

RACIAL EQUITY & JUSTICE INSTITUTE  
LEADING FOR CHANGE DIVERSITY CONSORTIUM  
SUFFOLK UNIVERSITY  
ANNUAL REPORT 2019-2020



**SUFFOLK  
UNIVERSITY**  
BOSTON



Members of the **Racial Equity and Justice Institute Campus Team** represent Suffolk as part of the Leading for Change Diversity Consortium facilitated by Bridgewater State University. For the 2019-2020 academic year, campus teams were encouraged to create campus specific actionable items to implement through the year to deepen the institutional infrastructure for the racial equity imperative. Planning for this group was informed by general institutional needs and the approved Suffolk 2025 Strategic Plan. In early fall 2019, the campus team crafted five overarching initiatives that involved professional learning and development for staff and faculty, accessing materials to enhance the curriculum related to race and ethnicity, developing partnerships between our institution and underrepresented students, organizing events to unify the institution around diversity and inclusion and ultimately capturing the voices and experiences of students of color.

Our efforts to engage the institutional community either by their engagement in a sub-committee or their attendance at an event, were important for expanding the reach of diversity and inclusion and implementing the initiatives. From the interactions with small groups, and in our attempts to make necessary improvements, our mission remains to be cognizant of the voices of people of color in the environment while making room for everyone to participate in building a community that is equitable and just.

In designing the actionable items, committee members discussed strategies for rapidly creating initiatives that are manageable and relevant. The following pages outline the approach to the projects and the progress of each committee. We invite you to join us in our quest to be inclusive from every aspect of campus by examining our own unconscious bias and behaving in ways that minimizes harmful impact.

The Racial Equity and Justice Institute Campus Team is comprised of faculty and staff across campus disciplines and schools. Current members are: Greg Beaver, Jennifer Blakely, Cameron Breither, Linda Brown, Alina Choo, Gary Fireman, Robin Mangino, Joyya Smith, Natasha Torkelson, and Cherina Wright.

The purpose of this report is to ***Unify and Communicate Broadly Diversity and Inclusion Institutional Efforts at Suffolk University.***

# RAM INCLUSION WEEK

**Committee Members:** Alina Choo, Beatriz Patiño, and Cameron Breither

**Initiative Goals:** Suffolk University has a diverse student population which provides opportunities to incorporate diversity and inclusion across campus to ensure students gain an appreciation for differences and to encourage community building. The initiative was designed to support and acknowledge inclusive practices and programs that bring together the entire Suffolk community (all students, staff, and faculty) with special attention to understanding the needs of our most marginalized or underrepresented students.

The three sub-goals were to (1) Provide opportunities for the Suffolk community to participate in events that highlight our diversity. (2) Enable attendees to acquire skills and knowledge about diversity, equity, and inclusion through intentional programming and dialogue. (3) Support and fulfill an initiative stated in the Suffolk 2020 Strategic Plan regarding diversity and inclusion: “Continue to enhance the University’s reputation and visibility around inclusion and diversity by cataloging the growing number of diversity and inclusion initiatives around campus, building content around those initiatives and sharing with targeted and wider audiences.”

**Initiative Progress:** RAM Inclusion Week was held February 3-7, 2020. The events were the following:

- **Racial Equity & Justice Committee Presentation** - 35 attendees and presenters.
- **Cultural Cuisine Night** – 80 students with five student groups as host of the event.
- **Affinity@Suffolk Employee Resource Group Recruitment Fair** - 30 attendees and members
- **Networking Night** 50 attendees
- **CTSE Workshops on Inclusive Assessments and Ally Software** - no faculty attendance
- **Law Student Poetry Slam** – 50 attendees
- **Social Justice Conference** - 67 attendees and 104 registered
- **Performance by Zuzu Acrobats, Inc.** -50+ attendees
- **A Seat at the Table: Black Radical Activism and Organizing of Yesterday and Today** -- 30 attendees

To gain a sense of how students, faculty, and staff view inclusion, attendees were asked to complete a postcard responding to the prompt “What does inclusion mean to you?”

