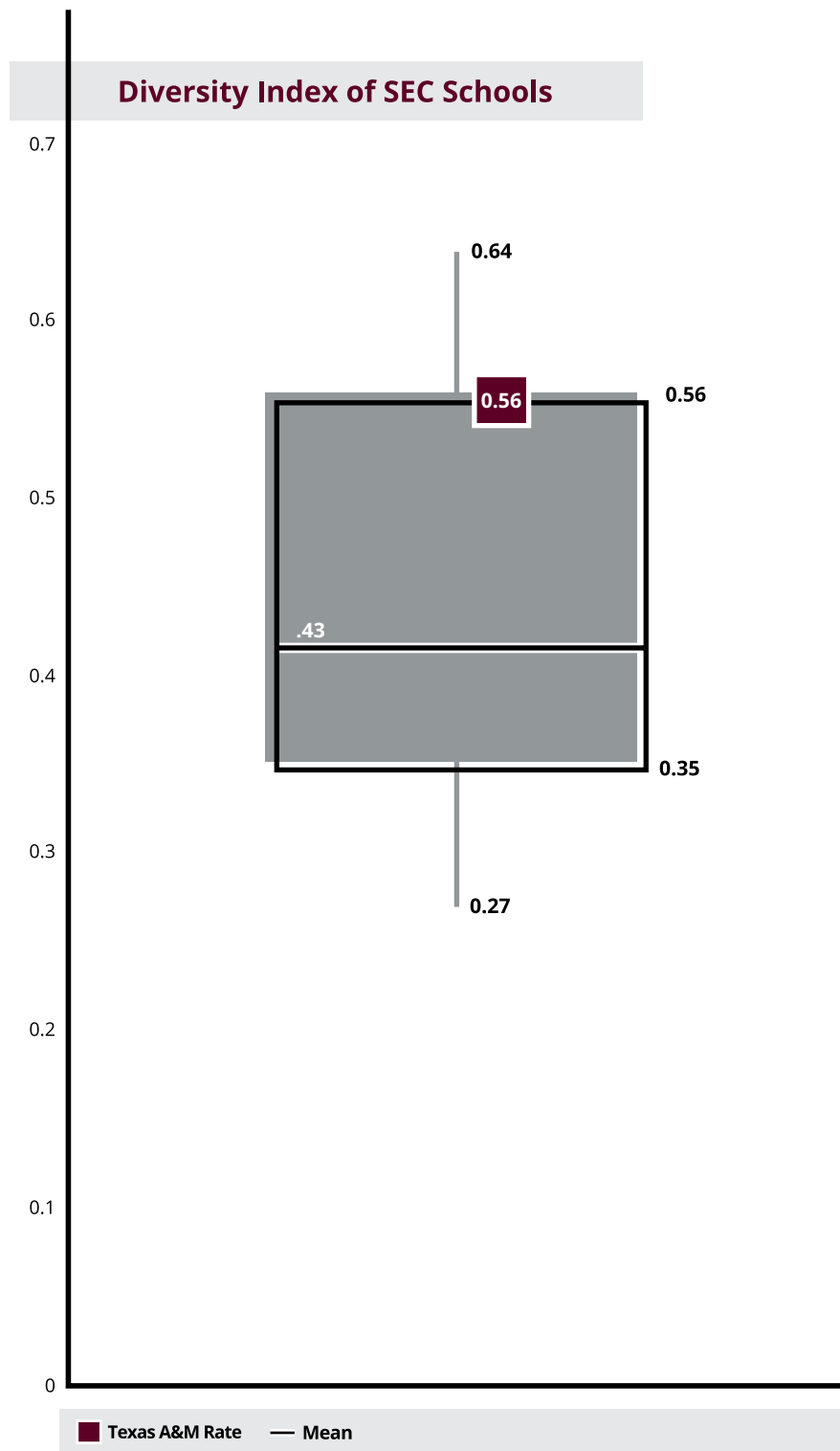


Figure 8: This benchmarks Texas A&M's diversity index (0.56) against Southeastern Conference (SEC) universities (n=14). This index measures the probability that any two individuals chosen at random from a school are of different ethnicity. The index ranges from 0 to 1, with 0 indicating there is no diversity (every person on campus is the same) and 1 indicating that the entire population is heterogeneous (everyone on campus is different).

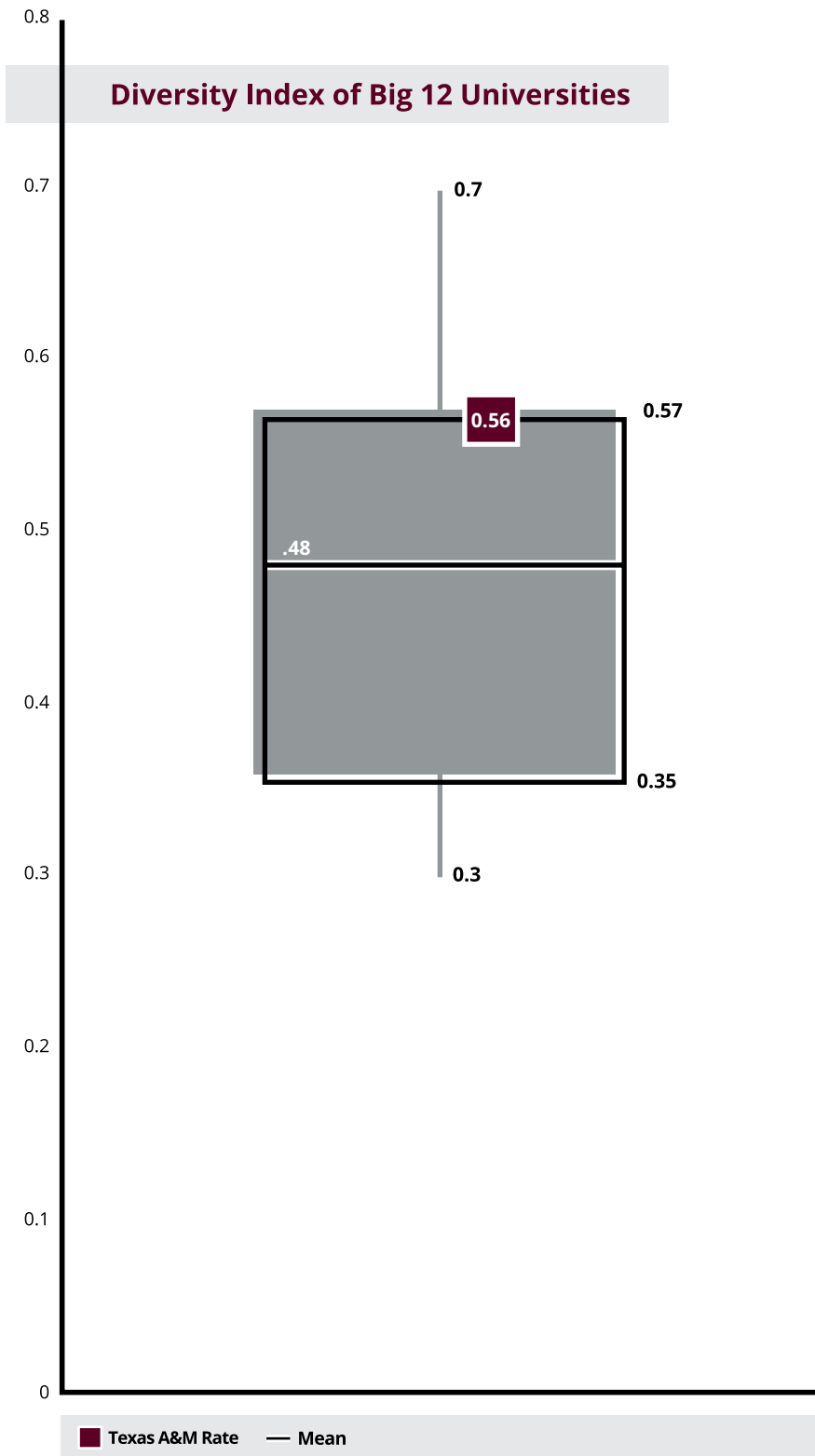


Figure 9: This benchmarks Texas A&M’s diversity index (0.56) against Big 12 universities, with the exclusion of West Virginia University* whose index was not listed (n=11). This index measures the probability that any two individuals chosen at random from a school are of different ethnicity. The index ranges from 0 to 1, with 0 indicating there is no diversity (every person on campus is the same) and 1 indicating that the entire population is heterogeneous (everyone on campus is different).

II.

MISSION AND VALUES

II. MISSION AND VALUES

Pride, love and desire for Texas A&M to succeed were central to all commission discussions, even among those who had significant criticisms. Even the most disparate voices found common ground in the Texas A&M Core Values and Mission.

“Too often, the lived reality of students, faculty and staff from historically underrepresented and excluded groups contrasts starkly with Texas A&M’s Core Values.”

Texas A&M State of Diversity 2020 Report

IIA. TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY GUIDING STATEMENTS

Currently, Texas A&M has an official Mission Statement, a Purpose Statement, a Code of Honor and a set of six Core Values.

MISSION STATEMENT:

“Texas A&M University is dedicated to the discovery, development, communication and application of knowledge in a wide range of academic and professional fields. Its mission of providing the highest quality undergraduate and graduate programs is inseparable from its mission of developing new understandings through research and creativity. It prepares students to assume roles in leadership, responsibility and service to society.

Texas A&M assumes as its historic trust the maintenance of freedom of inquiry and an intellectual environment nurturing the human mind and spirit. It welcomes and seeks to serve persons of all racial, ethnic and geographic groups as it addresses the needs of an increasingly diverse population and a global economy. In the 21st century, Texas A&M University seeks to assume a place of preeminence among public universities while respecting its history and traditions.”

<https://www.tamu.edu/statements/mission.html>

All Texas higher education institution mission statements must be reviewed and approved first by the Board of Regents and then by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. This requirement tends to make them too broad and all-encompassing to be truly useful institutional guideposts.

As a land-grant institution, Texas A&M includes in the Mission Statement language “welcoming and serving persons of all racial, ethnic and geographic groups as it addresses the needs of an increasingly diverse population and a global economy.” This sentiment is appropriate, but Texas A&M’s Mission Statement is a combination of vision, mission and action statements. This may be necessary to meet state of Texas requirements, but does not assist the university in easily communicating its mission.

TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY PURPOSE STATEMENT:

"To develop leaders of character dedicated to serving the greater good."

<https://www.tamu.edu/about/coreValues.html>

Beyond a mention on official Texas A&M websites, the Purpose Statement is often paired with discussion of the Core Values, but overall appears infrequently and almost as an afterthought.

AGGIE CODE OF HONOR:

"An Aggie does not lie, cheat or steal, or tolerate those who do."

TAMU Student Rules: <https://student-rules.tamu.edu/aggiecode/>

The Aggie Code of Honor is an effort to unify the aims of all Texas A&M men and women toward a high code of ethics and personal dignity. For most, living under this code will be no problem, as it asks nothing of a person that is beyond reason. It only calls for honesty and integrity, characteristics that Aggies have always exemplified. The Aggie Code of Honor functions as a symbol to all Aggies, promoting understanding and loyalty to truth and confidence in each other.

The Code of Honor is used in reference to academic integrity and to inform and serve as the primary academic dishonesty rule (e.g., plagiarism, cheating, etc.). The Aggie Honor office enforces the code, and it has a well-defined communications strategy and set of rules.

TEXAS A&M CORE VALUES:

"During 2005, Texas A&M, under the leadership of the then-university president Dr. Robert Gates, conducted a study of the perceived 'brand' and value of the university; what it means to be an Aggie, and what Texas A&M means to its many different and diverse constituencies. In short, it was an exercise to define a 'core' set of values — to put words on that 'spirit can ne'er be told.' Six words ascended into a cultural doctrine for current and former students, friends, faculty and staff: Loyalty, Integrity, Excellence, Leadership, Selfless Service and Respect."

From The Association of Former Students:

<https://www.aggienetwork.com/theassociation/corevalues.aspx>

Since their initial creation, the six Core Values have permeated internal and external messaging and marketing. A few examples include the creation of the "RELLIS" acronym, the Texas A&M RELLIS Campus, monuments around the Association of Former Students, banners, signage and frequent references around Texas A&M.

However, the interpretation of these values and associated actions is left to the individual to decide. Through commission discussions and research, it became clear that the Aggie Core Values, especially Respect, are not defined, understood, adopted or uniformly lived by the stakeholders of the Aggie family, including faculty, staff, students and former students.

The absence of any one Core Value undermines the Core Values as a whole. The failure to show Respect affects the fulfillment of the other five Core Values. Top-down leadership from stakeholders and student organizations is an effective means to inculcate the Core Values on a campus as large and diverse as Texas A&M. To create change and lasting effect, Aggie Core Values must be lived out daily by all stakeholders.

"I want every Aggie to have the same positive experience I had as a student at Texas A&M... but that's not realistic, especially if the university isn't committed to listening to the concerns of students of color currently on campus.

Many former students have voiced their concerns that making Aggieland more inclusive would tarnish our beloved traditions, but I would argue that inclusivity is the foundation of our treasured traditions.

It's time to listen and move forward, while holding true to what makes us all Aggies."

Listening session participant

The Core Value of Excellence is not fully reflected in the graduation rate for Black and African American students, which is lower in comparison to our peer institutions. The values are sometimes not role modeled because they have not been adequately communicated or taken on board by all students, faculty, staff and former students. The issue is exacerbated by social media and easy access to broad media platforms where hate-filled messages can be quickly broadcast.

The Aggie experience should be broadly positive for all students. However, behaviors by some create an environment that is sometimes inconsistent with the Aggie Core Values. Some underrepresented minority groups have experiences that are disproportionately negative relative to the experiences of the majority group. This can impact the sense of belonging, fulfillment and willingness to serve the university throughout the Aggie life cycle (including future, current and former students).

As one participant noted, "Alumni and counter-protestors at BLM [Black Lives Matter] protests on campus tend to use Aggie Traditions and Aggie Values as grounds for not making changes to campus to make it more inclusive for minority students. A&M should clarify these values, and should publicly condemn comments that use keeping traditions as grounds for not engaging in inclusive, overdue change. This would at least make minority students feel more supported by the administration!"

A clear set of guiding statements paired with strong and defined Core Values provides a standard for accountability. There are several excellent examples of guiding statements from the corporate world that Texas A&M may consider as a model, such as the Chevron Way, The Southwest Airlines Way and Superior Energy core values (see appendix for examples).

The Texas A&M Human Resources and Organizational Development division also recently went through a division-wide exercise to discuss and define the A&M Core Values specifically for their unit.¹

1. <https://employees.tamu.edu/about/>



IMPLEMENTING CORE VALUES AT



"We created a series of values and statements for our company. We then launched a massive, multi-year training effort on the Core Values.

Over the course of several years, our culture emerged, and Shared Core Values became the backbone of that culture. The key to all of this was tone from the top, clear understanding, not of words, but content, and most importantly ongoing training and education.

My experience at my own company leads me to believe that we should be thinking of opportunities to initiate education and training on our Aggie Core Values for everyone on our campus. In particular, the value of Respect. I believe that this value is the center point of diversity, equity and inclusion."

Dave Dunlap '83, President and CEO



IIB. BENCHMARK: HIGHER EDUCATION GUIDING STATEMENTS

The commission benchmarked 19 universities to consider how DEI was reflected in their guiding statements.

- Twelve universities have DEI mentioned as a value or defined in the values
- Five universities do not have official core values stated but have guiding principles (e.g., “principles of community,” “statement of integrity,” “guiding principles”) that include DEI
- Two universities (University of North Carolina and University of Mississippi) do not have core values or guiding principles but have DEI in their mission statement.²

The first commonality among many of these universities is that those that list their core values either have DEI as a core value, or include mention of DEI in the definition of a core value. For example, at Princeton University, “Fairness is a core value of the University. Students, staff and faculty applicants of all backgrounds should have an equal opportunity to earn a position at Princeton, and then contribute and succeed in their future endeavors.”³

At the University of Texas at Austin, a core value is Individual Opportunity, defined as “Many options, diverse people and ideas, one university,” and “diverse” in the quote is linked to their DEI website.⁴

Texas A&M mentions DEI in its mission statement, but not in its Core Values (and does not have a list of guiding principles). Furthermore, Texas A&M does not explicitly define the core values, unlike some of the other universities. UC Berkeley provides detailed descriptions and Penn State has clear definitions, and examples of what the value looks like.⁵

Although DEI is not specifically mentioned in the core values, Texas A&M states in its mission statement that “It welcomes and seeks to serve persons of all racial, ethnic and geographic groups as it addresses the needs of an increasingly diverse population and a global economy.” However, in listening sessions, most A&M stakeholders did not know the Mission Statement, which leaves a gap in effectively communicating DEI as a priority at Texas A&M.



2. Note that having DEI mentioned is not mutually exclusive in the core values, mission statements, guiding principles or the different values in various universities or colleges. Those that tended to mention DEI as a core value tended to have it in the university mission and guiding principles if they have such statements. The categories listed are meant to indicate where DEI is not present.

