

LIFT SU Goal One: Recruitment & Retention of BIPOC Students

Working Group Report, Phase 1: Retention

Executive Summary



Introduction

Reigniting Our Strategic Directions Goal 4 - Promote Inclusive Excellence provides under *LIFT SU Goal 1* that Seattle University will “focus on creating connections that attract and retain BIPOC students” and that Seattle University will make “thoughtful updates to the systems and structures that provide support, nurture persistence and empower thriving.”

The heart of this goal is to center our BIPOC students, but the impact will be to enhance

the experience for students with other marginalized identities and intersections, including first-generation students, LGBTQIA+ students, Pell-eligible students, neurodiverse, and veteran students, among others.

In this executive summary, the *LIFT SU Goal 1 Working Group* shares preliminary findings regarding retention efforts on behalf of our BIPOC students, including Key Priorities, a SWOT Analysis, and concrete Action Items. A full-length report will follow.

We must do more than merely retain our students.

We must create a campus environment and student experience in which they thrive. Stated differently, we want our students to **continue to choose** Seattle University over other schools and options because they **want to be here**.



Background

Vice President for Diversity & Inclusion Natasha Martin, as the executive sponsor of *Reigniting Our Strategic Directions* Goal 4/*LIFT* SU Goal 1, charged the *LIFT* SU Goal 1 Working Group as follows:

- Develop a fuller understanding of the recruitment and retention efforts for BIPOC students, particularly historically underrepresented students, across campus.
- Develop an evidence-based understanding of barriers to entry, access, belonging, and thriving for BIPOC students, and connections to the SU student experience.
- Develop recommendations and proposals for improving recruitment and retention efforts, which might include a high-impact practices guide for retention efforts and/or a proposal for how the university can better align its recruitment and retention efforts to support the engagement and thriving of BIPOC students; and
- Develop an implementation plan for recruitment and retention, including, but not limited to the development of accountability mechanisms and continuous improvement practices.

The *LIFT* SU Goal 1 Working Group is co-chaired by **Michelle Kim**, Office of Multicultural Affairs, and **Julie Homchick Crowe**, co-chair, Assistant Professor, Communication & Media. During the fall quarter, **Carol Cochran**, Director of Alfie's Scholars, served as co-chair while Michelle Kim was on parental leave. The members of the


working group are as follows: **Shelley Carr**, Assistant Librarian; **Victor Evans**, Assistant Professor, Communication & Media; **Angie Jenkins**, Director, Learning Assistance Programs; **Kerry Soo Von Esch**, Associate Professor & Program Director, Educating Non-Native English Speakers; **Kim Thompson**, Senior Director, Disability Services; and **Dale Watanabe**, Director, International Student Center. The group was supported by **Hidy Basta**, Provost Fellow.

In executing on this charge, the working group recognizes that this work is part of a continuum of how we understand our students' experiences, building on the foundational work of the Task Force on Diversity & Inclusive Excellence and contributing to the work that is ongoing under *Reigniting Our Strategic Directions* Goal 3 – *Enhance the Student Experience*. We approached our work through the lens of equity-mindedness, identifying the patterns of unequal outcomes and utilizing asset-based (not deficit-based) thinking to frame our evaluation and recommendations.



Key Priorities

The working group studied Seattle U's internal retention statistics, in partnership with the Office of Institutional Research; explored external research on high-impact practices for retention; and engaged students, staff, and faculty through outreach and focus groups. Based on that work, we offer that Seattle University will be our students' choice if we prioritize our commitment to the priorities below. This commitment further requires that where the student experience is at stake, these priorities must guide our allocation of resources.

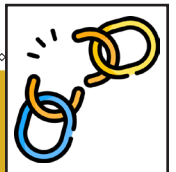
CREATE SAFE AND WELCOMING ENVIRONMENTS	EMPOWER FACULTY AND STAFF	BUILD COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS
<p>Create structures and information sharing, both inside and outside the classroom, that prioritize students and families who have the least amount of experience in college settings</p> <p>Support curriculum development that expands meaningful focus on marginalized voices</p> <p>Increase hiring of BIPOC staff and faculty, and improve retention of existing BIPOC staff and faculty</p> <p>Support and educate students, staff, and faculty to better engage across difference</p>	<p>Build mechanisms for accountability with regard to enhancing our BIPOC student outcomes and persistence (e.g., tie faculty and staff investment in BIPOC students to advancement and promotion)</p> <p>Incentivize and prioritize professional development opportunities (e.g., required tsessions on inclusive pedagogy, DEI competency, etc.) and increase professional development opportunities and compensation for those who work in high-impact student-facing areas</p> <p>Increase transparency for students and families regarding the realities of higher education</p>	<p>Increase support for community-building groups and activities</p> <p>Increase frequency of events that facilitate inclusion and belonging</p> <p>Better coordinate efforts and resources across and external to campus</p> 

Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis



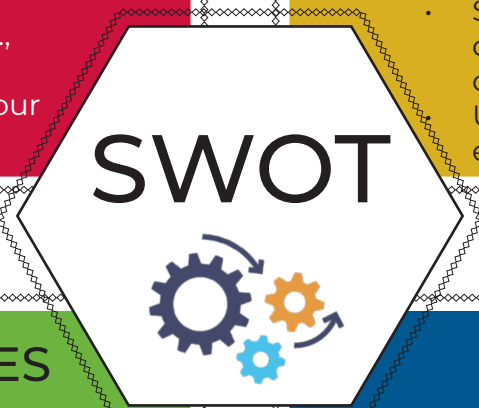
STRENGTHS

- Jesuit mission of educating the whole person and focus on professional formation
- Connections between students & staff
- Existing student clubs, affinity groups, and opportunities for connection
- Engaged and caring faculty
- Student-focused offices and infrastructure that support our students
- Existing programs and activities to engage BIPOC students (e.g., pre-arrival programs)
- The power of our location & our



WEAKNESSES

- Lack of transparency to students re: navigating their education and its challenges
- Limited professional development opportunities for faculty & staff
- Insufficient funding for student resources & student-facing staff positions
- Overpromising and underdelivering on the holistic student experience
 - Student-focused work on campus siloed and non-collaborative
 - Understaffing and associated exhaustion and turnover



OPPORTUNITIES

- Invest in student clubs and organization infrastructure
- Create more opportunities for community-building
- Engage and collaborate with committed staff, faculty, and administrators
- Build internal and external BIPOC community partnerships
- Develop culturally responsive pedagogy
- Invest in wrap-around-care services for students



THREATS

- Commitment to the status quo/ fear of change
- Competing universities that may be able to offer more support and resources to BIPOC students
- Competing universities that may invest more in faculty, staff, and community-building programs and infrastructure
- Student population demographic cliff and budget impact

Action Items

Based on our Key Priorities and SWOT Analysis, we recommend the following action items. We focused on institutional longer-term commitments and included recommended responsible and consultative partners. We recognize that some of these items may already be underway.

Action Item	Responsible & Consultative Partner(s)
Remedy our crisis of communication, including but not limited to: creating a master campus-wide calendar that is accessible to faculty, staff, and students.	Working group on Events Planning and Coordination; Office of Academic & Student Affairs; Marketing and Communications; RSD Goal 3
Streamline operations that impact the student experience, making the “business of being a student” easier.	Office of Academic & Student Affairs; RSD Goal 3; Center for Digital Learning & Innovation; Office of Institutional Research
Create a Professional “Day of Learning” on topics related to student success for all staff & faculty. This might also include a separate day of learning for students.	Human Resources; Office of Diversity & Inclusion; Office of Mission Integration; RSD Goal 2; Office of Academic & Student Affairs
Standardize and require training/professional development opportunities for staff and faculty and make that training/professional development part of the promotion and evaluation for staff and faculty.	Human Resources; Provost’s Office; Office of Diversity & Inclusion; Office of Academic & Student Affairs; RSD Goal 2



Action Items

Action Item	Responsible & Consultative Partner(s)
Invest in the resources necessary to obtain robust, disaggregated data regarding the student experience, as well as exit surveys for students who stop out.	Office of Institutional Research; RSD Goal 3
Create opportunities for cross-functional convenings of our campus stakeholders focused on the student experience (like the Office of Student & Faculty Affairs Student Experience Forums & Racial Equity Summit)	Office of Academic & Student Affairs; RSD Goal 3
<p>Better balance our collective strategic and financial focus and our operational focus, which might include the following initiatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number of staff in key student-facing roles like financial services and student engagement, with attention to numbers of staff and compensation. • Formalize a structure for student feedback/accountability and increase student representation on key committees/bodies making decisions/advising regarding university directions. 	Office of Academic & Student Affairs; Human Resources; RSD Goal 3
Empower and incentivize individual departments and programs to invest in their BIPOC students in ways that best match their student needs and programmatic goals.	Provost's Office; Office of Diversity & Inclusion; RSD Goal 1; Schools & Colleges
Build out and invest in our student employment opportunities to better connect students with communities on campus while providing them with both income and work experience.	Office of Academic & Student Affairs; Career Engagement Office; RSD Goal 2
<p>Increase our focus on retention efforts to better balance with our focus on enrollment. This might include ideas like the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create institutional committees or working groups to address specific student needs (e.g., undocumented student support committee or international student support working group). • Reimagine student orientation to better meet the needs of our students (in process) • Allocate more resources to colleges and departments for the creation of "bridge" programs specifically designed for BIPOC students 	Summer Programs; Office of Academic & Student Affairs; Orientation Programs; Office of Multicultural Affairs; Student Success & Outreach; International Student Center; RSD Goal 3; Global Engagement