Offices that helped to host an event and/or contributed funding: Division of Student Success; Center for Student Diversity & Inclusion (Diversity & Inclusion Council); Student Leadership & Involvement (Caribbean Student Network, Black Student Union,

Marxist Student Association); Human Resources; Center for Teaching & Scholarly Excellence; Office of Diversity, Access & Inclusion; Office of Advancement; Interfaith Center; & Black Law Student Association. For being an inaugural event, Ram Inclusion Week proved to be a successful collaboration among multiple campus partners. It was refreshing to see the campus community come together to organize events in order to celebrate our diversity and educate one another. Over the course of the week, we had between 350-400 attendees.

The three planning committee chairs sent out a survey to all of the event organizers to determine if promotional efforts were sufficient and if program goals were met. Overwhelmingly, the responses were positive, indicating that the variety of cross-campus marketing (print materials – posters/flyers, digital ads, and social media) was effective in getting the word out and highlighting our efforts. Overall, organizers felt that goals for both individual events and overarching Ram Inclusion Week goals were met – creating awareness, fostering dialogue, educating and engaging the community, bringing groups together, and celebrating our diversity.

## **DATA COLLECTION AND FOCUS GROUPS**

**Committee Members:** Gary Fireman and Natasha Torkelson

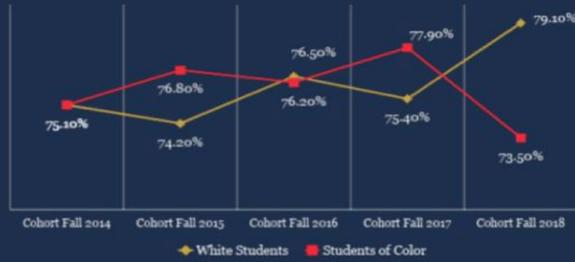
**Initiative Goals:** The purpose of the group is to provide insight to the experiences of students of color through a review of institutional data. To further understand the experiences of students, the committee will conduct focus groups to help us respectfully hear students of color at Suffolk University. Emphasizing the use of methods that gather information in a manner that honors the students who are sharing and that allows us to make the information actionable as soon as possible.

**Initiative Progress:** During the campus-wide presentation, the Data Collection and Focus Group committee presented the demographic and retention data for institutional members to review. A brief discussion was held during the session and feedback indicated a need to continue conversations on how to ensure all students receive support to maximize their experiences at Suffolk. Below are the data slides presented during the session held on February 3, 2020.

Focus groups will be conducted for a variety of institutional stakeholders; business students, students of color, faculty, etc. to answer questions regarding the institutional climate and their personal experience. The working group will take results from the data collected and respond with actionable goals to address the concerns. More information regarding the results of focus groups will be available once they are completed Fall 2020. Currently underway is planning for IRB submission and training for group leaders with sessions conducted in-person and virtually during Fall semester.

# Institutional Data

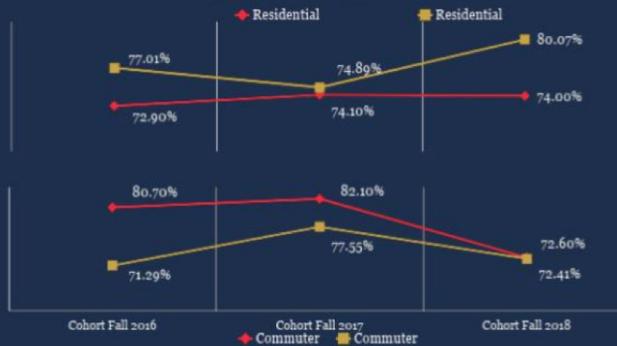
Retention Rates for Students of Color & White Students  
 First-Time, Full-Time Undergraduates from Boston Campus  
 Excludes International Students



Total Retention FA18 to FA 19 = 77.5% Suffolk University Factbook

# Institutional Data

Retention Rates for Students of Color by Residential Status  
 First-Time, Full-Time Undergraduates from Boston Campus Excludes  
 International Students



Total Retention FA18 to FA 19 = 77.5% Suffolk University Factbook

## Institutional Data

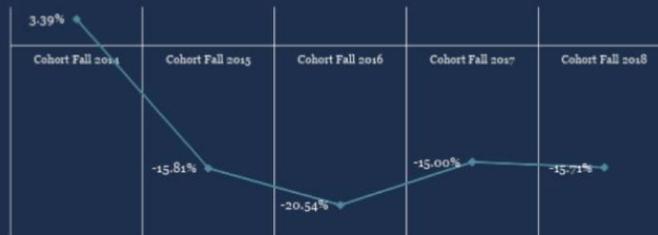
### Retention Rates for Students of Color by Academic College First-Time, Full-Time Undergraduates from Boston Campus Excludes International Students