3. <https://inclusive.princeton.edu/about/our-commitment-diversity>

4. <https://www.utexas.edu/about/mission-and-values>

5. <https://universityethics.psu.edu/penn-state-values>
<https://strategicplan.berkeley.edu/guiding-values-and-principles/>

	Core Values Mention DEI	Mission Mentions DEI	Guiding Principles/ Philosophy Mention DEI
Georgia Tech	■		
Ohio State	■	■	
Penn State	■	■	■
Princeton University	■		
Purdue			■
Rice University	■	■	
Texas A&M University		■	
University of California Berkeley	■		■
University of California Davis	■		■
University of California Los Angeles	■	■	■
University of California San Diego		■	■
University of Florida	■	■	
University of Illinois	■		■
University of Michigan			■
University of Minnesota		■	■
University of Mississippi		■	
University of North Carolina		■	
University of Texas Austin	■		
University of Wisconsin		■	■
Yale University	■	■	

Recently, three schools grappled with redefining or asserting their core values: The University of Florida, Georgia Tech and Pennsylvania State University. The University of Florida set its vision and strategic plan in 2015 for the next decade under which the UF Values Council was established to “document the core values of the University. These values are intended to address not just who we are, but who we want to be.”⁶ The first of seven aspirational goals is to foster a community of people with “diverse experiences and backgrounds” under which there are four main objectives, including increased diversity, inclusion, interdisciplinary education and globalization on campus.



In 2019, Georgia Tech created a working group to assess and identify the Institute’s core values after feedback from the Ethical Culture Indicator Survey indicated there was a need for the community to know the core values and act in accordance with them.⁷ The university is currently in the process of launching a new 10-year strategic plan (scheduled to launch fall 2020) that is titled “Vision 2030: Inclusive Innovation for a Better Future.”⁸

Under this new vision is a list of values (integrity, respect, community, accountability and adaptability) for the university, including new foundational principles.⁹ The third principle is titled “We thrive on diversity” covering diversity and inclusion in the community. The website on university values has not yet been updated and shows the outdated values.

6. <https://president.ufl.edu/initiatives/uf-values-council/>

7. <https://www.news.gatech.edu/2019/04/29/institute-recommends-core-values>

8. <https://president.gatech.edu/vision-values-and-beliefs>

9. <https://strategicplan.gatech.edu/values>

The working group is expected to make the core values an integral part of the campus conversation and outline ways to increase awareness of the values among faculty, staff and students, including a demonstration of the core values in the annual performance evaluation for employees. Future releases on how Georgia Tech will remain accountable to this commitment may provide guidance for Texas A&M.

Finally, Pennsylvania State University provides an example of restructuring of core values and accountability. In 2013, the university conducted the Values and Culture Survey. Key findings indicated that the university faced several challenges related to “community members’ comfort with reporting wrongdoing — including distrust of current processes, experiences with retaliation and unfamiliarity with available resources.”¹⁰ This launched an initiative to develop a unified statement of core values that was created from feedback of students, faculty and staff at all campus locations.¹¹

Various DEI and other culture and climate issues similar to what occurred at Penn State and other universities were brought up during Texas A&M’s listening sessions, including DEI concerns, a lack of civil discourse, self-censorship due to apparent homogeneity of the majority’s views and associated fear of retaliation. Furthermore, the commission listening sessions indicated that most stakeholders at Texas A&M have varying definitions and interpretations of what Texas A&M’s Core Values are (much like the universities that have recently restructured their values and principles).

IIC. FINDINGS

Today, Texas A&M has an opportunity to call upon Aggies to not only define, but demonstrate who they are as Texas Aggies. Texas A&M guiding statements (e.g., Mission, Vision, Purpose, Core Values, Code of Honor, etc.) may serve as a tool to enhance Aggie unity. Deep discussions and empathetic conversations can help coalesce the modern Aggie experience while holding true to the best of the past.

As the Texas A&M 2020-2025 strategic plan notes, “Throughout our evolution, our success and contemporary significance have been underpinned by strategically planning our direction and focus to always position Texas A&M ahead of the curve.” Continuing the community-wide conversations started by this commission allows us to discuss, explain and enhance our guiding principles.

The definition, promotion and socialization of the Aggie core values is a long-term commitment that requires sustained investment of focus, effort, leadership and resources.

- There is an opportunity to create a Vision Statement, an inspirational and aspirational picture of the desired future state, and other strong guiding statements to be the North Star that informs everything that we do, particularly for DEI.
- To fulfill the land-grant mission of Texas A&M, there is an opportunity to recognize and address that Aggie Core Values have not been fully adopted. For the university to be successful, engagement and inclusion of all faculty, staff, students, former students, the larger Bryan-College Station area and higher education community can lead to improvement.

10. <https://news.psu.edu/story/326751/2014/09/19/results-released-penn-states-values-and-culture-survey>

11. <https://news.psu.edu/story/326759/2014/09/19/community-feedback-forms-penn-state-values>

- There is an opportunity to fully define and operationalize the Aggie Core Values. Particular emphasis is needed on Respect, Integrity and Excellence. For example, regarding Excellence, only 61% of enrolled African American students graduate from Texas A&M, which is 13-20% below peer institutions.¹²

LOYALTY

RESPECT

INTEGRITY

SERVICE

EXCELLENCE

LEADERSHIP



- There are many opportunities to actively promote, socialize and implement the Aggie Core Values to be practiced in every part of the Aggie experience — not only for current students, but also for faculty, staff and former students. Leadership from student organizations and role modeling the Aggie Core Values play a critical role in the success of this initiative. Utilizing Texas A&M Core Values may be one way to unite and create accountability for our Aggie community and inculcate standards of behavior.
- Inculcating Core Values gives Texas A&M the opportunity to achieve long-term societal impacts and success. DEI are prerequisites for innovation, which is the only sustainable advantage for organizations in the long term. Diverse organizations are higher performing than those that are not, as noted in the 2018 McKinsey & Company report *Delivering through Diversity*: “Overall, companies in the bottom quartile for both gender and ethnic/cultural diversity were 29% less likely to achieve above-average profitability than were all other companies in our data set. In short, not only were they not leading, they were lagging.”¹³
- While promoting their individual missions and focusing on our unifying Core Values, student leaders and the members of their organizations can be intentional in moving beyond the spheres of their organizations, in areas such as programming, collaborations, partnerships and other initiatives. The Aggie experience can and should be personalized and inclusive. While it is natural for students of different backgrounds to compartmentalize, promoting intentional collaboration and “cross pollination” among organizations may lead to better understanding of each other and building more competent leaders.

12. <https://diversity.tamu.edu/Data#students>

13. <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/delivering-through-diversity>

III.

CAMPUS CULTURE
AND CLIMATE

III. CAMPUS CULTURE AND CLIMATE

Texas A&M is rich with traditions that should be accessible to all, including first-generation Aggies and historically marginalized populations. Most of the traditions that are highlighted by the university were established prior to the inclusion of several marginalized groups. As the campus community becomes more diverse, traditions and rituals on campus that create inclusive spaces can help students feel connected to the institutional culture.

Over the years, several new and positive campus traditions and rituals have emerged and evolved (e.g., Fish Camp (1954), Big Event (1982), Ring Day (2000)) as current students interpret and embrace the university's Core Values. Unfortunately, changes to traditions by student leaders to promote inclusion are sometimes met with criticism from students and former students who do not agree with the changes (e.g., Fish Camp using gender non-binary indications on its application, Class Councils changing the route of Elephant Walk to not stop at the Lawrence Sullivan Ross statue, etc.).

The question is not whether to preserve or destroy all Aggie traditions — it's a question of embracing, evolving and creating traditions that resonate with all students, staff and faculty regardless of their ethnicity, origin or financial means.

This vocal opposition is sometimes rudely expressed, contributing to a negative campus climate and feeding into a narrative that Aggies are more concerned with preserving the past than evolving to help current Aggies succeed.

IIIA. THE IMPACT OF SYMBOLS AND TRADITIONS ON CAMPUS CLIMATE

The commission examined data and spoke to various groups to identify how to create a campus culture and climate that is more welcoming and inclusive of all, regardless of identity or background.

"But then I went to the first Sully protest this summer and it really struck me that those who are there, those people who were pro-Sully, really weaponized the Aggie traditions and chants. They did the Aggie yells, did these things that are completely representative of Aggie culture to our face, and said 'we are Aggies, you guys are not' to show this is how Aggie traditions and culture are. I felt otherized."

Listening session participant

The working definition of “campus culture” is the set of ideas and behaviors shared by a university. “Campus climate” is defined as “the current perceptions, attitudes and expectations that define the institution and its members.”¹ Given that ideas and behaviors change, so can the campus culture and climate.

Unwelcoming campus climates impact the interactions between historically marginalized students and other members by reducing the frequency, quality and potential of positive interactions on campus. This in turn can inhibit students’ patterns of engagement, which can negatively impact student growth, development, persistence and graduation.²

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).³ If campus community members feel a sense of belonging along these four dimensions, it will contribute to a positive campus climate.

“When (minority students) come to Texas A&M at the moment, it’s not because of the culture...but in spite of the culture. It’s a selling point for some, but I can’t tell you how many conversations I have when recruiting minorities that start with ‘Well, is it as bad as I hear?’ Think about how that culture is being interpreted by those who are of color. We need this conversation before you can have more representation.”

Listening session participant

Climate differs from culture in that climate is a relatively inferred aspect of the campus environment and thus an easier target for institutional efforts to get impactful results. Unfortunately, this malleability also makes efforts for improvement prone to diminishing quickly.²

For example, a university-wide campaign condemning sexual harassment can make an impact on current campus climate. However, unless the underlying culture that explicitly or implicitly promotes or tolerates sexual discrimination is addressed, the effects of the campaign may be temporary, fade or be seen as empty words.



1. Shenkle, C. W., Snyder, R. S., Bauer, K. W. 1998. “Measures of Campus Climate.” *New Directions for Institutional Research* 98: 91-99.

2. Museus, S.D., Griffin, K.A., Quaye, S.J. 2020. “Engaging students of color.” *Student engagement in higher education: Theoretical perspectives and practical approaches for diverse populations*. New York: Routledge.

3. Hurtado, S., Maestas, R., Hill, L., Wathington, H., Meador, E.W. 1998. *Perspectives on the Climate for Diversity: Findings and Suggested Recommendations for the Texas A&M University Campus*. Ann Arbor: Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education.

IIIB. SIX AREAS AFFECTING CAMPUS CLIMATE

Texas A&M is not immune to the racism, sexism, ableism, religious intolerance and homophobia that exist in the state and country. Evidence collected from climate surveys, reporting mechanisms (e.g., StopHate, TellSomebody, etc.) and individual accounts indicates that students, faculty and staff from marginalized communities are the recipients of speech and behaviors by members of the Aggie community that contribute to feelings of exclusion, isolation and a less optimal learning and working environment.

A review of the abovementioned evidence led to six categories that influence the campus climate and campus culture at Texas A&M:

1) ATTITUDES TOWARDS DEI

Despite Texas A&M's published DEI goals, there is a contingency of students, faculty, staff and former students who do not believe these goals are of benefit to the university. There has been opposition to the university's DEI goals by various constituents through social media outlets, institutional reporting sites and published articles about the university. This tenor has an impact on campus climate and culture, and ultimately on those individuals who are part of the traditionally marginalized communities.

2) LACK OF COMPOSITIONAL, ORGANIZATIONAL AND STRUCTURAL DIVERSITY

As a land-grant institution, the demographics of the Texas A&M student population should mirror those of Texas. However, we fall short, particularly with Black and African American and Hispanic and Latinx students. Increasing the diversity of various identity groups on campus leads to an environment that fosters positive cross-racial interactions. Additionally, many former students have expressed a need to diversify the leadership of the university as well. Consequently, many of the external audiences see images of Texas A&M that are largely homogeneous and that do not reflect the wide spectrum of the Aggie experience.

3) LANGUAGE AND BEHAVIORS THAT IMPACT CAMPUS CLIMATE

Data from university reporting sites (StopHate, TellSomebody, etc.) provide evidence that students from marginalized groups have been (and continue to be) victims of hate speech and both overt and covert acts of racism (and other isms) that contribute to a decreased sense of belonging. These incidents (perpetuated primarily by other students, former students and, to a lesser degree, by faculty and staff) capture the lived experiences of mostly marginalized students and greatly influence their perception of the campus climate and culture. Dismissive attitudes towards these incidents further exacerbate a negative campus experience for many communities.

4) THE IMPACT OF SYMBOLS AND TRADITIONS ON CAMPUS CLIMATE

While there are many values and traditions that contribute to a positive Aggie culture, there are also those that were created during a history of exclusion. For example, up until three years ago, women were denied access to serving as the mascot corporal for Reveille. Texas A&M should ensure that all can take part in campus traditions and seriously examine those traditions and symbols that may negatively affect the experience of marginalized groups, including the Ross statue.

5) THE CURRICULAR AGGIE EXPERIENCE FOR HISTORICALLY MARGINALIZED GROUPS

While Texas A&M continues to be recognized as a prominent academic university, many marginalized communities experience bias and microaggressions within their classrooms from both students and faculty. Expanding the compositional diversity of the university will help decrease feelings of isolation, and in some instances, intimidation. Additionally, more courses that focus on learning the culture and history of different identities could be beneficial to all.

6) THE CO-CURRICULAR AGGIE EXPERIENCE FOR HISTORICALLY MARGINALIZED GROUPS

Students from all identities and backgrounds value the involvement and leadership development opportunities offered by Texas A&M. Many students from traditionally marginalized groups find their sense of belonging through identity-based groups, services and spaces, which are important in fostering a welcoming environment for these students. Continuing to provide and enhance these opportunities further elevates a sense of belonging and a positive Aggie experience

IIIC. REVIEW: BARRIERS AND HINDRANCES

Commission members identified root causes of poor enrollment and retention of minority students, including:

- Many members of the Aggie community, including former students, do not perceive that there is a problem. They believe that racism is over and behind us.
- There is a lack of civility when discussing issues related to race, equity and inclusion in our community in media and social media.
- Some university-affiliated individuals and groups believe that DEI efforts and principles are not necessary at a leading research university, which is in direct contrast to the Association of American Universities' (AAU) long-held assertion of the importance of diversity to the missions of research universities.⁴
- Among some members of the Aggie community, DEI is seen to represent weakness. They believe that evolution erases history, and that one action will be the panacea to all ills.



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4. <https://www.aau.edu/newsroom/press-releases/statement-diversity-board-directors-association-american-universities>

Texas A&M can elevate its campus culture and climate to become more welcoming and inclusive of all, regardless of identity or background. Past and recent incidents and debates, both locally and nationally, have created an environment where divisiveness is pervasive, both covertly and overtly.

An inclusive culture and climate help to eliminate barriers that may be more pronounced for historically marginalized students, faculty and staff, specifically Blacks and African Americans. Texas A&M has the opportunity to sustain real change by continuously examining the current climate

and underlying culture for areas that prevent a more welcoming and inclusive campus experience for students, faculty and staff.

The desired outcome is to eliminate barriers that impede student development and success, as well as barriers that prevent faculty and staff from thriving in their careers and meeting their professional goals. Not only will current students, faculty and staff benefit from a more inclusive environment, but former students, prospective students, faculty, staff and visitors will as well.

As a land-grant institution, the demographics of our student population should mirror those of the State of Texas; however, we fall short. The following chart compares the racial demographics of Texas to those of Texas A&M:

Race/Ethnicity	State of Texas*	Texas A&M University**
American Indian or Alaska Native	1.0%	0.22%
Asian	5.2%	8.8%
Black and/or African American	12.9%	3.3%
Hispanic and/or Latinx	39.7%	22.5%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.1%	0.06%
Two or More Races	2.1%	2.6%
White	41.2%	54.5%

*State of Texas data from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/TX>;

**Texas A&M University data from <http://accountability.tamu.edu/All-Metrics/Mixed-Metrics/Student-Demographics>

Note: Data percentages may vary slightly due to the reporting dates and mechanism (IPEDS, accountability, etc.).

Smaller milestones, including comparisons to our peer institutions, should be set and measured as we strive toward this goal. Creating an inclusive, welcoming environment with a culture and climate where equity abounds will allow the university to recruit a more diverse pool of students, as well as faculty and staff, moving us towards a population that is proportionate to that of the state.



Texas A&M has taken strides to facilitate a campus environment where divisive issues can be freely debated and discussed. Texas A&M was recognized

by the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE⁵) with its highest rating for free speech.⁶ FIRE reviews an institution's openness to speech and assembly on various campuses. It found that our principles and policies are consistent with the highest ideals of the First Amendment and the fundamental purposes and goals of a great education. Texas A&M is one of 45

universities nationwide — and the only one in Texas — to achieve such a designation.

This independent assessment by FIRE determined that Texas A&M's written policies fully align with the First Amendment. While Texas A&M's policies have always been strong, it is critical that we leverage this in creating an inclusive and welcoming environment. An open exchange of ideas is not only a cornerstone of our democracy, it is the surest path to truth, discovery and scholarly advancement.

Texas A&M hosts numerous programs, events and meetings each year on our campus. Occasionally, there is a provocative speaker that detracts from the conversation, but even those moments provide learning and engagement opportunities for our students, faculty and staff. Efforts in this area continue to inform our work of educating students so they can engage in difficult dialogues, express their ideas without fear, and be prepared to lead in their future professional and personal lives.

IID. FINDINGS

Students, faculty, staff and former students who lent their voices to this report care deeply about Texas A&M and are committed to making it better. Students feel a sense of pride having navigated Texas A&M's rigorous academic environment, and they celebrate academic success when they put on the Aggie ring and receive their diploma at graduation.

