

Diversity Dialogues on Graduate Education

2013-14

*Prepared by: Amandeep Kaur, Graduate Student Assistant to the Dean and Chancellor
2013-14*

Diversity Dialogues on Graduate Education were held during the academic year 2013-14 to understand the needs of various underrepresented graduate student groups at UC Davis. The discussions were centered around empowering 8 graduate student groups including:

- Women graduate students in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) related disciplines
- International graduate students
- Graduate students with disabilities
- Graduate students of color
- Undocumented graduate students
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex and Asexual (LGBTQIA) identified graduate students
- Graduate student veterans
- Graduate student parents

Overall seven discussions were held during the academic year 2013-14 to brainstorm on strategies to empower these student groups.

Methodology

Five independent surveys were done by Graduate Student Assistant to the Dean and Chancellor (GSADC) in collaboration with members of Chancellor's Graduate and Professional Student Advisory Board (CGPSA) to understand the needs and identify the challenges being faced by these student groups. At the beginning of each discussion the results of the surveys that had been conducted were presented by the GSADC which identified the challenges being faced by these student groups which was followed by a strategy session. During the strategy session the members of the UC Davis community who attended the sessions broke down into small groups to discuss strategies on empowering these student groups for about 45 minutes. In the last 30 minutes of an hour and a half discussion each group reported on the strategies that they had come up with.

Recommendations

These discussions were attended by about 300 members of UC Davis community who came up with tangible recommendations to improve the status quo for these student groups and to help them succeed in graduate school. The recommendations have been categorized in several themes which are the following (*The recommendations in italics are the action items that have been already implemented or are being currently implemented*):

- **Creating Awareness and an Inclusive Environment**
 - ✓ *Create more awareness of challenges faced by all the underrepresented groups through dialogues, forums with faculty and other campus stakeholders*
 - ✓ *Campus police training: Sensitivity training on handling challenges of underrepresented student groups*
 - ✓ Faculty should create inclusive environment in the classrooms for students with disabilities, international students, women in STEM, students of color, LGBTQIA identified students, student veterans
 - ✓ Build additional gender neutral and gender inclusive restrooms
 - ✓ Include diversity discussions as a part of curriculum

- **Improving Mentorship**
 - ✓ Mentorship training for faculty
 - Incentivize sensitivity training for faculty
 - Train faculty to mentor students from various underrepresented groups: understanding that each student group is unique
 - Professional development training for faculty to mentor students interested in careers outside of academia
 - ✓ Peer to Peer Mentoring
 - Provide institutional support to peer mentor groups for all underrepresented student groups
 - Peer mentoring panels to humanize the graduate student experience

- **Building Community**
 - ✓ *Build a graduate and professional community center*
 - Include a space within the center for international graduate students to make them a part of UC Davis community
 - Include a social space for graduate students with kids, graduate student veterans and graduate students with disabilities
 - ✓ Support student organizations that build community
 - ✓ *Affordable graduate student housing*
 - ✓ *Organize more social events where graduate students from various backgrounds can interact informally*

- **Providing Support and Information**
 - ✓ *Pre-Orientation for international students prior to WOW*
 - ✓ Orientation for veterans – helping them acclimatize with civilian life
 - ✓ Better organize information on the web (link through Graduate Studies) for students from different communities
 - ✓ *Hire an international Student Affairs Officer (SAO) and a Graduate Student Retention Coordinator to help support large international population*

- ✓ *Strengthen Student Disability Center (SDC) and more clearly identify its location and services and hire more staff to assist students with disabilities*
- ✓ *Ask about needs for disability services when students complete SIR*
- ✓ *Expand services at CAPS for veterans, international students and students with disabilities*
 - *CAPS hired one counselor this year with an international background*
- **Financial support**
 - ✓ *Parental and family leave for TAs and GSRs*
 - ✓ *Affordable daycare*
 - ✓ *Reduce the burden of supporting international graduate students (NRST)*
- **Professional development for graduate students**
 - ✓ *Create networking opportunities for underrepresented student groups*
 - ✓ *Expand GradPathways and services offered by Internship and Career Center (ICC) to help students explore careers outside of academia*
- **Understanding unconscious or implicit bias**
 - ✓ *Training for admission committee members*
 - ✓ *Training TAs to recognize bias in evaluating students*
 - ✓ *Helping others become aware of the challenges faced by different underrepresented groups*
 - ✓ *Evaluate new faculty hires based on the diversity and sensitivity training they have had prior to their appointment*
- **Strengthen TA training**
 - ✓ *Include understanding of bias in the classroom and gender differences in learning styles*
 - ✓ *Address the needs of students with disabilities*
 - ✓ *Address the needs of non-native English speakers*
 - ✓ *Make TA training more rigorous and more uniform*
- **Role models**
 - ✓ *Increase the number of women faculty in certain disciplines and help them learn how to serve as role models without coming overburdened*
 - ✓ *Identify faculty mentors from various underrepresented groups to serve as role models*
 - ✓ *Increase number of faculty belonging to underrepresented groups*
 - ✓ *Highlight student leaders and role models from various underrepresented groups*
 - ✓ *Acknowledge various faculty and student role models for academics, teaching and community building*

Action Items for 2014-15

Some of the recommendations that were put forward by the campus community are already being implemented and have been italicized above. Our goal is to prioritize some of these recommendations and present an update to the campus community in Winter 2015. Besides that we plan to do the following as well:

- **Build an outreach team consisting of various campus stakeholders**
 - ✓ Present various surveys conducted this year and educate campus community on the status quo
 - ✓ Create greater awareness
 - ✓ Create a sustained dialogue series – building on diversity dialogues 2013-14
- **Engage faculty in diversity related discussions**

In collaboration with various campus stakeholders this year we plan to have discussions about faculty and graduate student positionality and the problems associated with it. This requires brainstorming together with faculty in graduate council and the senate on how to come up with effective strategies to build healthy partnerships and relationships between students and faculty.