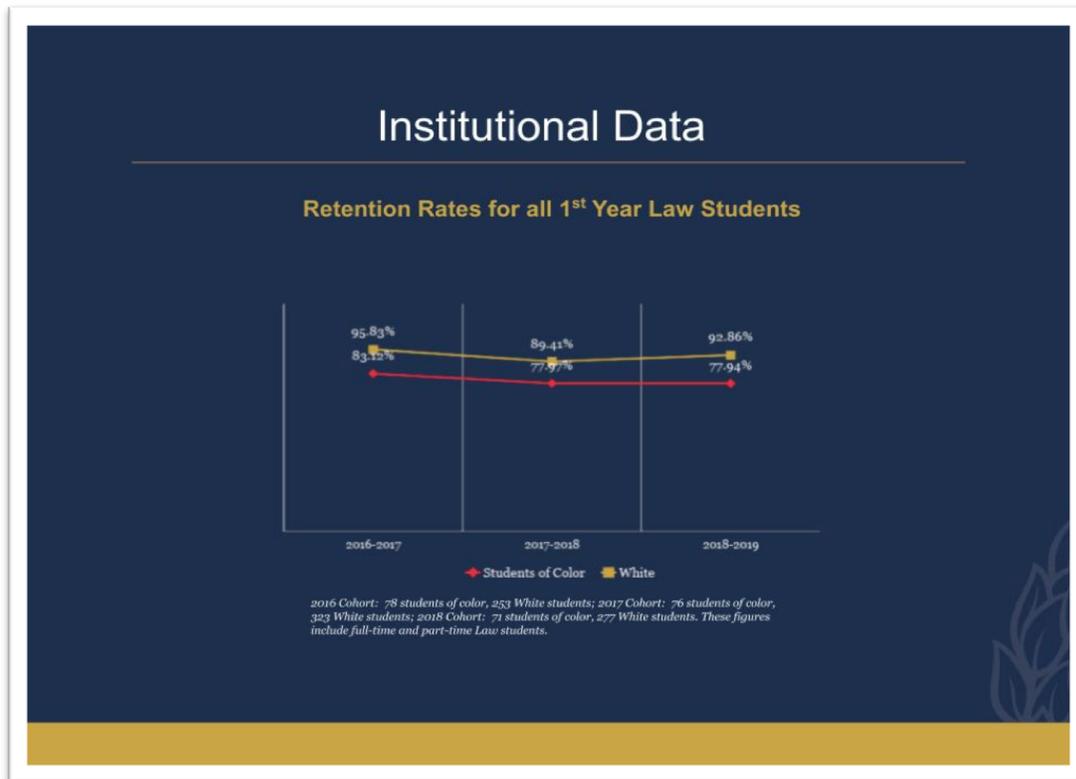
When the difference is positive it means that students of color are retained at a higher rate.  
When the difference is negative it means that students of color are retained at a lower rate.

## Institutional Data

### Retention Rates for Graduate Students 1<sup>st</sup> Year to 2<sup>nd</sup> Year, all campuses, Excluding PhDs.



When the difference is positive it means that students of color are retained at a higher rate.  
When the difference is negative it means that students of color are retained at a lower rate.



## PROFESSIONAL LEARNING



**Committee Members:** Jennifer Blakely and Joyya Smith

**Initiative Goals:** The goal of this program is to provide an opportunity for ongoing conversation around, and professional development in, two important values in our institutional culture—diversity and inclusion. Program content will be hosted in Blackboard, where users can choose from a menu of activities to complete the badge. After each activity, participants will post a brief private reflection about their experience in Blackboard and also engage in dialogue with other cohort members using discussion boards. Upon completion of the program, participants will receive a “badge”—a sticker with the Ambassador for Inclusion graphic—that can be displayed on an office door or window. This badge will indicate that its owner has invested time and effort in learning strategies and tactics to be an ambassador for diversity, equity, and inclusion in the Suffolk community.

