

**UTK College of Arts and Sciences**  
**Department of Physics and Astronomy**  
**Diversity Action Plan 2020**

Approved June 5, 2020

Mission statement of the Department with respect to Diversity, Inclusion and Climate (to be added to the mission statement of the department):

The department is strongly committed to enhancing the diversity at all levels (students, staff and faculty) so it is representative of the American physics community and, eventually, our nation. The department seeks to sustain the diversity and professional environment by providing an inclusive and welcoming climate that will allow for the educational and professional development of all members of the department regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, or disability status.

**Goal 1:** Create and sustain a welcoming, supportive, and inclusive campus **climate**.

Objectives	Actions	Metrics/Benchmarks	Date	Responsible Party(ies)
Provide a <b>permanent forum</b> for discussions and actions on how to enhance and sustain a welcoming, supportive, and inclusive departmental climate.	Establish a permanent <b>Departmental Community Committee</b> (DCC) charged with working together with the Head on all aspects of departmental climate, inclusion and diversity as well as monitoring the implementation of this and future departmental plans for these issues. The committee should have a broad composition from all constituents of the department: students, staff, and faculty.	Committee established and operating actively	September 2020	Management (= Head, Associate Heads, Program Directors)
Enhance the <b>professional behavior</b> in the department.	Provide a clear set of <b>guidelines</b> for all members of the department regarding <b>expected behavior</b> by acceptance of adherence to the various American Physical Society statements with respect to diversity and inclusion, appropriately modified to suit our department.	Acceptance of a set of professional behavior guidelines.	Fall 2020	DCC and Management
Enhance the possibilities for <b>reporting climate and discrimination issues</b> .	Provide a clear set of guidelines and procedures for how to <b>report climate and discrimination issues</b> for all members of the department. Ensure that reporting is <b>safe</b> and that everybody is aware of the reporting opportunities.	Publishing the guidelines and establishing the procedures.	Spring 2021	DCC and Management
Continuously <b>monitor the climate</b> in the department.	Generate a <b>recurring climate and diversity survey</b> of all members of the department in order to create a better understanding of climate and diversity issues and to monitor the progress towards our strategic goals on these issues.	Generation of data providing input for further actions to improve the diversity and climate in the department.	Spring 2021	DCC
Provide a more <b>welcoming</b> image of the department.	Strongly increased <b>web and social media presence</b> indicating the department is invested in a diverse and supporting climate for all our constituents.	Increased numbers of minority applicants for all types of positions.	Fall 2020	DDC, Publications Coordinator and Management
Provide tangible <b>credit</b> for work towards increased diversity.	<b>Modify the bylaws</b> so there are clear rules for the <b>credit allocated</b> to people involved with mentoring and other diversity enhancing workloads.	Department members working on diversity issues receive credit in annual evaluations.	Fall 2020	Management and Bylaws Committee

**Goal 2:** Attract and retain greater numbers of individuals from historically underrepresented populations<sup>1</sup> into **the undergraduate program.**

Objectives	Actions	Metrics/Benchmarks	Date	Responsible Party(ies)
Provide increased <b>support</b> for the undergraduate population.	Enhance the <b>advising</b> and <b>mentoring</b> of undergraduate majors and minors through the transition to a professional advisor and improved mentoring by faculty and, potentially, peers.	Increase graduation rates and climate satisfaction, as measured by the climate survey.	Spring 2021	Management, Undergraduate Program Director and DCC
Provide the students with better <b>tools for success.</b>	Establish a 1 credit hour <b>freshman course</b> that provides instruction on how to be a professional, successful and satisfied physics student.	Increase graduation rates and climate satisfaction.	Fall 2022	Management and Undergraduate Curriculum Committee
Attract greater <b>numbers of URM students.</b>	Improve <b>the recruiting and retention efforts</b> to enhance the quality, diversity and educational satisfaction of our undergraduate population.	Increase applications, enrollment and retention of URM students.	Fall 2022	Management and DCC
Enhance the <b>curriculum.</b>	Review the <b>undergraduate curriculum</b> to ensure it is flexible enough to ensure success for students with different social and educational backgrounds.	Increase number of graduates of URMs and their climate satisfaction.	Spring 2021	Undergraduate Curriculum Committee
Provide a safe and nurturing climate for URMs.	Provide all undergraduate students with instruction in bystander intervention and implicit bias issues.	Increase climate satisfaction	Fall 2022	Management, Undergraduate Program Director and SPS Advisor.