Although strides have been made over the years, students, faculty and staff from historically marginalized groups are encountering negative experiences at Texas A&M that impede their ability to successfully navigate our university's environment.

In 2017, 71% of Black and African American students (down from 82% in 2015) felt they belonged at Texas A&M as compared to 84% Asian, 88% Hispanic and Latinx, 79% International and 91% of White students. In addition, only 47% of Black and African American students felt respected on this campus based on their race or ethnicity as compared to 77% Asian, 77% Hispanic and Latinx, 78% International and 94% of White students. While the vast majority of undergraduates would still choose to enroll at Texas A&M "knowing what I know now," Black and African American (86% to 79%) and International students (86% to 74%) saw the largest decrease from 2015 & 2017.⁷

5. <https://www.thefire.org/>

6. <https://today.tamu.edu/2019/01/10/texas-am-earns-highest-rating-for-free-speech-on-campus/>

7. Information was obtained from Student Experience in the Research University (SERU) 2015 and 2017 reports found here <https://seru.tamu.edu/Home.aspx>

IIID.1. ATTITUDES TOWARD DEI

Although many institutions struggle with similar issues, Texas A&M is committed to being a leader in creating diverse learning and working environments where all students, faculty and staff can bring their best. The university has made strides throughout the years towards achieving our DEI goals.

“Diversity at Texas A&M University is an indispensable component of academic excellence.”

2010 Diversity Plan,
Texas A&M University

A large component impacting an institution’s diversity climate is its psychological climate, which is shaped by the perceptions, beliefs and attitudes about diversity held by members of the institution’s community.⁸ The institution’s community extends beyond current students, faculty and staff to include the Bryan-College Station area, governing boards and former students. Unfortunately, despite Texas A&M’s published DEI goals, there is a contingency of students, faculty, staff and former students who (either out of a lack of understanding, failure to recognize or outright dismissal) don’t believe these goals are of benefit to the university.

Vocal opposition by groups and individuals to these goals and the associated outcomes and strategies can be found on social media and reporting sites, and published articles about the university. This visible and vocal opposition contributes to a negative campus climate for historically marginalized students, faculty and staff, and feeds a narrative that members of the Texas A&M community do not value DEI. It also overshadows the large contingency

of individuals who are committed to these goals and are working to make progress. In addition, there is tension over the phrase “diversity, equity and inclusion.”

This dichotomy can be seen in a recent listening session held by the commission. One individual stated, “Some classmates don’t like the ‘DEI’ term...we don’t need that, we’re all Aggies. It’s just a government program. We need to focus on values and push aside the DEI terms, you might get more people to listen and learn.”

Although a focus on Core Values is a good strategy, dismissal of specific DEI language is perceived as refusing to acknowledge the problem and indicates a lack of care for creating an inclusive environment for all. As another individual stated, “As former students, it’s our burden to feel a little uncomfortable if we care about Texas A&M and its current students. If a term like DEI makes us uncomfortable, so be it if it helps current and future students feel part of the Aggie Family!”

Additionally, a concern frequently voiced by campus employees (staff in particular) is a fear to express DEI critiques or to openly support DEI changes. There is a concern that speaking up could result in marginalization or hidden retaliations, such as a reduction in force. The adages “Highway 6 runs both ways” and “if you don’t like it, leave” are commonly felt and heard by many within and outside the campus community who have questioned the status quo related to diversity and inclusion policies, practices and processes.

Formal DEI education and training programs for students, faculty and staff communicate expectations, benefits and incidents that detract from and enhance campus climate and culture for all Aggies, not only during their time on campus but as they become engaged citizens in their

8. Hurtado, S., Maestas, R., Hill, L., Wathington, H., Meador, E.W. 1998. *Perspectives on the Climate for Diversity: Findings and Suggested Recommendations for the Texas A&M University Campus*. Ann Arbor: Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education

communities and careers. Listening to and learning about DEI issues and the experiences of historically marginalized groups are powerful ways to create understanding between communities.

DEI training for faculty and staff can aid in designing experiences, examining processes and policies, and improving services for individuals from historically marginalized groups. For example, creators of a policy requiring students to purchase meal plans to live on campus may allow exemptions for students who require a certain type of food preparation due to religious reasons.

In several of the listening sessions, participants acknowledged that it was difficult to understand something that wasn't their own lived experience. In addition to enhancing campus climate, global and intercultural fluency continues to be rated

IIID.2.

LANGUAGE AND BEHAVIORS THAT IMPACT CAMPUS CLIMATE

Despite our Core Values, students from marginalized communities are still facing racist language and microaggressions which contribute to a decreased sense of belonging at the university.

Hashtags such as “hateisahiddencorevalue” and “racismatTAMUfeelslike” produced by current and former students, faculty and staff paint the picture of how Aggie Core Values are being ignored when it comes to treatment of students from historically marginalized backgrounds. In addition, incidents reported through the

“There is a lack of understanding and comfort for faculty talking about issues that others face. They are very, very uncomfortable participating in this DEI work.”

Listening session participant

by employers as an essential competency of career readiness of college graduates.⁹

Global and intercultural fluency is the ability to value, respect and learn from diverse cultures, races, ages, genders, sexual orientations and religions. The individual demonstrates openness, inclusiveness, sensitivity and the ability to interact respectfully with all people and understand individuals' differences. Texas A&M must continue to help students build proficiency in global and intercultural fluency to prepare them for a competitive job market.

StopHate website and various programs such as “Difficult Dialogues” capture the lived experiences of students, particularly students in marginalized groups, and illustrate their perceptions of the climate and culture at Texas A&M.

9. <https://www.naceweb.org/>

“This happened on my first-ever day of school at Texas A&M. I was taking the bus and all of a sudden the bus stopped and I fell forward on to another person. This person immediately pushed me off and said ‘Get off me you dirty wetback.’ I wanted to respond but for some reason I couldn’t. Everyone around me quickly looked away and acted like nothing happened... I wish somebody would have stood up for me. I wish I had the strength to respond to that person but I was paralyzed by fear and shock.”

Participant in a Difficult Dialogue session

Some community members will dismiss incidents (speech and behaviors) of hate and bias as occasional and only perpetuated by “a few bad apples.” The phrase “kids will be kids” was used to minimize the behavior by some respondents to commission questions. This outlook on incidents of hate or bias, including microaggressions, disregards the negative impact these incidents have on students from marginalized communities.

One international student commented, “[being the recipient of a microaggression] is like someone pooping in your cereal...it doesn’t matter how big the poop is...it is still poop. It still impacts the rest of your day.” Another international student mentioned, “I am constantly hearing from other international students about experiences with racism and microaggressions on campus. International students are less likely to report these incidents to the university for fear of losing their visa status or being turned in to other authorities.”

These incidents create and perpetuate a negative campus climate at Texas A&M and impact the recipients’ ability to thrive academically, feel a sense of belonging and build institutional commitment. Students who are the recipients of this language and behavior are less likely to persist at the university and recommend the institution to other students from their identity group.

Texas A&M has long prided itself on being a friendly campus. Often, visiting fans to our campus remark at the friendliness of our students and fans. Unfortunately, some view the concepts of “Aggies helping Aggies” and the “12th Man” as not extending to intervening or holding peers accountable for racist, sexist or homophobic speech and behaviors. As evidenced by accounts on message boards, social media and recent incidents, some current and former students do not possess the tools or are not willing to interrupt this speech or behavior exhibited by their peers in person or in a virtual environment.

Reflecting on the response to student activism at the university this summer (including the #shutupandplay hashtag), one student commented, “Aggies will stand for four hours in Kyle Field ready to assist Black football players but won’t do the same for that player off the field.” This student viewed support for these athletes by other Aggies as conditional, as the athletes were only considered Aggies and respected when their views don’t stray from what some think an “Aggie” should be.

Students and former students encounter incidents of hate and bias on campus and off campus. Students have shared experiences of not being allowed into establishments on Northgate and experiencing racist and homophobic comments while shopping at local stores. Constant microaggressions can perpetuate a feeling of unwelcomeness and exclusion for students. As one student explained, “constantly having to defend your presence on campus can be very taxing on a student’s mental health.”

“Factors that would positively impact the campus climate would be ones in which all forms of hate, racism and bigotry are not tolerated whatsoever. One in which Aggies can call each other out on such acts and are willing to stand up against such actions as they are not representative of who we are — really holding each other accountable and up to high standards.”

Listening session participant

Many of these types of hateful comments are protected speech under the First Amendment. A gap exists between how the university does respond and what the community wants to happen to those who engage in hateful speech that is constitutionally protected. The recipients of these comments are frustrated that nothing can be done to those who engage in speech that is racist, sexist or homophobic.

There is a perception that complaints of hate and bias submitted through StopHate and other reporting mechanisms are not followed up on. There is also a dissatisfaction that consequences to the respondent cannot be shared with the complainant or the larger campus community. One student explained what the perception of nonresponse by the institution leads to: “A lack of consequences for those who spread hateful speech enforces the belief that that kind of behavior is tolerated at Texas A&M.”

IIID.3. THE CURRICULAR AGGIE EXPERIENCE FOR HISTORICALLY MARGINALIZED GROUPS

Many students from historically marginalized groups identify the university’s prominent academic reputation as the reason they chose Texas A&M. Students from marginalized identities want to connect with faculty, staff and peers who share or understand their cultural backgrounds, identities and experiences.¹⁰ As previously mentioned, more needs to be done to diversify the Aggie community to better reflect the demographics of the state.

Some class environments can be extremely isolating for historically marginalized populations when they do not see any other students or professors who look like them. These students still experience bias and microaggressions within their classrooms. Being the only African American or just one of a few in the classrooms can be intimidating. While that is a part of the makeup of the university, where it really becomes uncomfortable is in certain classes where race may come up.

For example, a former student once mentioned that in a peer group where this happened, he raised his hand to comment on what he believed to be a misrepresentation of African Americans in an urban area, and the professor dismissed his observation. The former student said he not only felt his observation did not matter, but he felt many of the students were staring at him for challenging what the professor was presenting about his race. His suggestion was that the professor, through diversity training, could learn how to approach such a topic in a predominantly white classroom.

All students can benefit from courses that focus on learning the culture, history and frameworks of different identities. This may be the first opportunity for many students to learn and engage in discourse about race, ethnicity, culture, inclusion, equity and their implications on society from leading scholars in the field. Given the climate today, we must equip our graduates with the tools to engage in civil discussions around complex issues within disciplines and in the greater academic core requirements.

10. Museus, S.D., Griffin, K.A., Quaye, S.J. 2020. “Engaging students of color.” Student engagement in higher education: *Theoretical perspectives and practical approaches for diverse populations*. New York: Routledge.

IIID.4.**THE CO-CURRICULAR AGGIE EXPERIENCE FOR HISTORICALLY MARGINALIZED GROUPS**

Students across identities value the involvement and leadership development opportunities at Texas A&M and believe they contribute to a positive campus culture. The Aggie experience is unique to each student. Students from historically marginalized groups want to enjoy the friendliness, say “Howdy!” and participate in many of our recognized traditions.

In addition, some students from historically marginalized groups find their sense of belonging through identity-based (i.e., race, ethnicity, gender, religion, veteran status, etc.) affinity groups, programs, services and spaces. These students point to the importance of the Department of Multicultural Services in their collegiate experience, growth and development. Organizations such as IDEAAL, EXCEL and LatiLo that are geared towards the first-year experience of students can help foster a sense of belonging on campus. Identification with identity-based affinity groups as a way of connecting with the university extends beyond the current student experience.

As historically marginalized students graduate, many will choose to maintain a connection to the university through The Association of Former Students’ identity-based constituent networks, such as the Black Former Student Network, the Hispanic Former Student Network, the Women’s Former Student Network and the newly established Pride Former Student Network for LGBTQ+ former students. Most of these networks serve to advocate for the concerns and issues of their affinity groups. For example, the mission of the Hispanic Former Student Network is to serve “as an advocate and support group on Hispanic concerns and issues at the university and local communities.”

Affinity-based spaces (e.g., Veterans Resource and Support Center, cultural spaces in the DMS, LGBTQ+ Center, etc.) are an important tool in fostering a welcoming environment for marginalized students. They create a sense of cultural community and provide venues for identity expression, identity validation and mattering, as well as social belonging and development.

Culture-based events, activities, programs and physical spaces are instrumental in enhancing sense of belonging. Many of these programs such as Fusion Fiesta, International Week (I-Week), Southwestern Black Student Leadership Conference (SBSLC), Lunar New Year celebration and the MSC WBAC MLK Breakfast promote the cultures and diversity of various backgrounds. These are important programs for individuals who identify with these groups, and they give others opportunities to learn and engage socially with people who may be different than themselves.

The university recently started elevating the visibility of these cultural programs as part of Aggie life. Former Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) students often reference these events as “traditions” when they describe their Aggie experience.



IV.

DATA AND POLICIES

IV. DATA AND POLICIES

An abundance of quantitative and qualitative data have been collected over the years across academic and administrative units to identify and address DEI shortcomings at Texas A&M. These data have led to plans, accountability websites, programs, reports and documents containing many well-intentioned recommendations, some of which are given here.

“Equity AND Inclusion — it’s so much more than just numbers...it’s that you’re part of an institution...that you belong. We can get ethnicity numbers up, but still have nothing near equity and inclusion. You can’t break them apart, but if all we do is meet the numbers, we’ve accomplished nothing. We have to have a place where people feel respected and included.”

Texas A&M Administrator

The university has robust efforts led by the Office of Diversity and covered in the 2010 Diversity Plan. For example, the Diversity Operations Committee is charged with 1) ensuring that all existing and planned policies, operations and procedures, and all major plans for organizational change, are pursued with careful attention to their impact on this university’s diversity and inclusion goals; 2) ensuring strategic coordination of university-wide diversity-related activities; 3) considering processes for the collection of equity and climate data and diversity initiatives, as well as recruitment and retention strategies and outcomes; and 4) considering means for enhancing the effectiveness of our collective diversity initiatives, while taking into account current practices and the distinctive cultures of various units.

The Office of Diversity, through the efforts of the 2010 Diversity Plan, also oversees the work of the President’s Council on Climate and Diversity (PCCD) whose purpose is to provide counsel to the President, Provost and Executive Vice President on methods to attract and retain diverse students, faculty and staff to Texas A&M, as well as to strengthen, sustain and promote the

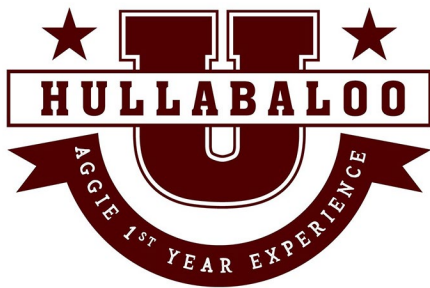
diversity efforts in support of Vision 2020 goals. Additionally, the PCCD assists the Vice President and Associate Provost for Diversity in planning appropriate assessment and evaluation of all university units regarding diversity-related endeavors.

Because of these efforts, Texas A&M has twice been recognized, in 2019 and 2020, with the prestigious Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (HEED) Award from INSIGHT Into Diversity.

Texas A&M works to create an inclusive and welcoming environment that is open to an exchange of ideas leading to discovery and scholarly advancement. In recognition of this, Texas A&M was recently awarded the highest rating for free speech by the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE¹). As mentioned earlier, FIRE reviews an institution’s openness to speech and assembly on various campuses, and the organization has found our principles and policies to be entirely consistent with the highest ideals of the First Amendment.

1. <https://www.thefire.org/>

Additionally, the university has created graduation requirements in the areas of International and Cultural Diversity and Cultural Discourse for students entering in fall 2019 and thereafter. Courses that fulfill these requirements are approved by the Core Curriculum Council, a group of elected faculty members who review course proposals based on rubric criteria. Courses are reviewed every three years and are evaluated each semester with student pre- and post-tests on the Global Perspectives Inventory.



The university has instituted Hullabaloo U learning communities for all incoming freshmen, developed an office of student success, and provided additional support to the Regents' Scholars Program to improve student retention and graduation rates by providing students opportunities to create a sense of belonging.

The university has also developed units and programs (such as the ADVANCE Center, ACES Fellows, ADVANCE Scholars, Enhancing Diversity Seminars and the Difficult Dialogues series) to improve campus climate and faculty hiring.

For example, the Accountability, Climate, Equity, and Scholarship (ACES) Fellows Program is a faculty pipeline initiative that connects those advancing outstanding scholarship with relevant disciplinary units on campus. This program promotes the research, teaching and scholarship of early career scholars who embrace the belief that diversity is an indispensable component of academic excellence.

ACES Fellows will benefit from mentoring, access to instructional best practices, a vast array of world-class research and productivity resources and a robust network of renowned Texas A&M scholars from across disciplines. From this experience, Fellows should develop an understanding of the value of diversity and inclusion and the power that it holds for students, faculty and staff to enrich their lives, and that some ACES Fellows will be hired as tenure-track faculty at the conclusion of the fellowship. This program is funded by the Office of the Provost and administered by the Office for Diversity at Texas A&M in partnership with the College of Engineering and College of Science.

In 2019, the College of Liberal Arts and the College of Education and Human Development participated in the program and four faculty were hired. In 2020, seven faculty were hired through the program. "As of December 2019, 435 applications had been submitted to the ACES program, proving that Texas A&M can attract promising, diverse early career faculty."² In 2020, two additional colleges are scheduled to join the program.