**Initiative Progress:** an ongoing diversity and inclusion program. Our institution offers one-time training sessions on this topic, but this format didn't seem to be enough. We wanted to give people an opportunity to participate in a variety of events that will allow them to think about this subject in different ways. We also wanted it to be a self-paced program, allowing participants to work at their own speed, so if they have a busy schedule, they would still be able to participate. Just as we were about to launch the pilot program, COVID-19 closed our campus. Our working group contemplated running the pilot during the remainder of the semester, but we felt that with the intensity of the change that we had all undertaken it might not be the best idea to add to the load that everyone was under.

Now that we have had some time to adjust to the changes, we felt that the summer might be a good time to offer the pilot program. Registration for the program begins May 22, 2020. The program starts June 1, 2020 with a virtual opening program. The program will run for the month of June with a virtual closing event on June 30, 2020.

## CURRICULUM ENHANCEMENTS

**Committee Members:** Greg Beaver & Linda Brown

**Initiative Goals:** The goal of the curriculum enhancement initiative is to determine the details of course content addressing race/ethnicity which are currently being taught, and to consider how, where, and when to provide curriculum enhancements if requested by faculty. Ultimately, the intention is to determine campus wide course offerings around discrimination, implicit bias, diversity, race, etc. in place for students. Consider how to provide curriculum enhancements based on the easily identifiable curriculum access points. (Access points may include co-curricular, mini -study abroad opportunities, service-learning, new student orientations, first-year and ongoing programming.) The tangible outcome of the initiative is to develop a database with materials and faculty contacts available to all faculty.

**Initiative Progress:** The first step in this initiative is to gather information on courses, methods, and activities from current faculty. In February of 2020 we created an online survey to ask current faculty if they include any course material related to race, ethnicity or diversity and inclusion in general. We also asked whether they are willing to share course materials or syllabi if it contains curriculum focusing on race/ethnicity or diversity, equity, and inclusion and whether faculty would like more information on how to supplement their course content related to race/ethnicity, diversity, equity, or inclusion. In total, we sent to emails to current faculty with the link to this survey – just in case they did not have time to complete the survey after receiving the first email.

In the second step, we analyzed the content of the responses collected from current faculty and created a list of best practices. We also recorded which faculty requested more information or were willing to share materials. We plan to reach out to these faculty in the near future.

The work group consisted of members from a cross-section of campus stakeholders; Institutional Research, Center for Teaching and Scholarly Excellence, Faculty from College of Arts and Sciences, Faculty from Sawyer Business School, and Diversity, Access, and Inclusion. Each area represented provided insight based on their experiences with instruction and survey design.

To date, we have received 98 usable responses from faculty. Responses included 49 courses that currently include material related to race/ethnicity and provided a summary of the activities they use in class, while 122 courses include material around the more general topics of diversity and inclusion. More than half (56) of the faculty offered to share resources, syllabi, or details of the activities that they use in class. Two thirds (69) of the faculty requested supplemental resources around race/ethnicity, while almost the same number (66) of faculty requested supplemental resources dealing with diversity, inclusion, and equity. In total, we heard from faculty in 24 separate departments or disciplines.

Putting together the survey to all faculty forced us to be very specific in the wording used as well as the focus of the activity. We had many meetings to discuss definitions of terms we used, the flow of the survey, and the organization of the data received. Based on the responses from the faculty we learned that race/ethnicity and diversity and inclusion are being covered in courses across the curriculum. Many faculty members were willing to share their materials and others were interested in receiving information on how to better incorporate these concepts in their instruction.

Consequently, the need to increase materials and make them available to faculty is a relevant and appropriate initiative for our institution at this time. In the future, the work group intends to meet with department chairs and co-curricular leaders to discuss the best approach for increasing more opportunities for students to engage in race/ethnicity activities through curricular and co-curricular avenues. The goal is to determine suitable places to insert new initiatives or provide more training on how to deliver content by including the voices of all stakeholders

