

Walker College of Business Inclusive Excellence Report 2018



Our Framework

We define “diversity” broadly including but not limited to race, color, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, disability, veteran status, and first generation students. We believe an appreciation of individuals from a multitude of backgrounds and experiences is a necessity in a global workforce. Our goal is an inclusive culture where the uniqueness of each individual is valued.

Weaving Diversity into our College Culture

It's no secret that diversity matters in business. In fact, if you Google ‘diversity in business’ you will find several articles outlining the benefits of business innovation and sustainability when incorporating diversity into the equation. A McKinsey & Company report from January 2015 suggests businesses with a more diverse workforce are more likely to achieve financial returns above the industry median. Thus, it makes sense that universities and business colleges in particular should see increasing diversity as a priority. The AACSB continues to emphasize its commitment to diversity¹. Multiple perspectives and multiple backgrounds become increasingly important as we seek solutions to new challenges arising in an environment accelerating change and disruptive innovation.

The Walker College of Business offers many dynamic programs and resources to its students. The WCOB is home to the 5th largest Risk Management & Insurance program in the country, the Walker Fellows, the Women of Walker, the Bowden Investment Group and the Holland Fellows, among others. These programs provide select students with the opportunity to obtain hands-on experience in industry and cross-cultural settings, as well as participate in mentoring and leadership training. Additionally, the WCOB is able to provide scholarships to students every year due to the generous support of external donors.

Dean Heather Norris commissioned a Diversity Advisory Team in response to a 2014 culture survey that suggested a college-wide need for more support and development regarding issues of diversity and inclusion. Members of the team consisted of a wide range of experiences, talents, and demographic backgrounds. The team was charged with evaluating and assisting with program development to address these concerns. The team has since evolved to align more closely with the vision for diversity and inclusion in the University. The Diversity Advisory Team rebranded to the Walker College of Business Inclusive Excellence Team in Spring 2018. Many of the programs outlined in this report stem from ideas evolving from this team.

Current WCOB Initiatives

The WCOB collaborates with historically black student organizations on Appalachian's campus to host *Courageous Conversations* in celebration of Black History Month. This event consists of a panel discussion and reception focused on creating a space for meaningful dialogue to occur around issues with race, racial discrimination and implicit bias in the workplace. The 2018 Courageous Conversations received local media recognition. See [here](#).

In 2019, this initiative will develop into a two-part series. The fall Courageous Conversations will expand to address a broader audience. The spring Courageous Conversations will retain its current focus in celebration of Black History month with expanding partnerships across campus and the African American Alumni Association.



In 2018, Multicultural Student Development reorganized the LEAD orientation program into the *ASCEND Program*. This high-impact supplemental orientation aims to provide marginalized and historically underrepresented students an opportunity to build community and to empower success with knowledge,

connections and resources. Students were paired with the college for their intended major and given an opportunity to engage with faculty, staff and students.

We are Walker is a social media campaign similar to “Everyone Matters Day” sponsored by College Student Educators International. The purpose of this event is to celebrate our college community by encouraging acceptance of others and ourselves as well as affirming that everyone has the right to be who they are in the College of Business without ridicule or judgment. This event was piloted in Fall 2017 with the University campaign #NoHateAppState and will be revamped in the upcoming semesters to align with other University and/or College programming.





Now in its 5th year, ***Women of Walker (WoW)*** has grown to over 30 members. The mission of the Women of Walker (WoW) is to accelerate professional development, personal growth,

and leadership abilities for female business majors at Appalachian State University through networking, career exploration, travel, and professional development workshops and seminars. Of the 2018 graduating class, only 34% were female.

Departmental Activities

The ***Women in Financial Services*** Initiative is co-led by Finance, Banking & Insurance faculty members Brandy Hadley and Lori Medders, and works to identify and develop high potential female Appalachian State students for careers in financial services. The Department of Finance, Banking & Insurance began the initiative in Fall 2017 in response to a noticeable reduction in the percentage of Walker College of Business women choosing to take upper level Finance and Risk Management courses. In 2018, fewer than 20% of the graduating class in these majors are women.

As part of the initiative, Professors Hadley and Medders have coordinated Women in Finance Industry panels, provided finance and insurance workshops for the campus student community, and exposed App State women to Financial Services opportunities both in and outside of North Carolina. In Fall 2018, the pair took ten Walker College women – a mix of sophomore and junior students – to New York City where they interacted with management team members from several major financial institutions. In Spring 2019, a larger group will travel to Charlotte, NC for a day long visit with women alumni of the department and their firms. Professors Hadley and Medders are also piloting programs with high school and university guidance counselors to promote the initiative.