Despite these recognitions, accomplishments and activities, some challenges to reach espoused goals remain. Moreover, it is unclear how data are being used to inform university policies, practice and processes. A review of data can help identify and understand inhibiting factors and their root causes that prevent Texas A&M from becoming a place that is authentically welcoming, inclusive and affirming to all regardless of their social and cultural identities.

2. <https://diversity.tamu.edu/Diversity/media/diversity/PDF/State-of-Diversity-06-23-20-final2.pdf>

IVA. FINDINGS RELATED TO UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

Qualitative data on campus climate and culture indicate that students of color and other marginalized communities do not feel a sense of belonging at the same rate as White peers. This is an important finding because it highlights that improving admission and enrollment rates of students of color to reflect the demographics in the state is only a start; providing opportunities for these students to experience a sense of belonging on our campus is paramount to ensuring retention and graduation rate benchmarks are met.

Currently, Texas A&M embraces Texas's top ten percent plan, which provides students in the top ten percent of their high-school classes with automatic admission to any public university in the state, including the two flagship schools. Texas House Bill 588, which instituted this rule, was created as an answer to the restrictions of the *Hopwood v. Texas* appeals court case banning the use of affirmative action.

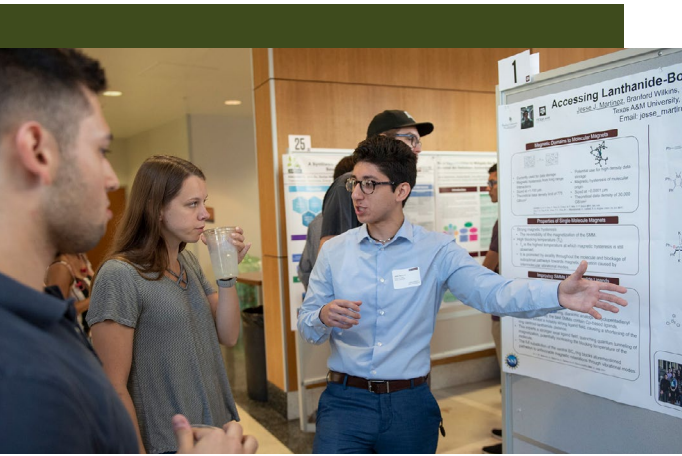
It is difficult to point to any particular policy as the root cause of the disparity between demographics and enrollment figures, though the inability to target populations by race or ethnicity is likely impeding efforts in this area. Developing specific policies aimed at increasing enrollment figures and retention for marginalized groups, including a reversal of the 2003 decision to not use race in admissions and scholarships in order to recruit and retain students of color, could be beneficial.

Texas A&M may potentially use race legally as a consideration in student admission as a tailored means of pursuing greater diversity if it can meet the standards articulated in the 2013 *Fisher v. University of Texas* case. Nevertheless, it is important to understand that it can be difficult to support and defend this type of admission policy under the standards of Equal Protection, as evidenced by continuous federal litigation.

Increasing targeted scholarships (particularly working with affiliate organizations like the Association of Former Students and Texas A&M Foundation) may also be a useful tool. For example, the Regents' Scholars Program has been a positive step toward bringing socio-economic diversity to Texas A&M.

This four-year scholarship program, established in fall 2004, is designed to assist first-generation college students with achieving their educational goals at Texas A&M. This program provides assistance to approximately 850 students each year, and racial and ethnic minority students represent 89% of the academic year 2019 freshman cohort.

In the summer of 2020, The Texas A&M University System board of regents voted unanimously to boost the effort by creating a \$100 million scholarship fund to address diversity issues on the system's 11 campuses. The program is aligned with the board's strategic plan, which articulates clearly the system's commitment to ensuring its institutions serve a diverse student body and better represent the population of the state. The program provides \$100 million over 10 years for scholarships, focusing on awards to low-income and first-generation college students as well as those from geographically underrepresented regions of the state.



Another program that is focused on increasing the number of underrepresented minority students who complete baccalaureate and doctoral degrees in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields is the Texas A&M University System Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (TAMUS LSAMP) program. A partnership composed of four system schools committed to increasing the number of underrepresented students participating in STEM fields, it is part of the larger LSAMP program of the National Science Foundation. The program began in 1990, and in the first eight years alone increased the number of degrees awarded to minority students by a factor of five, to more than 20,000.



RETENTION CONCERNS

- Black and African American students graduate at a rate 20% lower than White peers (61% versus 82%).
- Hispanic and Latinx students graduate at a rate 6% lower than White peers (76% versus 82%).
- Many peer institutions (e.g., University of Florida, University of Texas at Austin, University of Michigan and University of California, Los Angeles) do not experience these disparities to such a large extent.
- Qualitative data on campus climate and culture indicate that students of color and other marginalized communities do not feel a sense of belonging at the same rate as White peers.

"In addition to ignorance, outright defiance and denial is a usual response to discussions of oppressions with dominant groups (White, male, European, etc...), mandating these people address and acknowledge what behaviors are harmful will be a first step. In addition, teaching of discussion-subversion techniques such as derailing, plausibly deniable statements, and the use of macroaggressions would be critical to these courses.

In theory, promoting discussions on other cultures and diversity would be useful; however, realistically, the only students who would attend are not the ones who need them. The racist, sexist, etc., students have no interest in improving these aspects of the campus climate because they likely do not realize that they are the problem."

2016 Graduate Student Climate Survey

STATEMENTS FROM STUDENTS

"I was walking through academic plaza while talking on the phone in Spanish and I got asked if I was here legally and that the only reason I attended the school was because I had 'Mexican Scholarships.'"

#hateisthehiddencorevalue

"If anyone still doesn't think that racism is a problem @ TAMU please read through the #hateisthehiddencorevalue and LISTEN to these Aggie's stories. There IS a problem and it NEEDS to be addressed and fixed. If it's not coming from admin it has to come from students."

#hateisthehiddencorevalue

"#RacismAtTAMUFeelsLike the continued resistance to talking about the issue, telling students 'there is no racism at A&M, get over it.'"

"Freshman year my suitemate said 'I can't stand black people they are the reason I didn't get a scholarship, they take up all of A&M's money so people like me don't get anything when I am way more qualified than them.' Then she went even farther and said 'the least the black people could do is be grateful they could at least smile, don't they realize I'm paying for their check' — referring to the black workers on campus."

#hateisthehiddencorevalue

"The stories under this tag make me sick. If I could I would apologize to everyone who has been made to feel like they don't belong at A&M. You deserve to be here and you deserve to be heard. Aggies: we need to do better and be better this cannot continue."

#hateisthehiddencorevalue

"#BeingAPoCA@TAMU means being able to count on one hand the amount of PhDs EVER graduated by your department who share your ethnicity."

EXAMINING TEXAS A&M UNDERGRADUATE ENROLLMENT TRENDS BY ETHNICITY

- The data on undergraduate student enrollment³ show that the percentage of Black and African American students enrolled at Texas A&M has remained mostly unchanged since at least 1999: African American and/or Black students accounted for 2.66% of the undergraduate student population in 1999 and 3.15% in 2019. This percentage is far below the percentage of Blacks and African Americans in Texas, which is slightly above 12%.
- The number of Black and African American undergraduate students enrolled during this twenty-year period increased by 79% from 958 students to 1,715 students. Importantly, however, overall undergraduate student enrollment increased by approximately 51% during this period.

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT ENROLLMENT BY ETHNICITY

	1999	2019	Change
White	29,335	31,832	8.50%
Black	958	1,715	79.00%
Hispanic	3,398	13,352	292.90%
Total	36,077	54,476	51.00%

- Alarming, Black and African American female undergraduate student enrollment has declined more than 8% over the past four years.

UNDERGRADUATE BLACK AND AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENT ENROLLMENT

	1999	2019	Change
Male	417	827	98.30%
Female	541	888	64.14%
Total	958	1,715	79.02%

- The enrollment of Hispanic and Latinx undergraduate students has increased by 292.9% since 1999 to 9,954 students. It would be beneficial to understand how this growth occurred to better identify which policies and strategies had a role, and to evaluate if those policies and strategies could be successful in increasing the enrollment of other demographic groups.

3. Data from <https://dars.tamu.edu/Student/Enrollment-Profile> and <https://dars.tamu.edu/Student/files/enrollment-profile-fall-1999>

- It is difficult to point to a specific policy for the stagnation in Black and African American student enrollment and retaining those students once on campus, but significant qualitative data point to a culture of racism on campus and an unwelcoming environment. Domestic students of color and international students on campus have increasingly used their voices to make this known. They have relied on a variety of platforms to communicate their experiences with racism on and off campus and demanded action from the administration to make the campus, more welcoming, inclusive and accountable for acts of racism.
- College-level data show that two colleges have made progress in increasing Black and African American undergraduate student enrollment from 2014 to 2019. The College of Engineering has grown by a factor of 1.8 (240 students to 426), whereas the School of Public Health has increased by a factor of 43 (one student to 43). The College of Agriculture and Life Sciences has seen a decrease in Black and African American undergraduate enrollment, from 237 students to 203, whereas the College of Science has seen a decrease from 127 students to 88.
- More research is needed to better understand if specific strategies and culture changes in these colleges resulted in student growth or decline, or if the results were due to other factors, like overall enrollment growth in a college. Of course, any identified growth strategies could be employed across other colleges with accountability measures in place.



IVB. FINDINGS RELATED TO GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL STUDENTS

Analysis of 2015-2020 graduate and professional student enrollment data⁴ indicates the following key points:

- Although the total of White as well as Black and African American graduate and professional student numbers have remained constant, Hispanic and Latinx graduate students have increased by nearly 26% to compose 13% of the total number of graduate and professional students.
- The percentage of Black and African American graduate and professional student enrollment for fall 2020 (4.5%) is greater than the percentage of Black and African American undergraduate student enrollment (3.2%).
- International graduate student enrollment has declined by 18% over the past year, likely due to political factors and federal changes to student and work visas.
- Hispanic and Latinx graduate student enrollment and Black and African American graduate student enrollment percentages are underrepresented when compared to the state's demographics.
- The gap between female and male graduate and professional student enrollment has narrowed by 6% in fall 2020 (female at 47% and male at 53%). This resulted from a 6% increase in female enrollment and a 5% decrease in male enrollment.

	2015	2020	Change
Hispanic	1,563	1,965	25.70%
White	6,265	6,324	0.90%
Asian	1,030	1,111	7.90%
Black	617	663	7.50%
International	4,648	3,797	-18.30%
Total	14,599	14,616	1.10%

4. Data from <https://accountability.tamu.edu/All-Metrics/Mixed-Metrics/Student-Demographics> - accessed 11/05/20 - parameters: College Station & HSC, Masters, Doctoral, Professional

IVC. FINDINGS RELATED TO FACULTY AND STAFF

Faculty and staff are an important university community, because they commonly remain at an institution over long periods of time and greatly contribute to campus climate, inclusivity and culture. Data show that the percentage of faculty and staff of color remained relatively flat from 2015 to 2019. Some explanations for the shortcomings include a lack of accountability measures to help ensure policies for recruiting and hiring diverse faculty and staff are successful, and a need for additional resources related to increasing diversity.

Texas A&M is exploring several programs to address this shortfall, including the Accountability, Climate, Equity and Scholarship (ACES) Fellows Program, which is a faculty pipeline initiative that promotes the research, teaching and scholarship of early-career scholars who embrace the belief that diversity is an indispensable component of academic excellence.

Programs like ACES are valuable, and an excellent platform to accelerate attracting and retaining marginalized talent. Overall, most faculty are hired outside of this program. Expanding efforts like ACES, paired with a strong leadership

diversity focus, and creating assessment and accountability for evaluating how Texas A&M’s larger hiring practices affect diversity, could impact a larger number of diverse hires.

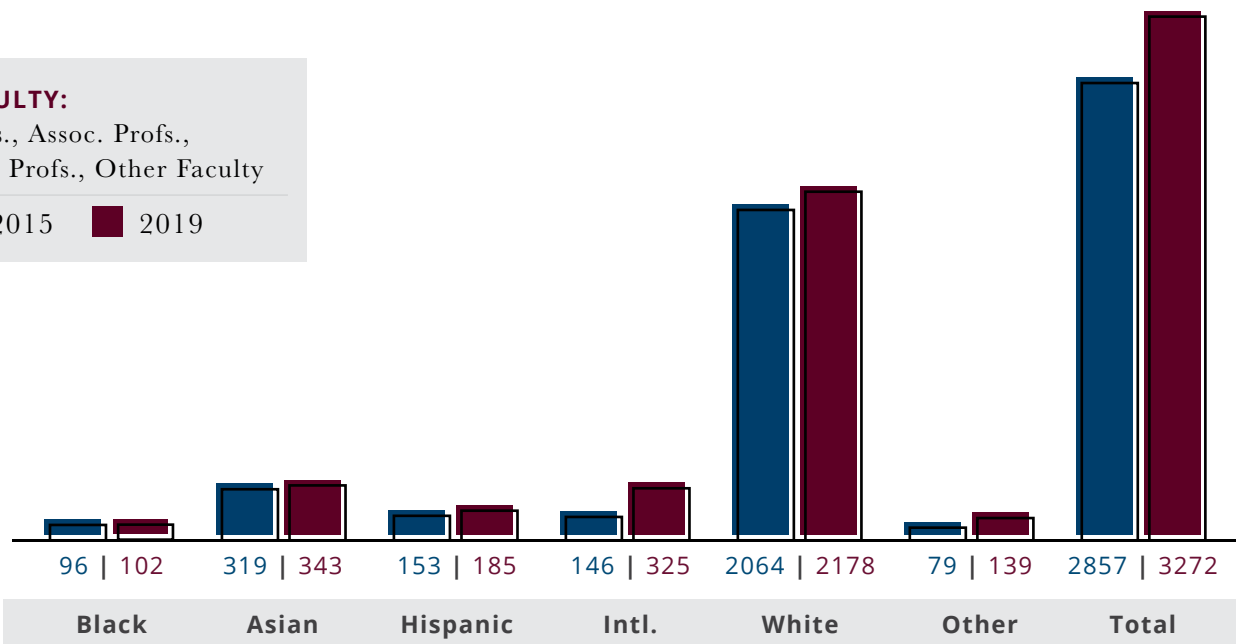
Texas A&M has policies and training (e.g., STRIDE) to help faculty search committees be more conscious of implicit bias regarding race and ethnicity and other forms of diversity. Nevertheless, an accountability and assessment system to ensure that these policies are being practiced seems absent. Moreover, there has not been an evaluation to determine the effectiveness of the STRIDE training.

It may be also beneficial to review the tools and creative options available within the bounds of the law to recruit and retain for gender, race and ethnicity as well as other social and cultural identities, to enhance and advance the university’s espoused commitment to DEI. The Texas A&M Office of Diversity 2020 State of Diversity report offers several examples of units making positive strategic efforts to focus on recruiting a diverse applicant pool.⁵

FACULTY:

Prof., Assoc. Profs.,
Asst. Profs., Other Faculty

■ 2015 ■ 2019



5. <https://diversity.tamu.edu/Diversity/media/diversity/PDF/State-of-Diversity-06-23-20-final2.pdf>



- Data indicate that faculty of color metrics are relatively flat from 2015 to 2019. This points to challenges in recruiting, retention climate and equity.
- The percentages of Black and African American and Hispanic and Latinx faculty and staff members at Texas A&M are below the state percentages: Black and African American 12% (Texas A&M: 3%) and Hispanic and Latinx 40% (Texas A&M: 6%).
- Some data belie underlying problems. For example, according to the 2015 Faculty Climate Surveys, “there were no statistically significant differences among racial and ethnic groups with respect to turnover intentions, burnout or life satisfaction. However, there were statistically significant differences among racial and ethnic groups with regard to job and career satisfaction: African American and non-Hispanic or Latinx White faculty members reported significantly higher levels of overall faculty satisfaction and a higher willingness to recommend Texas A&M to a colleague than did Asian faculty members and persons who did not report their races or ethnicities.”
- National trends reflect that students are increasingly seeking and demanding faculty who look like them and can serve as mentors. This desire is not being met, in that African Americans represent only 6% of full-time professors nationwide (3% at Texas A&M), while Hispanic and Latinx professors represent 6% nationwide and at Texas A&M.
- Black and African American students reported that faculty of color are their biggest advocate and not only provide them with tutorial services but also often play the role of counselor.⁶ Black and African American faculty may intervene administratively on behalf of students. They may also mentor and serve as a source of support for their Black and African American undergraduate students and to many Black and African American students who do not even enroll in their classes.
- Even with the small numbers of African American and Black students and Hispanic and Latinx students, with so few Black, African American, Hispanic and Latinx faculty, those faculty are routinely called upon by such students to help them navigate racial and cultural issues. Black and African American faculty mentoring aids in the retention of students of color at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs).⁷
- African American, Black, Hispanic and Latinx faculty are commonly expected to help oversee the climate health of African American, Black, Hispanic and Latinx students, in addition to helping students deal with micro and macro aggressions on campus and in the classroom. This added responsibility may not be appropriately recognized by academic leadership.