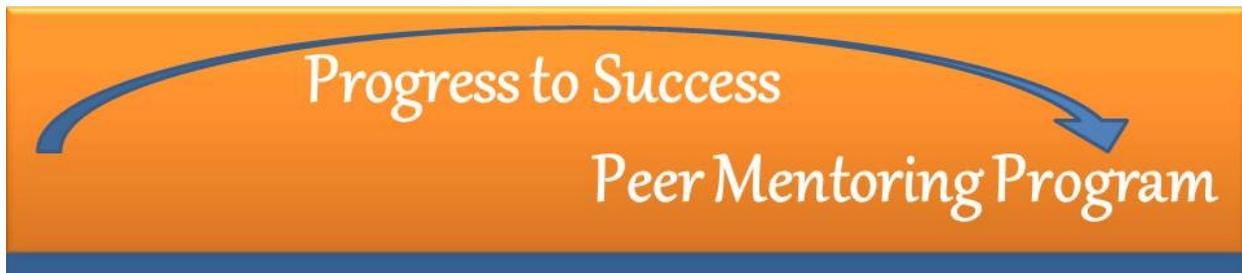
## **OUTREACH PROGRAMS**

**Committee Members:** Robin Mangino and Cherina Wright

**Initiative Goals:** With an original goal of serving underrepresented students at the high school level, their instructors, and first year law students, the outreach programs initiative was divided into two distinct projects. The Inclusive Writing Dual Enrollment Program and the Progress to Success Extended Orientation Program.

**Inclusive Writing Dual Enrollment Program:** The need to develop and implement bridge-type programming incorporating experiential opportunities allowed for the coordination of efforts with the dual enrollment program at Suffolk. The program will facilitate outreach to local high school emphasizing preparation for college level writing for undergraduate and post-graduate experiences. Specific Inclusive Writing Outreach

Goals are to support the Strategic Plan's goals to "increase programming to support students from historically underrepresented groups" and to "develop and expand partnerships and initiatives that connect Suffolk more closely with diverse communities".



Progress to Success Orientation Expansion: Suffolk Law's peer mentoring program for students of diverse and non-traditional backgrounds. Pairs first year students with a second or third year law school student mentors to help 1L students navigate the first year. The program also offers events and workshops during the semester. Including an optional half day program during New Student Orientation Week. Specific **Expansion to orientation goals are to provide:** An introductory program for students preparing them with the fundamentals of law school. The program will include a 3-5 day orientation in addition to the workshops, mentoring, and advising that already take place. Sessions will focus on financial literacy, academic excellence, career opportunities, and more.

**Initiative Progress:** In consideration with potential limitations with programming due to the current public health crisis, programming for both programs have been planned with adjustments and contingency plans. For the Inclusive Writing Dual Enrollment Program plans are being prepared to focus on the First-Year experience and the transition to college writing to increase retention and improve student readiness and performance.

The two phases require:

- Phase 1: Building Internal Framework for Outreach
  - Focusing on outreach to East Boston High School
  - Establishing a network of collaborators and stakeholder
- Phase 2: Facilitating Outreach
  - Supporting CAS dual enrollment initiative for WRI 101 in Fall 2020
  - Hosting dialogues and campus visits with First-Year Writing and East Boston High faculty

For the Progress to Success Program virtual orientation planning is currently underway in relation to current institutional operations. This project will be adjusted as conditions dictate.

# THE WAY FORWARD... 2020 AND BEYOND

Attending to the needs of students, faculty, and staff to further embed best practices related to racial equity and justice into the standard operations of Suffolk will continue to be a focus of the committee. In the last year, incorporating programming centering on the development of professional learning opportunities, accessible course content on race/ethnicity with a careful review of institutional data provided a strong start towards embedding procedures that benefit all members of the campus community. Ultimately drawing on the strengths on campus through RAM Inclusion Week and establishing ways to communicate stronger across campus are the cornerstones to advance our efforts in being inclusive. Finally, we continue to expand our reach to external partners and underrepresented groups through partnerships and concentrated programming for special populations. The way forward is to ensure that the programs started this year continue and are adjusted where necessary to address changing circumstances. In the wake of the pandemic, the barriers to academic and career success for diverse populations are more exposed. The Racial Equity and Justice Campus Team will continue to focus our efforts on reshaping institutional policy, procedures, and practices to serve our vulnerable populations better than before.

Special thank you to all work group committee members~

*Diane DiAngelo*

*Tim Albers*

*Suzanne Johns*

*Lisa Vigliotta*

*Mimi Arbeit*

*Jenene Cook*

*Nikki Tennessen*

*Dee Dee Paul*

*Jenny Joseph - Hayle*

*Margaret Wakelee*

*Jessica Lorenzana*

*Briana Charles*

*Kathleen Peets*

*Katerina Gonzolaz*

*Amy Marks*