The Brantley Risk and Insurance Center revitalized the ***Building Insurance Talent Program***, which was developed in 2010 to attract and support students of diverse backgrounds. The program included mentoring, networking opportunities and career development. While in the early stages of its new era, the program seeks to develop a robust program to introduce diverse students to the potential in Risk Management and Insurance while providing them the tools they need to be successful in the industry. The program is piloting several initiatives including:

The ***Inclusive Excellence in Risk Management and Insurance Dinner*** is an annual dinner hosted by the RMI Faculty & Gamma Iota Sigma focused on the recruitment of students from diverse backgrounds. The dinner features historically underrepresented industry professionals (alumni & non-alumni). The dinner is geared towards freshman, sophomores, and transfer students of diverse backgrounds. This program aims to recruit diverse undergraduate students with an interest in pursuing a degree in Risk Management & Insurance or Actuarial Science. It also serves to encourage undecided majors from diverse backgrounds to consider the Risk Management & Insurance or Actuarial Science major.



The *Inclusive Excellence Ice Cream Social & Meet the Industry* is periodic meet and greet networking opportunity for students interested in learning more about the RMI program. Current RMI students or insurance industry professionals guest speaking on campus are invited to share their experiences about Risk Management and Insurance at these events.

Over the last two years, the Brantley Center has supported 2-4 students to attend the *National African-American Insurance Association Conference (NAAIA)* held in various locations in the southeast.

This conference gives students the chance to learn about issues affecting the African-American insurance community as well as provide an opportunity to



connect with industry leaders for diversity and inclusion. This initiative will expand to the *Latin American Association of Insurance Agencies* in 2019.

The *RISE Career Fair* is a part of the RISE (Reach Invest Support Empower) mentoring program in Charlotte, North Carolina. ⁱⁱ RISE collaborated with Garinger High School in Charlotte to engage students to make good life decisions and develop career aspirations in hopes of assisting them in overcoming various barriers they may encounter. The Brantley Risk and Insurance Center supports the RISE Mentoring program by participating in their career fair, which will reach over 400 students in 2018.

Recruitments Efforts

In Spring of 2018, the WCOB IE Team reached out to multicultural student organizations on campus in order to give *5-Minute Informational* presentations about the opportunities within the Walker College of Business and to support efforts being made to combat the career under matching crisis and build more cross-cultural partnerships across campus.ⁱⁱⁱ The Black Student Association gave us the opportunity to participate in one of their meetings and invited us back in Fall 2018 to give an additional presentation on professional development with the support of our MBA faculty.

Additionally, Graduate Programs in the Walker College of Business has implemented a plan to build and support a pipeline of undergraduate students from traditionally underrepresented populations from North Carolina HBCUs. [St. Augustine](#)



[University](#) is the first undergraduate institution to be part of the effort. St. Augustine is a private, historically black college in Raleigh, North Carolina with an enrollment of approximately 1100 students. The School of Business, Management & Technology offers majors in business administration, accounting, computer information systems and sports management. In October 2018, COB Graduate Programs representatives hosted an informational session about the MBA and MS in Applied Data Analytics program reaching over twenty students. The Walker College of Business

also participates in [The PhD Project](#), which supports the advancement of diversity in business school faculty.

Cross Campus Collaboration

As part of the University Inclusive Excellence Initiative, Academic Affairs hosted the [Cultivating Faculty Inclusive Excellence Institute](#) facilitated by the Sustained Dialogue

Institute. SDI (sustaineddialogue.org/) has a rich history and experience working with faculty in higher education institutions worldwide. As part of this program, Inclusive Excellence Liaisons from each academic department were identified and trained to have a better understanding of Inclusive Excellence language and concepts. They also learn how to support underrepresented students, navigate difficult dialogue and strong opinions, diversify curriculum and syllabi, and learn classroom prevention and intervention strategies. Liaisons took this knowledge back to their departments to share with faculty and serve as an Inclusive Excellence resource in conjunction with the Inclusive Excellence Team and the Center for Academic Excellence.



The Walker College of Business was also an active participant in [Dr. Damon Williams' Residency](#) at Appalachian State University in the fall of 2018. Dr. Williams worked to strengthen Appalachian's diversity commitment by engaging our community in a conversation about diversity, equity, inclusion and change. Through multiple sessions over a three-day period WCOB Faculty, Staff and Administrators engaged in insightful conversations about how to further develop a mindset of "inclusive excellence" in the College of Business and across the campus

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LEARN MORE

<https://business.appstate.edu/programs/diversity-initiatives>



ⁱAACSB International. (n.d.). Retrieved January 9, 2017, from <http://www.aacsb.edu/diversity>

ⁱⁱ Learn more about RISE at <https://www.risementorship.org/>

ⁱⁱⁱ “Career under matching describes the phenomenon in which talented college graduates from low-income families wind up in jobs that don’t match their abilities or ambitions. Instead, they work in jobs that are less stimulating than they want, below their skill set and qualifications offer lower pay scales and provide fewer opportunities for advancement.” Pliska, Jessica. *Career Undermatching: The Higher Ed Issue You Need to Know About*. March 16, 2016. Retrieved from <http://diverseeducation.com/article/82502>