6. McClain, K. S., Perry, A. 2017. “Where Did They Go: Retention Rates for Students of Color at Predominantly White Institutions.” *College Student Affairs Leadership* 4.1, Article 3

7. Guiffrida, D. 2005. “Othermothering as frameworks for understanding African American students’ definitions of student centered faculty.” *Journal of Higher Education* 76.6: 701-723.

STAFF HEADCOUNT BY ETHNICITY BY FISCAL YEAR

	2014	2020
American Indian or Alaska Native	19	25
Asian	271	362
Black or African American	365	413
Declined to Specify	--	40
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	3	2
Hispanic or Latinx	567	849
Two or More Races	22	79
White	3,643	4,179
Unknown	67	120
Total	4,957	6,069

- Staff demographics have also remained relatively flat, with increases seen in White as well as Hispanic and Latinx staff hires.
- No programs were identified to specifically recruit and retain diverse staff.
- As an institution, Texas A&M has added a mandatory question to faculty and staff applications regarding ways they will work to value DEI for applicants. A question for reference checks now addresses this question as well. These are small steps, but more is needed to help ensure that DEI is valued on the campus, particularly when it comes to hiring faculty and staff.

IVD. FINDINGS RELATED TO COMMUNITY AND VENDORS

Texas A&M exists within the context of the local and surrounding Bryan/College Station community. There were no reported criminal incidents involving hate or bias in 2016, 2017 and 2018, although it is known that some students do experience issues within the community.

More time should be spent exploring the issues relative to community that are impacting DEI at this institution, including:

- The Public Partnership & Outreach program in the Office of the Provost is a strong asset in that it provides services to enhance the relationships, outreach and scholarly engagement of faculty, departments and colleges, as well as the Division of Academic Affairs. Staff within this office facilitate collaborative outreach to the public and various constituent communities with the goal of strengthening Texas A&M's service to and impact with the people of Texas. Their goal is to provide advice and support for the design, delivery and assessment of outreach programs, protocols, promotions, event management and local, regional and global partnerships and academic collaboration services. Locally, this office is engaged with the cities, economic development boards and school districts.
- Students, faculty and staff receive timely warnings according to Federal Clery Act guidelines.⁸
- Clery Act data include all incidents of Clery Act crimes reported to the institution that occurred within Clery Act campus locations, regardless of whether the individual reporting was a member of the campus community and regardless of whether the individual chose to move forward with the criminal justice or campus disciplinary proceedings. To prepare the annual disclosure of crime statistics, the institution collects information from internal sources, such as campus police and other campus security authorities, and requests information from external sources, such as the Bryan and College Station police departments. The university relies on external entities to report these incidents to it when requested, but there is no penalty against the university if the external entities fail to provide the information.⁹
- In 2016, 2017 and 2018, there were no reported criminal incidents involving hate or bias. Students have shared that incidents are not reported because the institution does not have the policies in place to hold violators accountable. The StopHate reports also include additional information that may not be found in other community reports.

8. <https://upd.tamu.edu/Crime%20Logs/Forms/AllItems.aspx>

9. <https://nokwv2p4iir3h3frsml79d3t-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/CSAnnualSecurityReport.pdf>

- Maltreatment of faculty, staff and students within the Bryan/College Station community and within the Northgate area is part of the complex issue tied to recruitment and retention. Though some may view these as isolated incidents, they are part of the problem for this institution.
- In the 2016 Graduate Student Climate Survey, graduate students were asked to report whether they had experienced concerns in regard to their personal safety at Texas A&M. Eighty-five percent of the graduate student respondents reported “no” to this question. Those who replied “yes” were further asked specific questions to the causes of these concerns. These findings revealed that 71% of the respondents expressed safety concerns from the Bryan/College Station community.



TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY HISTORICALLY UNDERUTILIZED BUSINESS (HUB) 2016-2020

- The university has a robust Historically Underutilized Business (HUB) program. The university outlay to these organizations has exceeded 17% from 2016 through 2019 and exceeded 21% in FY20. The university has numerous trade shows on campus in order to educate the campus community regarding HUB opportunities.
- Texas A&M has increased its outlay with Black or African American-owned businesses. Some \$11.5M was spent in FY20. This amount is the average annual spend for the preceding four years. While this amount exceeds the average annual spend for the preceding four years, university spend was atypical in latter FY20 due to COVID-19 campus preparations, so caution is warranted regarding interpreting FY20 results as a pattern in any category.
- It would be beneficial to compare Texas A&M’s performance in this area to in-state and out-of-state peer institutions.

V.

VOICES FROM
THE COMMUNITY

V. VOICES FROM THE COMMUNITY (COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT)

As Texas A&M is a land-grant institution dedicated to serving the community, the opinions of institutional stakeholders are necessary to understand the full scope of the issue and the demands of different segments. Texas A&M and the Bryan/College Station community were invited to share their views to help the commission better understand perceptions of DEI, both generally and at the university itself.

More than 350 individuals participated in five commission listening sessions, and more than 100 one-on-one interviews were conducted by the members of the community engagement subcommittee. Former students, Texas A&M administrators, current students, staff, faculty and community members contributed, sharing their personal and professional insights and experiences. Additionally, the commission received numerous submissions and suggestions through letters, email comments and an online feedback form, giving rich insights and opinions from a wide spectrum of thought and attitudes.

NOTE

The content presented throughout the community voices section includes direct quotes garnered from individual participants and represents a diverse set of opinions, views and voices. These listening sessions, interviews and other forms of dialogue prioritized empathetic listening, and the feedback informed trends and themes of the community in the commission's findings.

Previously, Texas A&M had worked to engage students and faculty through various campus surveys exploring campus climate and culture, as well as viewpoints on more controversial issues pertaining to race, gender, ethnicity and religion. While these surveys provide some insight into opinions on the state of DEI at Texas A&M, they do not effectively capture the qualitative data of personal experiences, perspectives and reasoning behind the ultimate opinions of stakeholders. Stakeholders continue to feel as though they are not being seen or heard, and these feelings of invisibility leave members of the Texas A&M community feeling undervalued. Over time, this erodes the sense of community and loyalty that is a bedrock of the university.

Exploring responses to questions that prompt more than a “yes” or “no” response will provide insight into the reasons behind often-passionate opinions surrounding Texas A&M’s DEI efforts. Exploring these reasons will assist the university in identifying strengths and weaknesses of existing approaches to DEI while highlighting opportunities to enhance and threats to mitigate in collaborating with stakeholders in this space.

IN AN EFFORT TO PROVIDE CONSISTENCY, THE COMMITTEE CRAFTED QUESTIONS TO PROMPT DISCUSSION ON THE FOLLOWING TOPICS:

- Aggie identity
- general perceptions of DEI
- Core Values and traditions
- expectations regarding the university's DEI efforts
- blind spots in those efforts

The subcommittee engaged in one-on-one conversations with more than 100 respondents across different constituencies, races, genders, ethnicities, sexual orientations and religions.

PARTICIPANTS IN ONE-ON-ONE CONVERSATIONS AND IN FOCUS GROUPS WERE ASKED THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

1. What is your connection to Texas A&M University?
(Current Student, Former Student, Staff, Faculty or Other)
2. How do you define what it means to be an Aggie?
3. Has your definition changed over time?
4. Is there a correct way to define being an Aggie?
5. The terms “Diversity, Equity and Inclusion” have many definitions and perceptions. When you hear these terms, do you have a favorable or unfavorable perception? Why?
6. Which of these Core Values do you connect with the most (Respect, Loyalty, Leadership, Integrity)? Does this value connect you to Texas A&M history and traditions? Why or why not?
7. What would you like to see from Texas A&M right now?
8. Is there anything else you would like the Commission on DEI to know?

Additional impactful quotes gathered directly from the community can be found in the appendix.

VA. COMMUNITY VOICES FINDINGS



VA.I. COMMUNITY FEEDBACK: IDENTITY INFLUENCES OPINION ON DEI

An individual's personal lens has a significant influence on their response to DEI at Texas A&M. Overall, respondents agreed that every person has their own unique definition of what it means to be an Aggie, which is impacted by their experience with the university. While there are many ways to define being an Aggie, many respondents agreed there is an incorrect way to define being an Aggie — specifically, exhibiting attitudes and behaviors (such as disrespect) that contradict the Core Values of Texas A&M.

Whether or not respondents felt there was a correct way to define being an Aggie, responses were rooted in Texas A&M's Core Values as a prerequisite to any acceptable definition. The majority of respondents stated that their definitions had evolved over time from their first impression, and that their understanding of what it means to be an Aggie grows deeper with more experience with and/or exposure to Texas A&M. Even those who felt their definition of an Aggie had not changed over time still referenced that more interaction with and/or exposure to the university expanded their perspective on the diverse ways in which their definition can manifest.

Across constituencies, when asked how one defines what it means to be an Aggie, the characteristics were positive and centered around the Aggie Family, community and being part of something bigger than themselves. In addition to the general reference of Core Values or a reference to a specific Core Value, respondents also used “inclusive” and “welcoming” to define what it means to be an Aggie. There was often a reference to a strong sense of honor and personal responsibility.

It is noteworthy that while the majority of respondents stipulated to a variety of ways an Aggie can be defined, with a resounding reference to Core Values, most also acknowledged stereotypes surrounding the Aggie definition. These included participating in Aggie football, being conservative, participating in “all of the traditions” and “not being a two-percenter.” Those who felt like they did not belong to or were alienated by the Aggie Family often pointed to the exclusivity and/or rigid nature of a variety of these stereotypes.

VA.2. COMMUNITY FEEDBACK: DEI EFFORTS MUST BE SUPPORTED BY ONGOING ENGAGEMENT

The composition of communities as well as the challenges facing them is subject to change. While Texas A&M's commitment to DEI should be constant, our response and associated efforts must continuously adapt to inevitable change. Texas A&M has an opportunity to remain engaged with stakeholders on the topic of DEI. An ongoing commitment to engagement will foster trust and provide an opportunity to receive and disseminate information.

Respondents across constituencies placed a high value on transparency and expressed a desire for more effective communication with university leadership. Many expressed wanting to be heard and wanting to hear why certain decisions were made. There was an understanding across constituencies that the decision would not always be one that made them happy. The value was placed on being provided with the thought process behind the decision in an effort to foster understanding in the event that agreement was not possible. Community Engagement efforts revealed that stakeholders are thirsting for more opportunities to share their perspectives and were grateful for the efforts of the commission to seek their input.

While the efforts of this commission cast a wide net in seeking feedback from the community, there are still many current and former students, faculty, staff and other stakeholders who were not engaged. Engagement is voluntary, but an open invitation to share feedback and partner with Texas A&M on DEI efforts could increase success.

VA.3. COMMUNITY FEEDBACK: DEI EFFORTS MUST BE TAILORED TOWARD CONSTITUENCIES FOR EFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT

While there were common trends across constituencies related to DEI, targeted community engagement revealed specific blind spots and challenges unique to each constituency group (student, faculty, etc.). A stakeholder's reception to DEI efforts and perspective on desired action from the university was highly dependent on their current relationship to Texas A&M.

Each constituency has a different set of resources and methods with which it can influence the university's DEI efforts. A comprehensive response to DEI should include plans that center the voice of each constituency, partner with their leadership and provide them resources they need to advance their efforts. Below are specific findings tailored to each constituency.



VA.4.**COMMUNITY FEEDBACK: DEI EFFORTS MUST BE FULLY INTEGRATED THROUGHOUT TEXAS A&M AND REQUIRE ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

Stakeholders had a myriad of responses for the commission on what they would like to see from Texas A&M right now. The general themes of bold leadership, decisive action and clear messaging permeated most responses. The feedback revealed a need for coordination throughout the university and additional resources to support a sustained commitment to these efforts.

SOME OF THE SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS GIVEN BY COMMISSION COMMENTATORS INCLUDE:**Participant Suggestions**

- Acknowledgment and ownership of Texas A&M's history that runs counter to DEI efforts
- Representation of Black, Indigenous and Persons of Color (BIPOC) in leadership and decision-making roles at Texas A&M
- Representation of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBTQ+) community in leadership and decision-making roles at Texas A&M
- Increased availability of DEI curriculum and training for students, faculty and staff
- Establishment of a Mexican American studies program
- Establishment of Diversity as a Core Value
- Placement of the Ross statue in context
- Removal of the Ross statue from its current location
- Clear condemnation of hateful actions and those who create hate
- Seeking the voices of current students in conversations vs. those of wealthy donors
- Establishment of the position of Deans of Black Student Life, Hispanic Student Life and Asian Student Life
- Diversification of faculty and creation of an inclusive environment to assist in retention
- Establishment of new and inclusive traditions
- Prioritization of campus climate as significantly as research dollars
- Unity in messaging
- Native American Land acknowledgment
- An inclusive focus on diversity that recognizes diversity of thought and perspective
- Increased support for international students
- Better-defined Core Values

VA.5. FACULTY COMMENTS AND THEMES

Many faculty who were interviewed do not feel like they are Aggies. They define being an Aggie as a status reserved for students.

- **Definitions of an Aggie varied among faculty.**
 - Many faculty equate this with football and traditions
 - Some faculty thought it was reserved for White students
 - Some faculty indicated it was defined by adherence to Core Values
 - Other faculty defined being an Aggie by personal attributes (friendliness, personal responsibility and pride in the institution)
- **The definition of an Aggie changed for many faculty.**
 - For some faculty, their first impression was that Texas A&M was a very conservative, Christian and militaristic place. This perception evolved as faculty began to interact with more underrepresented minority students.
 - Several faculty indicated that their perception of what it means to be an Aggie has deteriorated over time. They feel that many students must fight against the culture, and do not feel welcome.
- **Faculty did not feel there was a correct way to be an Aggie.**
 - Some faculty indicated that the perception is that there is a correct way, and that there is an unspoken code.
 - Most faculty felt that there is not and should not be a “correct” way to be an Aggie.
- **Most faculty were favorably inclined toward the terms “diversity, equity and inclusion.”**
 - The majority of faculty have a strong favorable view towards DEI, but many felt we fall short in these arenas.
 - Several faculty were less favorable about the term “diversity.” Reasons included that diversity had a political context and had been “co-opted by liberals,” either well-intentioned or not, or that it simply lacked specific meaningful context.
- **Most faculty identified with the Core Value of Integrity, but indicated that this value does not connect to our history and traditions.**
 - Many faculty felt that our traditions and history do not align with Integrity (or Respect) for women, LGBTQ+ and People of Color. They indicated that the traditions do not resonate with them personally.
 - A few faculty indicated that Integrity does connect to Muster, for example. Also, that the institution does not lack Integrity.



- **The large majority of faculty interviewed want Texas A&M to take action, and want increased accountability related to DEI, including a significant monetary investment.**
 - Many faculty indicated that Texas A&M does not sufficiently engage with or address the needs of students, faculty and staff of color. Other faculty pointed out the institution does not adequately support women or LGBTQ+ members of the campus community.
 - Several faculty indicated that the institution needs to “put its money where its mouth is” with respect to DEI.
 - Several faculty said we need to devote significant new resources to hiring cohorts of faculty of color and developing mechanisms where faculty, staff and students of color can interact with each other and feel safe.
 - Several faculty mentioned that many students of color do not feel safe at Texas A&M.
 - Some faculty indicated we need to provide more education on the true history of the institution.
 - Some faculty expressed concern about the lack of transparency and the rigid, top-down approach from the institution.
- **Faculty want the commission to know that there must be transformational change, but the level of optimism that this commission will bring about such change is low.**
- **The majority of faculty thought that the Ross statue should be moved to another site on campus and not be a centerpiece of the campus.** All faculty interviewed felt that there should be some historical and contextual information provided if the statue stays where it is.

VA.6.

FORMER STUDENTS' COMMENTS AND THEMES

The definition of an Aggie varied among former students, but themes such as Core Values and being part of a family or larger community did emerge.

- **The definition of an Aggie hasn't changed so much as evolved.**
 - Most former students will say it hasn't changed but has become less narrow and more inclusive.
 - Those who see the most change are older, and they see it as being more inclusive.
 - Core Values are the themes that remain where change is noted.
- **Former students did not feel there was a “correct way” to be an Aggie.**
 - The Aggie experience is beginning to differ, and each student has their definition of what it is.
 - “Two-percenters” are becoming less of a “thing.”
 - What makes Aggies and Texas A&M different is the availability of so many

opportunities to get involved. Aggies find their place, find their tribes and the university wants to attract students who seek that out and want to become leaders. That isn't (and shouldn't be) for everyone.

- **Favorability of DEI was mixed among former students.**

- Unfavorable perception stems from politically charged context (association with far left) and the intention to divide and/or highlight what makes us different vs. what brings us together (tribalism).



- Equity can be perceived as providing for equality regardless of merit (unfavorable) as opposed to equal opportunity (favorable).
- Diversity should not be limited to race or gender, but to thoughts as well.

- **Most former students identified with the Core Values of Respect, Integrity and Leadership (in that order).**

- Whether or not we “walk the walk” was questioned for Respect, which also calls into question regard for Integrity if we say one thing and do another.
- Respect and Integrity are inherent character traits, but Leadership is part of the experience you can gain from being an Aggie.
- There was little connection between Core Values and traditions, with the exception of members of the Corps of Cadets who felt strongly that Leadership and Loyalty were instilled in them during their time in the Corps.

