

Diversity Action Plan September 2016

Institutional Mission, Goals, and Principles of Community

The mission of the Virginia Institute of Marine Science is to seek and broadly communicate knowledge in marine and coastal science to the Commonwealth of Virginia, the nation and the world through research, education, and advisory service. Our goals are to: (1) make seminal advances in the understanding of marine and coastal systems through research and discovery; (2) translate research findings into practical solutions to complex issues of societal importance; and (3) provide new generations of researchers, educators, problem solvers, and managers with a marine-science education of unsurpassed quality.

Our success in achieving these institutional goals requires an open, diverse and inclusive environment, one that supports the growth and development of faculty, staff, students and administrators. Our mission and institutional goals are most effectively accomplished when every member of the VIMS community acknowledges and adheres to the following recently-adopted Principles of Community:

- We believe that diversity and inclusion are critical to maintaining excellence.
- We recognize and appreciate the roles and contributions each member of the community brings to the success of VIMS.
- We welcome, support, engage and celebrate the broad range of backgrounds and experiences in our community.
- We affirm our individual and collective responsibility for creating and fostering a respectful, cooperative, inclusive and equitable campus environment that is free from harassment and discrimination.
- We treat all members of the VIMS community, as well as collaborators, work groups, stakeholders and the public, with civility, respect, and courtesy.
- We value honesty and integrity and are committed to lawful and ethical behavior.
- We are personally responsible for our actions, how we treat others, and the way in which we do our jobs.

Diversity Statement

As an academic institution created to serve the citizens of the Commonwealth of Virginia, we are committed to enhancing diversity and inclusion within VIMS, William & Mary, and the field of marine science. Our commitment to diversity is underpinned by the above Principles of Community. We recognize that diversity goes beyond ethnicity and gender to include differences in sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, cultural identity, age,

religion, political and ideological viewpoints, physical and cognitive ability, and more. We are committed to doing what we can as an institution to embrace these differences, to overcome historical circumstances and social structures that have produced imbalances in power, privilege and opportunity and to facilitate thinking in new ways about how to structure our institution for an increasingly diverse future.

Diversity Goals

Beginning in late summer 2015, VIMS engaged in a year-long self-study and “campus conversation” on diversity and inclusion. As part of the process, we documented key aspects of diversity on our campus, examined a broad range of institutional processes, structures and procedures that may enhance or limit diversity and inclusion, and researched best practices for supporting and enhancing diversity and inclusion at academic institutions and in the workplace. These efforts have allowed us to better understand our campus climate, to document where we are in our efforts to achieve diversity and inclusion, and to identify areas for improvement (VIMS Diversity Report, September 2016). Using our own findings and the recommendations of the President’s Task Force on Race and Race Relations (April 2016), we developed the following overarching goals to enhance diversity and inclusion at VIMS.

- I. Ensure an inclusive, welcoming, safe and supportive work environment by establishing and enforcing policies that are informed by and promote the above Principles of Community.
- II. Effectively communicate the commitment of the VIMS leadership to increasing diversity and inclusion in our institution and in the broader field of marine science, and to creating a working environment at VIMS that is free of harassment and discrimination.
- III. Attract, develop, and retain increasingly diverse administrators, faculty, students and staff.
- IV. Develop leadership at multiple levels that is itself diverse, builds the capacity for open and candid conversations on diversity and inclusion, and ensures that whenever possible, institutional policies, processes and procedures to facilitate diversity and inclusion.

As an institution with a strong tradition of public outreach education that goes beyond the traditional role of an academic institution, we identified an additional goal.

- V. Reach an increasingly diverse audience with education programs and outreach services.

Meeting the Goals: Diversity Action Plan

Establish Diversity and Inclusion Committee: A new *Diversity and Inclusion Committee* to be comprised of diverse individuals from across the VIMS administrative units and key standing committees that represent faculty, staff and students will be appointed by the VIMS Dean and Director in fall 2016. This high-level, highly-visible Committee will serve as liaison between the Office of the Dean and Director, the W&M Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity, and the VIMS community at large. The Committee will be explicitly charged with reviewing current VIMS policies and practices to determine whether they support changing demographics and the goals for inclusive excellence that will further diversify VIMS. The Committee, which will meet initially once a month, will recommend development or revision of institutional policies and practices that will help to ensure progress towards achievement of the goals outlined above, and identification of appropriate mechanisms to report progress to the Office of the Dean and Director. In short, the committee will work closely with the VIMS administration and have wide latitude in helping to create and maintain the best possible environment in which diversity can thrive.

Enhance Awareness and Communication: The VIMS leadership will regularly communicate, both verbally and in written form, that diversity and inclusion are central to the VIMS mission, goals and strategic priorities. We will adopt the recommendation of the W&M Task Force on Race and Relations to require “on-going, mandatory educational training on issues of diversity and inclusion” for administrators, faculty, staff and students. Directors of administrative units will be encouraged to communicate with the *Diversity and Inclusion Committee* as well as directly to the Dean and Director to convey issues that may be impacting our commitment to diversity. Results of the Climate Survey administered by William & Mary in fall 2015 will be discussed in a Town Hall meeting in fall 2016 to communicate findings to faculty and staff. The *Diversity and Inclusion Committee* will recommend to the Dean and Director whether a follow-up survey, tailored specifically to VIMS, should be undertaken to help clarify responses in the previous survey. Finally, the Dean and Director will meet each year with the committee that makes decisions on awarding professional development funds to staff employees to ensure that those who receive these highly-sought funds fully reflect the staff diversity at VIMS.

