

The Unleashing Social Work and Nursing Initiative

A Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work Initiative to Increase Diversity, Inclusive Community and Inclusive Excellence

Executive Summary, December 2016

This semester, the University of Southern California (USC) set out to increase diversity, inclusion and opportunity and to create a campus climate that is inclusive of all. To that end, USC President C. L. Max Nikias put forth an overall university strategy that was operationalized by Michael Quick, provost and senior vice president for academic affairs, and the Faculty Senate through its Access and Opportunity, Diversity and Inclusion initiative. Subsequently, the provost began making structural changes and requested that each academic unit develop a five-year diversity and inclusion plan. For the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work, this request coincided with efforts already underway.

The school's diversity and inclusion strategic plan, *Unleashing Social Work and Nursing Initiative*, presents our initial thinking about the implementing, evaluating and sustaining activities carried out as part of the initiative, and thus is subject to the school's budgetary and resource constraints. The plan offers a framework to guide the initiative, including priority areas and a set of concrete actions to ensure that the initiative is implemented as intended and successful. Leadership was provided by Associate Dean Cherrie Short and an advisory committee consisting of two representatives from each of the school's four departments. Members of the tenure-track faculty, teaching and field faculty and ground and virtual program faculty; administrative staff members; and students comprised the committee. Dean Short collaborated with Dean Marilyn Flynn, Associate Professor Maria Aranda (chair of the Faculty Council), faculty, and representatives from the school's Committee on Diversity and Inclusion. The Advisory Committee was charged with providing a framework for a school-wide effort to create and sustain an environment that allows people of different backgrounds and perspectives to flourish both individually and collectively. Ultimately, implementing our plan is the responsibility of all constituencies comprising the larger school community.

The plan was developed with direct input from the faculty, staff and students. Multiple sources of information shaped development of the initiative and initial plan, including data from focus groups carried out during a school-wide faculty meeting and a summary report prepared by our Faculty Council; data collected from a web-based survey administered to faculty, staff, students, alumni and community partners (e.g., field supervisors); reports from the school's Committee on Diversity and Inclusion; and various departmental and committee reports.

Building on our past and existing efforts as a school and those of the social work and nursing professions, the ultimate goals of this groundbreaking initiative are to transform society and achieve global social justice. Clearly, those goals will require more than five years to realize, but they remind us of the importance of this initiative and are included as longer-term goals. More attainable over the next five years are three goals that we believe will enhance our capacity to bring about social

transformation and justice. Those goals are to increase diversity, create an inclusive community and advance inclusive excellence in the school.

Within those goals, four priority areas were identified through the direct contribution of faculty, students, staff, select community partners, and alumni. The four priority areas of need will guide our actions during the next five years.

The four priority areas are as follows:

Priority Area 1 – School Commitment and Infrastructure

Priority Area 2 – Scholarship

Priority Area 3 – Curriculum, Teaching and Student Issues

Priority Area 4 – Community Outreach, Engagement and Transformation

The plan will be executed in five phases across five academic years, from fall 2016 through spring 2021. The plan builds on the strengths of the school, particularly its diversity and longstanding professional commitment to inclusion and social justice. It also aligns with other school and university initiatives, such as reaffirmation and tackling grand challenges and wicked problems. Throughout all phases, we will be involved in evaluation activities and efforts that demonstrate our accountability to the initiative.

We will determine the best methods for evaluating implementation, change and success. Evaluation activities will be applied at each of the five phases, and overseen by school leadership as well as active and proactive advisory groups formed by representatives from each sector of the school. The evaluation activities will include collecting a second round of data to understand reaction to the plan, level of commitment, readiness, challenges in outreach and engagement (initial outcomes), internal implementation and development of best practices in the school (intermediate outcomes) and external implementation and development of best practices both across and outside the university (long-term outcomes).

Importantly, this plan builds on the strength of the school and aligns with other initiatives and activities in which we are currently engaged. The final section of the strategic plan contains illustrations of these initiatives and activities, which will continue, and, in some cases, be expanded upon and looked to as best practices.

Notably, this plan is a living document, and our intention is to continue developing and refining it during the next five years. The school will also work with university leadership to ensure the school's activities during the next five years are accountable to larger objectives and goals. In recognition that issues of diversity and inclusion are ever expanding and evolving, our objective is to adapt to and build on any necessary changes and purposes during the implementation and evaluation stages.

Ultimately, the diversity and inclusion strategic plan reflects our commitment, accountability and transparency to upholding standards of diversity and inclusion at our school, and ultimately demonstrates the values that we carry as social workers and nurses in implementing this plan.