- **The large majority of former students want to see more visibility around the effort and success of DEI initiatives.**

- Better leadership around concerns on DEI should be offered in a way that wins hearts and minds — not forced upon everyone.
- DEI needs to be genuine and authentic, not paper-pushing, agenda-driving, empty initiatives.
- Better messaging should tell the Texas A&M story and be used to describe a more inclusive and broader Aggie Experience.
- Better definition and communication regarding the expectations behind our Core Values is needed.

- **Nearly all felt that “something needed to be done about Sully.”** The few participants that explicitly wanted it removed from Academic Plaza suggested that it be moved to Cushing or an archival location and be given more interpretation and context. Others suggested that more context and a complete story (with all its complexity) could be told if left in Academic Plaza. Multiple conversations indicated that it should be a visible reminder of how far we have come.

VA.7.

STAFF COMMENTS AND THEMES

Generally, Texas A&M staff who were interviewed believe there is not a “correct way” to define being an Aggie. They reference the Core Values of Respect and Integrity as central to what it means to be an Aggie. They believe that at times, the university falls short of its claims of emulating Core Values.

- **Texas A&M is making great strides and improvements in DEI efforts and needs to build upon those.**
 - The focus should be on unity and respect.
 - The university should refrain from being political and work against infighting and towards peace.
- **Some staff feel alienated if they did not go to school at Texas A&M.**
 - They have feelings of being a “perpetual outsider” and have difficulty connecting to the Aggie culture.
 - There is a palpable feeling from staff that they lack agency and are treated as second-class citizens at Texas A&M.
- **Overall, staff want to see action taken along with an acknowledgement of Texas A&M’s history.**
 - True leadership is necessary.
 - Silence is not the answer.
 - All parts of the university should be moving in the same direction towards DEI.
 - Traditions should evolve.
 - Harmful and offensive traditions should be discontinued.
 - Current students should be centered and valued as much as former students and donors.
 - Leadership should take risks.
 - Leadership should focus on healing.
- **Staff believe that more resources are needed to support DEI efforts.**
 - Training and the space to make mistakes are needed.
 - Mentors and accountability groups should be made available.
 - Staff should be included as a model of Core Values.

- **Staff who mentioned the Ross statue expressed that context was important.** The bad parts of Ross’s history should be acknowledged with the good.

VA.8.

CURRENT STUDENTS COMMENTS AND THEMES

Current students have a broad and inclusive definition of what it means to be an Aggie. Their definition of an Aggie centers on Core Values and the Aggie Code of Honor, and they believe the definition of an Aggie has become more inclusive during their time at Texas A&M.

- **Current students did not feel there was a “correct way” to be an Aggie.**
- **Most current students were favorably inclined toward the terms “diversity, equity and inclusion.”**
 - They feel frustrated when DEI efforts appear superficial.
 - They believe DEI should be more inclusive.
 - They want more transparency and communication from leadership on DEI issues.
- **Tension exists between the desires of current students and former students on DEI issues.**
 - Current students want their voices to be heard as loudly as those of former students.
 - Former students unfairly claim ownership over what it means to be an Aggie.
 - They believe that the administration cares more about wealthy donors than the desires of current students.
 - Students want to be able to provide constructive criticism and improve Texas A&M without being accused of hating Texas A&M or being less than an Aggie.
- **Most current students identify with the Core Value of Respect, followed by Integrity.**
 - Some felt the Core Values did connect to the history and traditions of Texas A&M but that current students are not given as much respect.
 - Some felt Core Values are not reflected in the history and traditions of Texas A&M because of the exclusionary nature of the founding of the university.
 - They believe the Aggie experience doesn’t just happen on campus. Aggies belonging to marginalized communities are disrespected off campus as well, and the university should be involved in discouraging that behavior.
- **There is a fear from current students that nothing will change and that the commission is an attempt to keep them quiet.**
 - Texas A&M has created several commissions and issued several reports on DEI before.
 - No clear communication about what the university has achieved in DEI efforts.
 - Texas A&M has a habit of not following up words with actions.



- **Current students want the commission to know that bold leadership is necessary and words are not enough.**
- **Current students believe that a final decision needs to be made on the Ross statue and that it needs to come from university leadership.** Current students are more likely to prioritize the feelings of their marginalized classmates than the tradition.

VA.9.

GREATER BRYAN/ COLLEGE STATION COMMUNITY COMMENTS AND THEMES

"While I was walking out of HEB, I made eye contact with a random guy. He glared at me and slightly pulled his knife out of a knife sheath thing that was connected to his confederate flag belt. It wasn't on campus, but he was wearing a TAMU shirt".

#hateisthehiddencorevalue

"I was volunteering once and one of our coordinators said 'don't worry about doing that, that's some poor Mexican's job'."

#hateisthehiddencorevalue

- **Definitions of what it means to be an Aggie are generally positive.**
 - There is pride in being an Aggie.
 - Being an Aggie is "all-consuming."
 - It is rooted in the Core Values and is generally seen as commitment to Texas A&M.
 - Many people in the greater Bryan/College Station community consider themselves Aggies even though they did not attend Texas A&M.
 - Texas A&M is the largest employer in Bryan/College Station, and employment at the university is often multi-generational.
- **The definition of what it means to be an Aggie has evolved.**
 - The university's employment decisions and benefits have had negative impacts on residents of Bryan/College Station and soured what it means to be an Aggie (e.g., outsourcing, stagnating wages, etc.).
 - Joining the SEC has impacted residents of Bryan/College Station, and football is now a bigger piece of what it means to be an Aggie than it used to be.

- **There is no “correct way” to be an Aggie.**

The definition of what it means to be an Aggie should be inclusive.

- **Perceptions of DEI are generally favorable.**

The Bryan/College Station community feels more diverse than the student body at Texas A&M.

- **Texas A&M’s Core Values are something to strive for,** but they are not always reflected in the actions of the university or Aggie students.

- **Many in the broader community would like to see the university take a stronger position in favor of DEI.** What happens at the university has ripple effects throughout the entire community.

- **Texas A&M should more expressly support its students and student athletes who stand for unity.**

- **Texas A&M’s Core Values should be reflected in how it cares for its staff that help the university run every day.** There seems to be a lack of equity in the treatment of staff (including staff outsourced to SSC), and people appear to be separated into the highs and the lows.



VB. SUMMARY OF OPEN COMMUNITY LISTENING SESSIONS

In total, a pool of more than 350 people participated in listening sessions. As with the previous section, these comments are direct feedback from participants. The most consistent participant opinions and themes from across all listening sessions are summarized below.

The most frequently mentioned theme was a desire for action to improve DEI. Most of these participants expressed concern over the lack of DEI, emphasizing that certain traditions are not inclusive or welcoming to people of color. Solutions proposed for action include more venues for civil discourse, admitting more minorities and thoughtfully addressing behaviors counter to DEI. Some students mentioned the need to widen the definition of diversity: increasing facilities for disabled people, introducing halal dining or including LGBTQ+ into the conversation on diversity.

The second-most mentioned theme was the desire to move the Ross statue. These stakeholders generally believed that this statue now was a physical symbol of disrespect.

Third, many brought up the need for leadership training or support for hiring and managing diverse groups. Many individuals expressed feeling unable to discuss concerns, given the outwardly homogenous views expressed on campus and pressure to conform or self-censor even if they disagree with the views. Having such programming was cited as a first step to rectifying the situation.

The fourth-most frequently mentioned theme was that many felt a lack of respect on campus and that few care about their opinion. (This sentiment was expressed primarily by current students.)

In line with the fourth theme, the fifth theme was that there was a need to clarify what the Core Values mean. Nearly all agreed the Core Values are important but indicated that without examples of “what ‘right’ looks like,” the terms cannot be used as guiding principles. Those who stated that they felt a lack of respect attributed the deplorable actions of others to this lack of an operational definition.

Finally, the sixth-most commonly discussed theme was the desire to maintain the Ross statue as is. The reasons cited behind such statements were to prevent erasing history, to honor tradition and to commemorate Ross. It should be mentioned that many who advocated to keep the statue acknowledged racism on campus and expressed the need for DEI improvements, but did not feel removing the statue would achieve this objective. About one quarter of the participants expressed a desire to make no changes to the Ross statue, while the remaining three quarters advocated moving or eliminating the statue.

There appear to be generational gaps in opinions related to the statue as well, with older participants expressing a desire to leave the statue alone while younger generations advocate for relocation/removal. However, this was not always the case; as one former student stated: “If [current] students want it gone, it’s not up to old A&Ms, and I am an old Ag speaking.” Another stated that the students are the ones who are on campus most and therefore the ones who actually see the statue regularly. Although it was only explicitly stated a few times, the overall sentiment was not combative, and most participants indicated they participated in the listening session because they love Texas A&M and want it to succeed.

VI.

SYMBOLS, NAMINGS
AND ICONOGRAPHY

VI. SYMBOLS, NAMINGS AND ICONOGRAPHY

"It's not about the statue. I know the question of what to do about Sully is top of mind right now, but we have to go deeper. So much of the public debate has been about who Sul Ross was and whether he's an appropriate symbol of Texas A&M's values. But the conflict itself is about how people feel and what they are afraid of.

One side has exceptionally positive feelings about their time at Texas A&M and may even idealize it, especially since life today feels extra complicated, and the increase in our community's diversity has meant they've had to grapple with hard questions that they didn't have to before. They fear that an important part of American culture, and of their lives personally, is going to be undervalued and ultimately lost if that statue goes away.

For folks on the other side, the statue is a symbol and reminder of the times they have felt ignored, oppressed, rejected and hurt. They fear that their university doesn't care about them and is not for them if the statue stays. The real challenge is to help people work through THOSE thoughts and feelings. If you can help everyone arrive at a shared reality where everyone is valued and feels valued, the statue debate will be much less of an issue."

Listening session participant

Many universities across the nation have faced escalating protests over campus symbols, namings and iconography in recent years. These statues and building names are often viewed as a proxy to the school's mission, values and culture, defined as the set of ideas and behaviors shared by a group of people, including its traditions.

VIA. PURPOSE OF SYMBOLS, NAMINGS AND ICONOGRAPHY

To begin, it serves to understand the purpose of public symbols and their relation to the concept of history. There are currently two accepted concepts of history: “a record of things from the past that should not be forgotten” and commemoration of the past that expresses values.¹

Public statues are not meant to teach a record of the past². Most monuments and namings are accompanied only by a short plaque summarizing the contribution of the person whom it honors. Rather than teaching history, such symbols are erasing it because they only tell one side of the story, the side that focuses on the positives, normalizing that single narrative and erasing alternative versions. This was evident in the listening sessions — a large number of participants stated that they were unaware until recently of Lawrence Sullivan Ross’s role in the Confederacy and Native American genocide. In short, statues in general, including Ross’s, do not, and are not meant to, teach a record of the past.

The value of symbols and iconography in public spaces is what they indicate about the culture of the society that created them, and perhaps later altered or removed them. In other words, public names and monuments commemorate a person or event. They inform us of what a society thought worthy of recognition in the past when it was erected, and at present, if it is still standing.

The symbols and monuments at Texas A&M are therefore a story of us — who we honor and celebrate, what stories we tell, what values we hold and who we aspire to be. To date, Texas A&M’s symbols and iconography omit any celebrations, stories or accomplishments surrounding minorities and instead heavily center on those of White males. This is partially a result of

Texas A&M’s history of only admitting that demographic for the first century of its existence. However, since the 1960s, Texas A&M’s history, traditions and values changed once the university admitted Black men and then women.

This change in values can be seen in Texas A&M’s symbols and iconography. There have been discussions to create a diversity plaza and install a statue of Matthew Gaines to commemorate both his contribution as Washington County’s first African American state senator and Texas A&M values: “that any Aggie, regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, religion, or background, can make a lasting impact on our campus.”³



This initiative was begun in 1998, but was abandoned due to the Bonfire tragedy. As of 2020, funding has been secured and the Gaines statue is in the process of being designed.

Texas A&M has also worked not just to add symbols but to remove racist symbols, systems and narratives (e.g., Confederate flags and sexist images from Corps of Cadet outfit insignia, skirts at Fish Camp with racist/sexist/homophobic undertones, racist/homophobic fables by the yell leaders at midnight yell, etc.). Images of exclusion (racist tropes in annuals, Ku Klux Klan robes worn by notable Aggies, etc.) are no longer displayed in the open and are in Cushing Memorial Library & Archives for community members who wish to study the evolution of Texas A&M.

1. https://president.yale.edu/sites/default/files/files/CEPR_FINAL_12-2-16.pdf

2. <https://clarencelb30.medium.com/statues-arent-our-history-theyre-our-archaeology-e3f12996092a>

3. <https://studentaffairs.tamu.edu/matthew-gaines-statue/>

VIB. THE LAWRENCE SULLIVAN ROSS STATUE AT TEXAS A&M

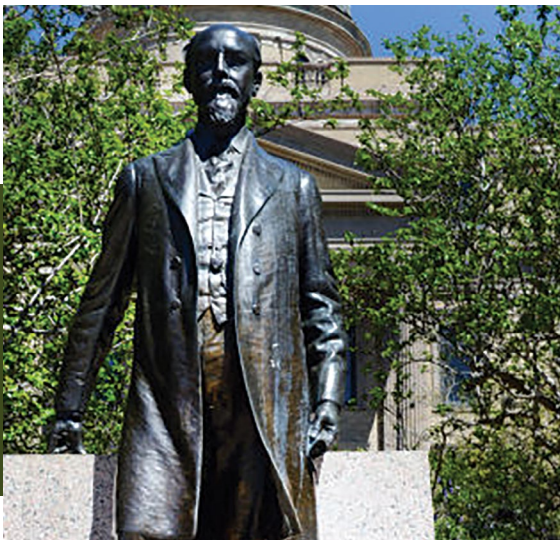
Most recently, the Lawrence Sullivan Ross statue has come under scrutiny as the country and other institutions of higher education examine images and symbols with racist origins in public spaces. At the time the statue was erected in 1919, Texas A&M felt honoring Ross was consistent with campus values, and he was viewed as a role model. Judith Ann Benner, a well-known historian on the Civil War, Texas and the Confederacy, wrote in her full-scale biography of Ross published in the Centennial Series of the Association of Former Students, Texas A&M University that:

“[n] the days, weeks, and months after his death, those who had known Lawrence Sullivan Ross expressed what his life had meant to them. Comrades of ranger fights, veterans of the Civil War, statesman friends of governmental days, and the faculty, alumni, and students of A&M College poured forth praise. His courage, honesty, and public spirit were extolled, and he was compared to George Washington and Robert E. Lee as a Southern ideal.

Other memorials took more lasting form. Less than a week after Ross’s death, the former cadets of A&M were planning a suitable monument. Funds poured in, but the memorial was not actually begun until the state appropriated ten thousand dollars toward the project in 1917. The ten-foot bronze statue, a creation of Pompeo Coppini, was unveiled on May 4, 1919, with appropriate ceremonies.”

*From *Sul Ross: Soldier, Statesman, Educator* by Judith Ann Benner*

Today, the intent of the Ross statue and the tradition of pennies on Sully is still to commemorate him. The statue is placed in the center of campus in a prominent location, making a literal and figurative statement that the statue is central to



Texas A&M. As one student said, “As long as [the statue] has a place of honor, it is a message that this is how the University really feels.” The Texas A&M Traditions website corroborates this sentiment by stating that Ross is “the embodiment of Aggie Spirit” and the tradition of leaving pennies is meant to be a way to “pay homage” and that his statue “stands as one of the most iconic landmarks on campus, situated in the heart of campus in the Academic Plaza.”⁴ In short, nearly all stakeholders agree that the statue and its placement is intended to, and does, confer honor.

The question is what the statue now symbolizes to current students, institutional stakeholders and the public, and whether or not this symbol is out of step with the current lived values of Texas A&M. In other words, what aspect about the statue are we honoring and does this aspect align with today’s Texas A&M?

4. <https://www.tamu.edu/traditions/aggie-culture/pennies-on-sully/index.html>

VIC. FINDINGS

The views of the campus community on the meaning of the Ross statue are polarized, largely along the demographics of race, ethnicity and age. This divide is illustrated in an article in the *Washington Post* from September 8, 2020⁵. It is also clear in the surveys produced from the Student Senate, Texas A&M staff council and other polls this past summer.

While there were many diverse views, of those who voiced an opinion on the matter to the commission, a greater number were in favor of moving/replacement, as discussed in *Voices of the Community*.

The history of both positive and negative sides of Ross's contribution are well documented. The root cause of this conflict, though complex, is essentially dual-faceted: those who see the statue as a symbol of tradition and selfless service and those who see the statue as a symbol of hate, disrespect and intolerance.

Proponents of the statue believe it only honors Ross as a former president of Texas A&M, governor of Texas, general in the Confederate Army, and for his role in saving the college when it was at risk of being closed. Many current and former students have also shared their views that the statue is a symbol of tradition and to them, Ross is a role model that exemplifies such values. Former students have suggested that current students who want to move the statue should go to another institution rather than change Texas A&M.

The statue holds value for proponents as a reminder of tradition and history, invoking a sense of nostalgia for former students and as commemoration of Ross himself, specifically for his commitment to the university (but not negative aspects of his history and actions, which are omitted).

One former student said, "A&M's founders and government officers of the State of Texas who made it successful were some of the giants of Texas history...The statue, building names and street names honoring these men must remain inviolate on the campus of Texas A&M University. Don't destroy them, don't eradicate them, don't slander them."