Modify Recruitment and Hiring Practices: To attract, develop, and retain an increasingly diverse faculty and staff, the *Diversity and Inclusion Committee* will work with the VIMS Faculty Council, W&M Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity, and the W&M Human Resources office to review current search processes and practices and recommend to the Dean and Director modifications that support the goal of diversification. The challenges in recruitment, which are especially significant in faculty searches, are discussed in the VIMS Diversity Report as they apply to the field of Marine Science. Strategies for recruitment and hiring will include: (1) mechanisms to more broadly publicize each position opening; (2) a

requirement that applicants for faculty positions include a diversity statement; (3) a commitment of resources to bring in additional highly-qualified candidates for interviews to increase diversity of the pool of finalists; and, (4) using an applicant's commitment to diversity as one of the search selection criteria. When hiring senior administrators and senior staff, a list of diversity competencies will be requested with the application materials as per the recommendation in the W&M Task Force Report on Race and Race Relations (page 11). All faculty search committees at VIMS are appointed by the Dean and Director who, going forward, will solicit specific recommendations from senior leadership staff with regard to makeup of the committees.

Expand Minority Student Recruitment Efforts: The ocean sciences field is doing a good job recruiting women and international students in the U.S. and the School of Marine Science has been a contributor to the successful trajectory of the field. Based on projections at the federal level, the low number of under-represented minority applicants annually is expected to be a continuing challenge. To enhance efforts to recruit students from under-representative minorities the Associate Dean of Academic Studies will expand outreach to minority-serving institutions beyond the mid-Atlantic and will continue to use networking events at conferences or other events to connect with under-represented marine-science-tracked students. In addition, alumni in faculty positions at higher education institutions will be asked to help with recruitment of diverse students to the graduate program. Given the low diversity in the field of Marine Science and within the VIMS faculty, the Associate Dean of Academic Studies has begun to ask diverse alumni of the graduate program to serve as mentors for current students of color. The VIMS Academic Council will review current curricular offerings and provide input on diversity and inclusion as they relate to the marine science curriculum, teaching and advising activities.

Diversify Internal Committees: Of the 13 active committees at VIMS, four have members who are elected by faculty or staff and, as such, the membership is not within the purview of the VIMS Administration. There are two other committees whose membership is determined by positions held by employees. In most of the above cases, the administration can have modest influence on committee diversity at the time of employee turnover by helping to recruit diverse candidates who are willing to serve. This will receive special attention in the future. In addition, there are seven committees with members appointed by the Dean and Director. These committees are generally balanced with respect to gender and many have some degree of racial/ethnic diversity (within the constraints of the diversity of eligible candidates). For these committees, or ad-hoc committees appointed by the Dean and Director, both the Dean and Director and Chief Financial and Administrative Officer will use gender and ethnic diversity as one of the most important attributes in committee selection.

Diversify VIMS Foundation Board: The VIMS Foundation Board is comprised of 32 members, nine of whom are women (28%) and 23 are men (72%). Thirty-three percent of the leadership positions on the Board are held by women, but there are currently no Board members from underrepresented minorities. The Board, and the Board Experience Committee, are aware of the benefits of having greater diversity in future Board composition and will be encouraged to take this into account when identifying profiles of potential Board members. In addition, the Dean and Director and the VIMS Director of Advancement, who have excellent relationships with the Foundation leadership, will work closely with them to cultivate minority candidates who may be interested in making VIMS a priority through major gifts and being ambassadors for our science and outreach programs. Finally, the Dean and Director and Director of Advancement will weave diversity and inclusiveness into the way we communicate and portray our goals in the on-going campaign.

Diversify Public Outreach Efforts: The VIMS Director of Outreach develops quarterly and annual outreach reports that identify audiences by geographic area (through collection of zip codes), audience type, total number of citizens reached in various programs, and more. In addition to the reports, the Director of Outreach has developed a connection with the program established by Pharrell Williams “*From One Hand To AnOTHER*” (FOHTA) that focuses on underserved youth in at-risk communities. In fall 2015, children in the FOHTA program participated in an event at VIMS where they were taught how to use seine and dip nets. We will commit additional resources to weave this program into regular VIMS outreach efforts and enhance the outreach program by: (1) developing images to show diversity in promotional materials; (2) including intercity schools and churches in flyer distribution; (3) participating in festivals throughout the region that have diverse audiences; (4) partnering with area museums to reach more diverse audiences; (5) providing volunteer information at events to increase diversity among the current volunteer team; and, (6) including diversity training in regularly-scheduled volunteer training programs.

Additional Opportunities: Based on suggestions from the 15 focus groups that met during spring 2016, VIMS will: (1) pursue funding to offer a minority fellowship or postdoctoral position built on the highly-successful Hall Bonner Program at VIMS; (2) explore opportunities for private support to create a “commons area” where faculty and staff can congregate for coffee or lunch; (3) offer flex time and non-traditional work hours to attract and accommodate non-traditional employees; (4) identify and communicate professional development offerings to allow career advancement; and, (5) establish an “employee of the quarter” or a “featured employee of the quarter”.

Benchmark Diversity and Inclusion: Evaluating progress towards goal attainment will require a commitment to monitoring and careful collection of data. The *Diversity and Inclusion Committee* will work with the administrative units and standing committees to

develop specific metrics to benchmark diversity and inclusion. The Office of the Dean and Director will make benchmark data and other key indicators of goal attainment available to the VIMS community on an annual basis.