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<sup>1</sup> The Higher Education Act defines the term “minority” as an American Indian, Alaskan Native, Black (not of Hispanic origin), Hispanic (including persons of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, and Central or South American origin), Pacific Islander, or other ethnic group underrepresented in science and engineering. Note: identification of a particular group as underrepresented may vary by discipline (e.g., women are underrepresented in many STEM fields; Asian Americans in social science and humanities fields.). See formal definition at <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/USCODE-2011-title20/html/USCODE-2011-title20-chap28-subchapIII-partE-subpart3-sec1067k.htm>. “Historically underrepresented” can refer to any population that has been excluded over time in a higher education context by virtue of their identity(ies). This exclusion can occur on the basis of race, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, socioeconomic status, ability, or level of parental education.

**Goal 3:** Attract and retain greater numbers of individuals from historically underrepresented populations<sup>2</sup> into **the graduate program.**

Objectives	Actions	Metrics/Benchmarks	Date	Responsible Party(ies)
Attract <b>greater numbers of URM</b> students.	Continue the improvements of our <b>recruiting efforts</b> by evaluating applicants holistically and invite candidates to the campus.	Increase enrollment of URM students.	Spring 2021	Graduate Admissions Committee
Enhance our <b>mentoring</b> efforts.	Continue the improvements of <b>enhanced mentoring</b> of the graduate students by ensuring all students have one or several mentors and provide the students with stronger tools for building their portfolio and succeeding in their job applications. Provide increased support for students pursuing careers in both academia and industry.	Increase graduation rates and climate satisfaction, as measured by the climate survey.	Fall 2021	Management, Graduate Program Director and DCC
Enhance the <b>climate in the research groups.</b>	Establish a set of <b>guidelines</b> for graduate students and postdocs working <b>in research groups</b> to ensure optimal working conditions and work-life balance for all students. Enforce regular annual or bi-annual student committee meetings.	Increase graduation rates and climate satisfaction, as measured by the climate survey. Track the number of committee meetings held for each student.	Fall 2022	DCC and Management

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**Goal 4:** Attract and retain greater numbers of individuals from historically underrepresented populations<sup>3</sup> as **staff and faculty**.

Objectives	Actions	Metrics/Benchmarks	Date	Responsible Party(ies)
Attract a <b>greater number of URMs</b> in our staff and faculty.	Enhance the efforts to <b>increase the diversity</b> of the faculty through increased usage of active recruiting, opportunity hire options, and open searches. Establish a well-defined protocol for all searches, which involves initial online interviews, rubrics and timelines, so all searches are conducted in a similar manner.	Increase the number of URMs in our staff and faculty as well as increase job satisfaction as measured by the climate survey.	Continuously	Management and the faculty
Enhance <b>job satisfaction</b> .	Enhance the <b>mentoring</b> efforts for both assistant and associate professors as well as staff through an optional set of modern mentoring methods.	Increase the job satisfactions as measured by the climate survey.	Spring 2021	Management and DCC
Enhance the <b>interactions</b> between all members of the department.	Increase the number of <b>faculty/staff meetings</b> and enhance their quality with discussions of educational issues, common research issues and, in general, issues that can increase the job satisfaction of all employees of the department.	Increase job satisfaction as measured by the climate survey.	Spring 2021	Management and DCC
Improve the tenure and promotion process.	The tenure process and the requirements for tenure should be clearly explained to the voting faculty, including the appropriate apportionment between research, teaching, and service, and the metrics used to judge each. Clear guidelines for the promotion colloquia should be established. Consider establishing confidential faculty evaluations of promotion and tenure candidates.	Increase the job satisfaction for the junior faculty.	Fall 2020	Management and Bylaws Committee

<sup>3</sup> The Higher Education Act defines the term “minority” as an American Indian, Alaskan Native, Black (not of Hispanic origin), Hispanic (including persons of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, and Central or South American origin), Pacific Islander, or other ethnic group underrepresented in science and engineering. Note: identification of a particular group as underrepresented may vary by discipline (e.g., women are underrepresented in many STEM fields; Asian Americans in social science and humanities fields.). See formal definition at <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/USCODE-2011-title20/html/USCODE-2011-title20-chap28-subchapIII-partE-subpart3-sec1067k.htm>. “Historically underrepresented” can refer to any population that has been excluded over time in a higher education context by virtue of their identity(ies). This exclusion can occur on the basis of race, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, socioeconomic status, ability, or level of parental education.