Opponents to the statue recognize Ross's contributions to the university; however, they believe he should not be honored due to other roles he held, including his leadership in the Confederate army, which fought to preserve slavery as an institution, and his participation in the massacre of indigenous people. Opponents of the statue believe that it honors the anti-value of disrespect. To them, Ross is a prominent, visual reminder of a time when individuals fought to keep oppressive structures and systems that devalued the humanity of historically marginalized groups.

The "fight" to keep the statue is viewed by some as disrespectful because it prioritizes an exclusionary statue over making a more welcoming and inclusive community where all Aggies can thrive. A student commented, "When looking at the purpose of statues and symbols, they indicate to all those surrounding what this institution values and upholds. His statue serves a physical manifestation of exclusion on this campus, especially when the university pushes traditions surrounding it, like 'Pennies on Sully', which not all student groups feel comfortable participating in due to who Sullivan Ross was." Furthermore, many of those who are "pro-Sully" have weaponized the Aggie traditions and chants to make those opposing the statue feel "Un-Aggie" during recent protests.

5. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2020/09/08/debates-over-race-history-values-challenge-texas-am-campuses-student-body-diversifies/>

VID. CAMPUS ICONOGRAPHY, SYMBOL AND NAMING CASE STUDIES

“Change is constant, and our propensity as Aggies is to be late to the party due to traditional mindsets. I’m not sure if I’m considered an old Aggie or a new Aggie, but I think we would be wise to learn from our past and evaluate what our history teaches us about ourselves. We cannot afford to be insular and disregard what outsiders observe of our behavior.”

Former student

When considering what policies or actions Texas A&M may take regarding statues, symbols or namings, the case studies of other institutions that have managed monument or name controversies may provide insights.

Case studies from the 15 peer institutions listed in the Vision 2020 Strategic Plan and four comparable universities were surveyed and their accounts investigated.⁶ Of the 19 case studies, almost all had or are having issues related to monuments or name changes.

AS OF NOVEMBER 2020:

- Eight have removed the name or monument that was deemed an undesirable symbol.
- Four are currently undergoing review.
- Two have had requests for their removal denied.
- One monument was toppled and reinstallation abandoned.
- One has a sculpture that was vandalized but there are currently no further calls for removal.

The remaining three did not provide information on name or monument removals, but rather have information that new monuments were installed to honor people of color — often in response to a pejorative incident that occurred on campus, but which are otherwise unrelated to past monuments or symbols. Many of these are still ongoing cases and are expected to develop further in the near future.

REASONS CITED FOR THE DECISION TO KEEP OR REMOVE SYMBOLS INCLUDE:

- The monument or name was symbolic of values that did not align with that of the school.
- The monument was a source of division and an obstacle to healing.
- Protests around the monuments presented campus safety concerns.
- The monument made the school ineligible to play in the NCAA.

6. <http://vision2020.tamu.edu/peer-institutions>

In some cases, there was no formal explanation and only a report of the final decisive vote on the issue. However, the most commonly self-stated reason by schools that removed such symbols, or that are considering removal, was that the views and actions of the people the naming or monument honors no longer represent the values of the school.

In nearly all the cases that were controversial (n=16), institutional stakeholders were reported to have very different opinions that varied drastically. Specifically, alumni tended to associate symbols with a sense of nostalgia and identity. Texas A&M's divide in stakeholder beliefs is not unique.

Another pattern across institutions was when there was resistance from the university in relocating or removing symbols, or in name changes, the pushback often became worse. At least ten of the case studies (out of 16 that were controversial) included symbols that had been revisited multiple times before any firm decisions were made, creating fodder for a trail of media reports over the years from the ongoing protests and controversy.

A common complaint from the student bodies in these case studies is the unclear stance universities often take, in addition to the slow pace at which universities come to decisions and implement changes. In extreme cases, such as the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC), the statue was torn down by a crowd due to the university's perceived inaction. It is an example of what should be avoided when coming to a decision. Recent news about the UNC case includes a quote from F. Sheffield Hale, the president and chief executive of Atlanta History Center, who stated "Chapel Hill is a special case, and it's particularly special because it's been going on so long, and it's so heated, and every time they've tried to solve it, they've chosen the clumsiest way possible and made it worse."⁷

Another example is University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, which was forced to retire their mascot, Chief Illiniwek, in order to remain eligible to play in the NCAA. The school has needed to continue to make related changes every few years. An article by the Chicago Tribune states "Now, if only Illinois would rip off the Band-Aid. Stop prolonging a divisive issue by picking at a scab every few years."⁸

Indeed, this cycle has already happened at Texas A&M. Recent protests to remove the Ross statue and demand accountability are the culmination of decades of frustration from students of color and their allies on campus. This controversy has been ongoing at least since 1998 and a quick search online provides substantial content related to the problems with the Ross statue and Texas A&M's lack of DEI accountability.⁹ These include articles that portray Texas A&M pejoratively, including one that states that A&M handles anything related to race poorly.¹⁰

In short, while some universities have attempted to ignore demands surrounding symbols, names and iconography, in the majority of cases, they have been unsuccessful and by inadequately addressing the issue, increased reputational damage.

Universities were also aware that removals may come across as erasure of history. Nearly all acknowledged the importance of history when such decisions were made and highlighted the distinction between keeping a record of the past and memorialization, which is explained well in Yale's *Principles of Renaming*.¹¹ For example, "The University of Texas at Austin has a duty to preserve and study history. But our duty also compels us to acknowledge that those parts of our history that run counter to the university's core values, the values of our state and the enduring values of our nation do not belong on pedestals in the heart of the Forty Acres."¹²

7. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/14/us/unc-silent-sam-statue-settlement.html>

8. <https://www.chicagotribune.com/sports/college/ct-illinois-chief-illiniwek-ryan-spt-0827-20170826-column.html>

9. Slattery, P. 2006. "Deconstructing Racism One Statue at a Time: Visual Culture Wars at Texas A&M University and the University of Texas at Austin." *Visual Arts Research* 32.2: 28-31.

10. http://www.thebatt.com/opinion/a-m-needs-urgent-self-reflection/article_00556058-077b-11eb-9cd2-5b28da543e92.html

11. https://president.yale.edu/sites/default/files/files/CEPR_FINAL_12-2-16.pdf

12. <https://president.utexas.edu/messages-speeches-2017/confederate-statues-on-campus>

"I used to be of the mind that we should contextualize history...but Charlottesville changed my mind. Once statues like this become weaponized by the white supremacist[s] and the Nazis, keeping it up is untenable, I think it has to go. And I think it will go."

Former UNC-CH Chancellor James Moeser on "Silent Sam" statue

Only in the case of the University of Wisconsin and its Abraham Lincoln statue, where a firm stance was made and is currently still held, was history cited as the primary reason for non removal; "The University [of Wisconsin] is committed to supporting President Lincoln's history," according to Blank's statement, which may, after 150 years, "appear flawed."¹³

These findings show that based on case study trends, if Texas A&M decides against removal of the Ross statue, there is a very likely chance that protests and controversy surrounding it will continue. It is important to understand, however, that legislative approval may be required to alter, move or remove the monument.

A call for quick resolution was mentioned frequently during the commission's listening sessions from both defenders and detractors of the statue. In the words of one respondent, "I want the commission to know we want to see some definitive actions. As academics, we study things to death but then there's little movement. We are pointed in the right direction, but our velocity is screwed up. If we do get there it's at a snail's pace."

VIE. CONCLUSION

Texas A&M is not alone in its struggle to define its values, culture and image through naming, symbols and iconography in higher education or across the nation. Leaders of our institution must decide how we want to be perceived, both now and in the future. Messaging on this issue speaks loudly to students, faculty, and staff from marginalized communities.

When Texas A&M rejected segregation and allowed Black and/or African American men and then women to enroll, each decision was controversial and divisive. Any poll of current and former students at those times would likely look much like the current surveys that have been conducted over the statue. The decisions made by our leaders in those times reflected that the institution was moving and growing in a new direction.

13. <https://madison365.com/uw-chancellor-lincoln-statue-will-stay-on-expropriated-land/>



CASE STUDIES

CURRENT AS OF NOVEMBER 2020

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA BERKELEY

Case:	Barrows Hall, Kroeber Hall, LeConte Hall, Boalt Hall
Peer Institution:	Yes
Removed/Relocated:	School is deliberating what to do / Yes (for Boalt Hall only)
Stated Reason:	Barrows Hall is the building name that started the renaming controversy at Berkeley— in 2017 the school rejected changing it, stating that they are “considering other ways to make clear that the University’s values have changed dramatically since the building was named.” By July 2020, Barrows Hall is under review again. Meanwhile, Boalt’s name was removed because “The legacy of a building’s namesake should be in alignment with the values and mission of the university.”
Comments:	In 2016, Berkeley embarked on review of more than 150 building names after concerns about Barrows Hall arose. At the end they recommended creating another committee to handle it.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA DAVIS

Case:	The Voice of Lupe monument
Peer Institution:	Yes
Removed/Relocated:	N/A
Stated Reason:	“With the dedication of The Voice of Lupe , we are setting forth for the world to see that we are committed to building a community that honors and celebrates all of its members, that cherishes our differences, and that fosters a spirit of civility, equity and justice,” Chancellor Linda P.B. Katchi said.
Comments:	The name “Lupe” came from a sexist, racist fraternity song from the 1970s. The Chicano/Hispanic/Latinx community staged a protest in 1976. In 1992, the fraternity funded a room in the school, but people refused to go in. Reconciliation began with the establishment of Lupe Social Justice Scholarships (2007-8) and installation of the public art piece in 2015.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LOS ANGELES

Case:	Janss Steps name
Peer Institution:	Yes
Removed/Relocated:	School is deliberating what to do
Stated Reason:	“We are committed to UCLA’s values of equity, diversity and inclusion, and are considering ways to better align the names of campus structures and spaces with those values, as well as to honor the contributions of people from a variety of backgrounds.”
Comments:	School launched the Campus Honorary Naming Advisory Committee to review building names and physical spaces.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO

Case:	No current controversies; Sojourner Truth statue added to promote diversity
Peer Institution:	Yes
Removed/Relocated:	N/A
Stated Reason:	N/A
Comments:	Sojourner Truth statue added. “Her presence will serve to start conversations about who she was and what she stood for, a reminder of her influence and the need to continually address racial and gender equality.” Other artwork on campus celebrating diversity include: <i>Martin Luther King & 37th Street mural</i> and the <i>Chicano Legacy 40 Años mosaic</i> .

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

Case:	O'Connell Center and J. Wayne Reitz Union building names, "Gator bait" cheer
Peer Institution:	Yes
Removed/Relocated:	School is deliberating what to do about the namings, Gator bait cheer will not be used anymore
Stated Reason:	Cheer is no longer going to be used because of its "horrific historic racist imagery."Part of the new strategic goal falls under "History, symbolism and demonstrating behaviors consistent with our values" including name and monument changes. This is also where new values are being evaluated and defined. No decision has been made yet about the namings, but they are "committed to removing any monuments or namings that UF can control that celebrate the Confederacy or its leaders."
Comments:	Building renamings have been proposed many times over the years, but no changes were made. Now the university is reconsidering again.

GEORGIA TECH

Case:	No current controversies; statues added to promote diversity
Peer Institution:	Yes
Removed/Relocated:	N/A
Stated Reason:	N/A
Comments:	Two statues added that honor the first Black students who entered the institution.

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA CHAMPAIGN

Case:	Chief Illiniwek mascot
Peer Institution:	Yes
Removed/Relocated:	Yes / Ongoing
Stated Reason:	“In 2007, at the insistence of the NCAA, the school banned the Chief Illiniwek mascot.” A majority of students had voted to keep it, but on March 13, 2007, the University of Illinois board of trustees voted to retire Illiniwek’s name, image and regalia.
Comments:	The mascot had been controversial since the 1970s. NCAA banned UIUC from participating in 2006 as part of a ban on schools that use “hostile and abusive American Indian nicknames.” UIUC finally removed the mascot in 2007, and in 2017 other traditions related to the mascot were removed. Some people remain angry, and an unofficial “chief” still appears at games, there is currently a state bill being considered to remove all Native American mascots in Illinois.

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Case:	Clarence Cook Little and Alexander Winchell building names
Peer Institution:	Yes
Removed/Relocated:	Yes
Stated Reason:	Did not reflect university’s institutional values.
Comments:	Principles for renaming buildings were created.

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Case:	Lotus D. Coffman Hall, Nicholson Hall, Middlebrook Hall and Coffey Hall building names
Peer Institution:	Yes
Removed/Relocated:	No
Stated Reason:	Regents voted to keep current names for the buildings, “contradicting the recommendations of University President Eric Kaler and the university task force charged with studying the former administrators’ history.”
Comments:	A faculty-led task force had recommended removing the names, but after the report’s release, one of the regents accused the task force of academic dishonesty, saying it left out information that would have vindicated Mr. Coffman. The university said it will form a permanent Advisory Committee on University History, which could consider renaming other buildings.

UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI

Case:	Confederate statue at Lyceum Circle
Peer Institution:	No
Removed/Relocated:	Yes
Stated Reason:	Student government voted unanimously to remove it (47-0). While some stakeholders were split on the issue, the compromise to move to the cemetery was seen as a bipartisan resolution.
Comments:	Statue removal was revisited many times . First a plaque was put in place to better contextualize it in 2015. In 2019, the student government voted unanimously to remove it. It was finally removed in July 2020. It is still controversial because it was moved to a cemetery and now appears to be a shrine.

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA

Case:	Silent Sam statue (ongoing), and Saunders Hall in the past
Peer Institution:	Yes
Removed/Relocated:	Statue was toppled by protestors / School is deliberating what to do regarding the statue. Saunders Hall was renamed.
Stated Reason:	The university did not provide a reason for removal because the Silent Sam statue was toppled by protesters. For Saunders Hall, “[a]fter a review, the trustees conceded that university leaders in 1920 made a mistake in citing Mr. Saunders’s role as head of the KKK in North Carolina as a qualification.”
Comments:	Since 1960s, there has been opposition to the statue (vandalism, protests, etc.). In 2010s, more protests, vandalism, and media calls were made to remove it. The statue was pulled down in 2018, and in 2019 a settlement was signed with the Sons of the Confederacy (\$2.5 million), a White nationalist group, which was seen as a back-room deal. Earlier in 2020, the agreement was voided by the same judge who signed the settlement after public outcry, and the issue till now remains unresolved with where the statue will go.

OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

Case:	Thomas Oxley statue
Peer Institution:	Yes
Removed/Relocated:	No
Stated Reason:	N/A
Comments:	There is no official call to remove the statue. However, it has been vandalized, suggesting it is controversial (Oxley was pro-segregation).

PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY

Case:	Joe Paterno statue
Peer Institution:	Yes
Removed/Relocated:	Yes
Stated Reason:	Penn State President Rod Erickson said he decided to have the statue removed and put into storage because it “has become a source of division and an obstacle to healing.”
Comments:	President Erickson said Paterno’s name will remain on the campus library because it “symbolizes the substantial and lasting contributions to the academic life and educational excellence that the Paterno family has made to Penn State University.” Even so, the school faced a lawsuit with the Paterno family that was recently resolved.

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

Case:	Woodrow Wilson building name
Peer Institution:	No
Removed/Relocated:	Yes
Stated Reason:	The Princeton University Board of Trustees voted to remove Woodrow Wilson’s name from the university’s School of Public and International Affairs saying his was an inappropriate namesake because his views do not align with the school’s current values.
Comments:	The first time this became an issue they voted not to remove it and only put in a plaque, protests continued before they reconvened and decided to remove it.

PURDUE UNIVERSITY

Case:	John H. Schnatter Center for Economic Research building name
Peer Institution:	Yes
Removed/Relocated:	Yes
Stated Reason:	Removal was “necessary to avoid distraction from the center’s work” as it led to counterproductive division on the campus and was a deviation from the university’s often-stated stance on tolerance and racial relations.
Comments:	The Papa John’s Founder had donated \$8 million to Purdue. In a conference call he used a racial slur. Purdue offered to return the donation. Ball State University, his alma mater, is not removing his name from a building there.

RICE UNIVERSITY

Case:	William Marsh Rice statue
Peer Institution:	No
Removed/Relocated:	No
Stated Reason:	Some students, staff, and faculty are against its removal.
Comments:	Issue was revisited several times (2015, 2017, 2018). This is a developing case involving sit-ins currently taking place at the statue.

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS, AUSTIN

Case:	Several building name changes and statue removals
Peer Institution:	Yes
Removed/Relocated:	Yes
Stated Reason:	They are symbols of hate and bigotry that run counter to core values.
Comments:	The majority of petitions were approved, except for removing “Eyes of Texas” which is currently under development. The school is taking steps to promote diversity and is considering multiple renamings, removals and installations. It has also added diversity initiatives in response to these controversies.

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

Case:	The Chamberlain Boulder that has a nickname after a racial slur and an Abraham Lincoln statue
Peer Institution:	Yes
Removed/Relocated:	School is deliberating what to do
Stated Reason:	The boulder is under consideration for removal but the school stated that the Abraham Lincoln statue stays because they support his history.
Comments:	“As the [boulder] itself is of concern – and not the personal history of President Chamberlin [...] Chancellor Blank is exploring other ways that he can be remembered by the university.” However, Chancellor Blank stated that “The University continues to support the Abraham Lincoln statue on our campus.”

