Provost's Leadership Academy Subgroup Recommendation on Improving the Campus Climate

Our workgroup was tasked with the opportunity to develop a quantitative "Inclusive Excellence Index" for the UCI campus that could assess school-based equity, diversity, and inclusion, identify areas for improvement, and track progress in each campus unit over time.

The original charge was described as follows:

"Focus attention on improving the climate for inclusive excellence. Climate implicates all four pillars of UCI's Strategic Plan, while affecting the sense of belong for faculty, graduate students and undergraduates. We want to propose as a topic: the development of an Inclusive Excellence Index. This index will monitor belonging for a wide spectrum of groups-including those who are marginal, vulnerable or otherwise under-represented such as the LGBTQ, Muslim and Jewish, undocumented, African Americans, Chicanos/Latinos populations, among others. The index will serve as a tool for campus leaders and members to understand the climate and target efforts to improve it for all."

Workgroup members reviewed Fall 2015 data describing the sex and racial/ethnic diversity of the campus at the undergraduate, graduate, and faculty levels. We then considered a number of topics in developing an Inclusive Excellence Index:

a. What is our definition of climate?
b. What are the components or dimensions of an Inclusive Excellence Index? That is, while it is easier to measure diversity, 1) how can we measure a sense of belonging and 2) what specific dimensions should we be assessing?
c. In creating an aggregated score comprised of several metrics, should different components of the index be prioritized or should each component be weighted equally?

We identified 3 potential domains in which climate might be assessed:

- **Objective Climate** (i.e., social/structural or demographic diversity)
- **Perceived Climate** (i.e., psychological or "felt" climate from each of the campus constituencies)
- **Behavioral Climate** (i.e., "lived" experiences and behaviors)

We also considered whether we should focus on race/ethnicity and/or gender exclusively, or also consider sexual orientation, religion, veteran status, social class, gender identity, and other identity characteristics.

The workgroup decided it was important to assess 4 campus constituencies and specific topics of relevance for each group, including:

- **Faculty**, with a focus on hiring (and consideration of the faculty distribution of gender and underrepresented minority faculty against pool of eligible women and underrepresented minorities/URMs), department "tone" (with a focus on the department's success at achieving diversity, equity, inclusion, and transparency), and overall faculty job satisfaction.
Undergraduate students, with a focus on degree completion of women and URM compared to men and non-URM students.

Graduate students, with a focus on admission of women and URM compared to men and non-URM students, as well as degree completion of women and URM compared to men and non-URM students.

Staff, with a focus on job satisfaction.

We also discussed the importance of addressing what might be done with the results and discussed the value of a post-assessment “debriefing”, and considered the pros/cons of a public release of an abstract and/or final report of findings.

The workgroup reviewed the UC Campus Climate Assessment project (2013) surveys and considered other possible assessment tools. Several concerns were raised in our initial discussion:

1. An index should undoubtedly consider both "objective" and "subjective" aspects of climate, although clearly the latter are more difficult to measure. We are likely to want to assess “comfort” at the community level and to assess why individuals feel that they are not part of the community.
2. We want to make sure that while transparent, the components measured in an index are inclusive enough that focused attention to one topic will not result in inattention to other, equally important, issues for a School.
3. Creating an index at the School level may hide differential attention and success in Inclusive Excellence in specific departments. We might want to consider creating an index that can be compiled at the Department level, perhaps aggregated across departments to create a School rating if needed – but not hiding the fact that there may be vast differences in the attention and success of department-level activities.

Final recommendations:

• After considering a number of models, the workgroup felt that creation of a single index that could reliably assess all assessment domains was not feasible.
• The workgroup instead recommends that unit-based climate should be assessed as part of the School-based Inclusive Excellence reviews, begun during the 2016-17 academic year, that will be rolled out for each school over the next academic year.
• School-based Inclusive Excellence Reviews involve ongoing climate and exit surveys of faculty, students, and staff, initiated by the Office of Inclusive Excellence.
• After compiling the data and sharing conclusions with the Provost, each Dean will receive a report of findings and will be supported in achieving inclusive excellence goals by the Office of Inclusive Excellence.
• School-based Inclusive Excellence Reviews should be repeated regularly to monitor progress toward equity, diversity, and inclusion.
• The workgroup recommends starting the assessment at the School level and disaggregating into smaller units over time.