

## **Proposal for the Council of Chairs Leadership Academy**

### **Executive Overview**

At the forefront of fostering an inclusive and dynamic academic environment, we propose the Council of Chairs Leadership Academy (CLA). This initiative is structured to address the lack of targeted leadership and diversity training among department chairs, positioning these pivotal figures at the helm of institutional change towards equity and inclusion.

### **Initiating Change: The Genesis of the Academy**

The conception of the CLA is a response to a recognized need for a shift in the culture of leadership within academic departments. Department chairs serve as the nexus between faculty aspirations and administrative policies, inherently positioned to champion diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives. Yet, the absence of specialized training has left a gap that the Academy aims to fill, blending innovative training methods with deep engagement on DEI principles.

Our group consists of a diverse group of participants from various disciplines, including Jonathan Alexander (English), Nana Entsuah (Clinical Pharmacy Practice), Glenda M. Flores (Chicano/Latino Studies), and others, representing a wide range of departments and specialties.

### **Crafting Leaders: The Academy's Blueprint**

At its core, the CLA is driven by a strategic collaboration with the Office of Inclusive Excellence, with a singular mandate: to sculpt equity-minded leaders capable of identifying and dismantling structural barriers to equity. This mission finds its foundation in Deloitte's 6 C-Traits of Inclusive Leadership, prescribing a holistic approach that includes commitment, courage, cognizance of bias, curiosity, cultural intelligence, and collaboration. These principles are not merely theoretical but will be operationalized through the academy's curriculum, fostering leaders who not only understand the value of diversity but actively promote an inclusive culture within their spheres of influence.

### **Targeted Transformation: Focusing on Chairs**

The rationale for focusing on department chairs is as strategic as it is intuitive. Occupying a critical juncture between the faculty they shepherd and the administration they interface with, chairs are uniquely positioned to influence DEI policies and practices. From merit and promotions to hiring, retention, and academic offerings, chairs can operationalize equity in myriad facets of departmental life. Recognizing this, the CLA is tailored to weave into the fabric of a chair's tenure, the principles and practices of inclusive leadership.

### **Innovative Instruction: The Pedagogy of the Academy**

The pedagogical framework of the CLA diverges from conventional training models, incorporating cutting-edge methodologies such as Virtual Reality (VR) for immersive learning experiences. This approach not only enhances engagement but fosters a safe space for exploring complex scenarios related to decision-making, perspective-taking, and bias

identification. Additionally, the quarterly networking lunches, inspired by the PLA model, bring together chairs in interdisciplinary cohorts, fostering a collaborative learning environment where DEI topics are deliberated. This blend of immersive technology and collaborative discourse encapsulates the academy's innovative approach to leadership training.

### **Measuring Impact: Towards Transformative Outcomes**

Anticipated outcomes of the Academy are categorized into behavioral, cognitive, and emotional dimensions, aiming for a comprehensive transformation in leadership ethos. The behavioral shift envisages chairs embracing inclusive communication and actively challenging biases. Cognitively, the program aims to enhance the analytical and problem-solving capabilities of chairs in the context of DEI issues. Emotionally, VR and networking sessions are designed to provide a safe platform for emotional engagement with complex scenarios, promoting empathy and psychological safety.

The evaluation framework, anchored in a pre and post Chair Equity assessment, will provide critical insights into the program's efficacy. Utilizing Deloitte's leadership characteristics as a benchmark, this evaluation is not just a measure but a feedback mechanism, guiding the continuous refinement of the Academy.

### **In Conclusion**

The Council of Chairs Leadership Academy stands as an endeavor to recalibrate leadership perspectives within UCI, embedding equity and inclusion at the heart of departmental leadership. Through its innovative curriculum, targeted focus, and robust evaluation, the Academy is poised to engender a culture where leadership is synonymous with equity, laying the groundwork for an inclusive academic future.