YALE UNIVERSITY

Case:	John Calhoun College name
Peer Institution:	No
Removed/Relocated:	Yes
Stated Reason:	Does not align with school mission or values.
Comments:	Controversy regarding renaming began in 1992; graduating seniors commissioned a plaque to reveal the associated history. The name change was discussed again in 2015 after the Charleston church shooting, but the president said they “can’t erase history.” Finally, in 2017 a task force recommended renaming it.

VII.

LEADERSHIP

VII. LEADERSHIP

"We know what we should be doing and what we need to do. We need to move forward doing the right thing. Courage does not come in still waters. It's about leadership and will."

Listening session participant

VIIIA. CAMPUS LEADERSHIP

Though faculty, staff, students and community have a deep impact on the institution, Texas A&M leaders have the power to greatly influence the adoption and diffusion of DEI in authentic and meaningful ways. University leadership, college and various divisions can demonstrate commitment by implementing systemic policies and procedures to ensure success in this area. Additionally, resources (human, financial and physical) should be provided to carry out plans. While university leadership may provide the resources needed to implement plans for a more inclusive climate and culture, continuous verbal, physical and emotional support from leadership is vital as well.

In spring of 2020, in response to continued racism at Texas A&M, university leadership accepted and triaged a collection of proposals from students, faculty and staff containing remedies to concerns stemming from local, regional and national events that have negatively impacted our communities. Leadership identified common action items and organized proposed remedies by themes.

Five key themes were identified, comprising a total of 16 action items, such as providing funding and erecting the Matthew Gaines statue by the spring of 2021, revising the script used during student tours, funding identity-specific cultural resource centers on campus, and developing and enforcing a systemwide anti-racism policy for students, faculty and staff.

Each action item has already been given attention; some items were completed, and others remain in progress. A full list of the themes, action items and assessments, as well as an outline of the actions taken to date and contact information, can be found in the appendix.



LEADERSHIP FINDINGS

- There is a strong desire for Texas A&M leaders to actively and authentically acknowledge issues around racism, and talk directly about broader DEI issues.
- A perception heard from many is that Texas A&M leadership has created a number of reports, recommendations and suggestions from past groups, and has known all of the data included in this report for many years, yet has made no significant actions or changes in DEI.
- There is limited compositional diversity in leadership positions across the university, including the President, Vice Presidents, Provost, Associate and Assistant Provosts, Deans, Department Heads and Board of Regents.
- It is difficult to cross-reference leadership positions with diversity attributes on dars.tamu.edu. The absence of this data further complicates efforts to achieve DEI at our institution.
- In 2017, there was approval through the Council on Built Environment (CBE), but no funding provided, for a Diversity Plaza.¹ The lack of action on this potentially important campus structure and cultural space is concerning. Though these projects are in the Campus Master Plan² (page 130), they have not been enacted in purposeful ways that provide meaning to campus diversity efforts.
- Clearly compiling on a central website all the reports related to DEI could make them more widely understood. Additionally, when reports and metrics are available, there is often a lack of information related to progress or current status.
- Defining actions in specific terms with metrics and timelines may help Texas A&M and others assess discernable progress. Incorporating additional accountability tools, such as AEFIS (Assessment, Evaluation, Feedback and Intervention System) through the President's or Provost's offices, may help address this issue.



1. <http://cbe.tamu.edu/Data/Sites/1/allouruploads/presidentialactions/2017actions/062817aggiesunitedplaza.pdf>

2. <https://campusplan.tamu.edu/files/presentations/2017CampusMasterPlan.pdf>

VIIB. COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING SUPPORTING DEI

University Life Suits Him Fine.

C.J. Woods enrolled as a student three decades ago and hasn't left a college campus since. His pursuit of higher education ultimately led him to earn a doctoral degree on that very subject. His experience has taken him from being a residence hall director as a student in Mississippi, to overseeing diversity programs at several colleges, on to his current role as associate vice president and chief of staff for the Office of the President at the largest university in the country.

As the son of a math teacher and a guidance counselor, C.J. learned the value of public service early, and supporting students both inside and outside the classroom has become a mission. Whether as administrator, professor, entrepreneur or father, he approaches every role with dignified grace and thoughtful decision making.

DR. C.J. WOODS
Associate Vice President and
Chief of Staff
Office of the President



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INSIGHT
DIVERSITY CHAMPION
2020

INSIGHT
DIVERSITY CHAMPION
2020

**Giving A Voice To Freedom,
With An Eye Toward The Future.**

The story of African Americans in post-Civil War Texas comes not just from people, but from places. Preserving the state's 337 "freedom colonies" and documenting grassroots preservation practices is what moves Texas A&M University Professor Dr. Andrea Roberts, who founded the Texas Freedom Colonies Project.

She and her team partner with communities to tell their stories, preserve their heritage and protect remaining historic sites. Her research illuminates African American resilience in the past and present, while helping communities plan for brighter futures.

ANDREA ROBERTS, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Urban Planning



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INSIGHT
DIVERSITY CHAMPION
2020

INSIGHT
DIVERSITY CHAMPION
2020

Marketing and messaging serve critical roles in setting campus climate, and are shaped by the existing culture. Official photos, stories, ads, videos and other collateral play a large role in communicating what is valued by the institution. If only longstanding traditions, activities and organizations are highlighted, an opportunity is missed to showcase the diverse offerings and ways individuals and groups connect with and serve Texas A&M. This can be key in recruiting students, faculty and staff from historically marginalized groups who seek cultural familiarity in their future environment.

Texas A&M recently placed ads in the September 18, 2020 diversity edition of *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, featuring prominent campus African Americans and highlighting recent diversity awards. The ad of Dr. Andrea Roberts also ran in *The Atlantic*. This type of messaging helps keep DEI and marginalized groups at the forefront and shows that Texas A&M is serious about inclusion.

Texas A&M's human resources and organizational development recently added a diversity and inclusion statement to all Texas A&M job announcements. Another example of matching messaging with DEI goals was the response to the campus tour discussion of the Ross statue; see inset.

APPELT AGGIELAND VISITOR CENTER CAMPUS TOUR UPDATES: SUMMER 2020

As social unrest swept the nation and Texas A&M more boldly addressed racism on its campus, the Appelt Aggieland Visitor Center and Howdy Crew (student employees of the visitor center) were on the front line. Every campus tour discussed Lawrence Sullivan Ross. Multiple petitions from Black students demanded revisions to “the script” that would not “whitewash his legacy.” Revisions to the campus tour were implemented when campus tours returned to campus to welcome visitors on July 1, 2020.

Notably, the move to tell a more complete history of “Sully” was driven much more by the internal conversations. On Zoom, Howdy Crew students recounted how they had been targets of racism on campus. We surveyed tour guides to assess their feelings and comfort level to discuss “Sully.” These difficult dialogues fostered critical empathy to pivot discussion of cherished Aggie traditions.

Students who are truly uncomfortable discussing Ross have been empowered to skip talking about him, unless directly asked; we owe them that respect. These students, mostly people of color, are now among our most loyal and engaged employees. We aspire to be a workplace that celebrates everyone’s personal beliefs and authentically demonstrates that there is not just one Aggie story.

The fall 2020 campus tour now promotes the Department of Multicultural Services and A&M’s support for expressive activity. It “acknowledges Ross’s biography as a Confederate general, whose transformational impact on Texas A&M is undeniable.” We view the Medal of Honor display of Clarence Sasser, an African American former student, in the MSC and discuss his heroic acts of Selfless Service.

Overall, the campus tour’s verbal messaging and visual representations now offer a much more inclusive view of Texas A&M to the thousands of prospective students and guests served by the Appelt Aggieland Visitor Center.

When asked what people wanted to see from Texas A&M right now, there was an overwhelming desire to see more swift, frequent and effective communication about DEI. Texas A&M leaders were encouraged to reflect and honestly discuss areas that need improvement as well as successes.

Two themes readily emerged. First, there was a strong desire for Texas A&M leaders to actively and authentically acknowledge issues around racism and talk directly about broader DEI issues. As one student noted, “I’m so sick of bland statements!” A senior administrator said, “We have to talk about these issues, or we have failed!” Another respondent encouraged leaders to continuously listen and respond.

“Regularly and proactively seeking input— and then showing what you’re doing in response to that input— is the best way to find out how Aggies are feeling and what they want. And the more you do it, the more they will feel like they can come talk to you instead of launching a protest or complaining about you on social media.

I would also encourage Texas A&M leaders to use multiple channels and methods. Surveys are important, but so are casual conversations and social media engagement. And it can’t just be top leadership or the chief diversity officer who does this work.”

Listening session participant

LAND-GRANT UNIVERSITIES AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

The land the U.S. federal government provided to build and fund land-grant universities in the Morrill Act was only made possible through earlier decades of war and subjugation that forced Native American tribes to cede their land.

Recently, universities have begun grappling with this grievous legacy through land acknowledgement statements — written or verbal declarations that recognize and honor Indigenous peoples. Specifically, these acknowledge that the land on which the higher educational institution is built belonged to one or more Indigenous groups who resided or still reside in that geographic area.

Texas A&M has an opportunity to recognize the Indigenous peoples that the federal government exploited to build the university. Current Native American students have stated in commission interviews that they do not feel seen on campus and are “too small to matter.”

“Engage the Texas A&M community in learning about our history together. In my ongoing personal journey to better understand race, racism and equity, learning more about our nation’s history has been crucial. The more I learn about how people of color, women and other minoritized groups have been discriminated against in the past, the more I see the ripple effects here in the present day.”

Listening session participant

In addition, many current students expressed that there is not an overarching campus message (similar to the “Step In. Stand Up” and the “Don’t Pass It Back” coronavirus campaign) that communicates to the community our commitment to creating an inclusive campus climate where all Aggies can thrive. As one listening group participant stated, “If you want to change the climate of the campus, there needs to be education and teaching about how to step in and stand up, acknowledging acts of racism and marginalization.”

Other programs and efforts targeted at specific campus groups could be more widely marketed to help create a better sense of belonging and inclusion across campus. Examples include the new faculty and staff wellness program, Flourish, the Deans CARE: Deans Committed to Anti-Racism Efforts initiative, and many student, college and unit-specific DEI activities that may be overlooked.³

Secondly, there are many Texas A&M DEI success stories, but without a central and comprehensive communications or marketing strategy, these institutional wins are often overlooked or viewed as singular events. The Texas A&M Athletics Aggie Commitment initiative was created in conjunction with student athletes and coaches.⁴

Debuted with actionable goals, statements from top athletic leadership, photos and video ready for social media sharing, Athletics leadership communicated a clear DEI message, noting that “athletics may not be the most important thing at the university, but they can be the most visible.”

3. <https://flourish.tamu.edu/>

4. <https://12thman.com/news/2020/8/25/the-aggie-commitment.aspx>

**DON'T
PASS IT BACK**

ATM **STEP
IN** **STAND
UP**
against sexual violence



VIIC. DONOR FUNDING

“It’s important for our community to know the full history and culture of the institution, embracing and celebrating what’s been good but also acknowledging and grappling with the bad. That’s a scary thing to do, particularly when you rely on your institution’s good reputation to attract students and donors — but telling the full truth is an act of integrity that will ultimately serve our community well.”

Listening session participant

A concern from various stakeholders was that changes in DEI efforts on campus and to the Ross statue could have donor funding implications. To address this question, meetings were held with three affiliated organizations that help provide funding for Texas A&M: including the Texas A&M Foundation, the Association of Former Students of Texas A&M and the 12th Man Foundation.

While some of today’s donors may not agree with DEI changes, many in the current student body lean heavily toward greater DEI efforts. These students will become the future donors. The largest group of current donors is White males, which is expected as many in this group attended the university before or just after A&M began admitting minorities and women. The trend is slowly starting to shift to women and some minority groups. As a more diverse graduate pool leaves Texas A&M, a subsequent increase in donations from women and minorities is also expected.

Two of the three organizations indicated an expected short-term (~3 year) drop in funding, but the overall consensus seemed that long-term funding (~10+ years) will not be greatly changed if the university stays true to its values. Short-term funding is also affected by the current social climate and global pandemic. All groups agreed that much of the dissent is from a small number of people who are spreading rumors and tend to be overly vocal about their opinions. In terms of actions, all three groups indicated that better defining values, putting them into practice and marketing them would be positive for both Texas A&M and fundraising efforts.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

An effort of this size and scope requires a combined effort and the Texas A&M Commission on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion had an outstanding team and many dedicated people who assisted the commission. Deep appreciation to Dr. John Hurtado and Dr. Jimmy Williams, commission co-chairs, the subcommittee co-chairs and to the entire commission membership. Additionally, we thank those listed below for their commitment and assistance throughout the process.

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President Michael K. Young

Provost Carol Fierke

COMMUNITY LISTENING SESSION MODERATORS AND SCRIBES

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Jennifer Reyes

Tonya Driver

Charlene Shroulote-Durán

Suzanne Droleskey

Julie Wilson

Connie Langellier

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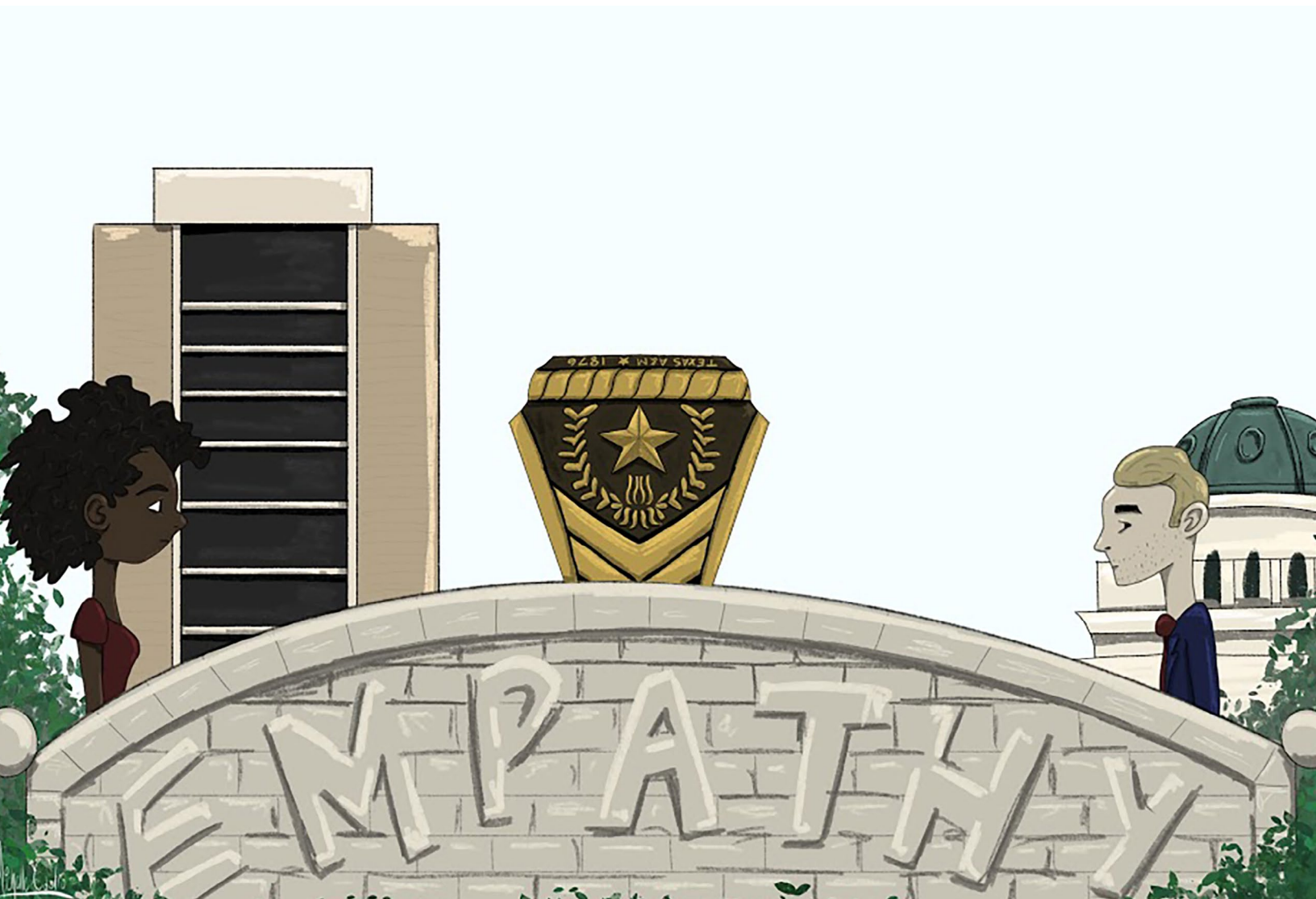
Frances Jackson

Heather Wheeler

Kristi Orr

Chad Wooton

Ligia Perez



About the Artist, Michelle Castro

"My major is Performance Studies with a minor in Art. I was born in Chicago, raised in Mexico and for the past nine years or so I've been in Texas. During my last year in high school I had gone to two college road trips, and of the five universities we toured, Texas A&M felt right. I felt very at home on campus and I got excited over the courses that were offered.

In this piece I wanted to show campus and some of the landmarks, Rudder, the Aggie Ring and the Academic Building. I think having the Aggie Ring in the middle of the empathy ring really centers our focus and end goal of being one big diverse family."



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