

Walker College of Business Diversity Report



Our Framework

We define “diversity” broadly including but not limited to race, color, national origin, sexual orientation, disability, veteran status, and first generation. We look to enhance diversity in our college by developing programs in three areas:

- Faculty and staff development
- Recruitment and professional development of current non-WCOB students, prospective high school students and graduate students
- Professional development and retention of current WCOB students.

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 many articles related to 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 have financial returns above the industry median. Thus, it makes sense that universities and college of businesses in particular should see increasing diversity as a priority. The AACSB recently emphasized its commitment to diversity when the White House convened a meeting of administration officials and business school deans to discuss best practices for supporting diversity in business schoolsⁱ.

The Walker College of Business offers 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 Bowden Investment Group, which provides select students an opportunity to obtain hands-on investment experience and many other student-focused development programs that allow students to obtain industry and leadership experience. Additionally, the WCOB is able to provide scholarships to students every year due to the support of external donors.

Despite the quantity and quality of professional and academic programming the college has to offer, we do not have the diversity needed to serve the business industry. Currently, approximately 13% of our undergraduate students represent ethnically diverse backgrounds and anywhere from 4-10% of our graduate students are ethnically diverseⁱⁱ. While comparable to the University averages, one of Appalachian State’s strategic goals is to increase diversity in the University.

The Dean of the Walker College of Business commissioned a Diversity Advisory Team at the end of 2014 after a culture survey suggested a recurring concern around diversity in the college. Members of the team include a wide range of experience from academic and corporate perspectives. The team was charged with evaluating and assisting with program development to address these concerns. Many of the programs outlined in this report stem from ideas evolving from this team.

Current Initiatives

The *CEO Multicultural Student Day* is an event held in conjunction with the WCOB Boyle's CEO Lecture and luncheon. The Distinguished CEO Lecture Series began in the Spring of 1988 and is held each semester. The lecture has featured CEOs from Lowe's Companies, Inc., Bank of America, Lance, Inc. and many more. Diverse students accepted for admission to Appalachian State who indicate an interest in business or undecided are invited through the Dean's office to attend the lecture and luncheon with a guest. This intimate event allows prospective students to have an opportunity to network with various campus administrators, current business students, and alumni. We piloted this program with three students in the Spring of 2015 and 100% of these students chose to enroll at Appalachian and are currently pursuing a degree in business. Students found this experience to be the "icing on the cake" in making their decision to come to Appalachian State University. We look to expand this program to invite prospective graduate students as well as prospective undergraduate students.



Georgette Dixon, Spring 2015 CEO Executive Luncheon Speaker

The *Affinity Club* is comprised of a network of students both WCOB and non-WCOB majors who represent diverse backgrounds. The Affinity Club is open to all individuals including but not limited to first generation, LGBTQ+, disabled, veteran status, and ethnically diverse students. The goal of this program is to improve and enhance the experiences of students from these diverse backgrounds by providing empowerment, networking, and community. Additionally, this program strives to expose non-WCOB majors to the resources and opportunities available in our college and the business industry. We piloted the Affinity Club in the Spring 2016 with approximately seven students. Initial feedback suggests that this is a much needed program within the college. The WCOB currently has a similar group which services women in the college of business called Women of Walker (WOW). While WOW has an open invitation to many of their events, the exclusive focus is increasing and developing women in the business industry. While created to serve as a support for diverse students, Affinity Club views diversity broadly and attracts a wide range of students.

The *Collegiate Multicultural Leadership Exchange (CMLE) Phase I* was established to 1) assist with recruiting a more diverse graduate student body. This program is a two to three-day immersion experience hosted at Appalachian State University and a Historically Black College and University (HBCU) in the University of North Carolina system. Guest students “shadow” a host student for two days to classes and extracurricular activities while also participating in lectures and forums related to the Leadership

Exchange in the evenings. This program was piloted in Fall 2016 with Winston Salem State University. A number of students indicated at the end of the event they developed an interest in pursuing a master’s degree in business and will consider Appalachian as a place to pursue such a degree. We hope to establish relationships with other HBCUs in our area for future years.



CMLE 2016 participants from Winston-Salem State University

The COB collaborates with a historically black student organization on Appalachian’s campus to host *Courageous Conversations* in celebration of Black History Month. The 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. In future years, we will incorporate a service activity to serve a local African-American community.



Our Future

Collegiate Multicultural Leadership Exchange Phase II will be an immersion experience hosted by the previously mentioned HBCU partnering school in which selected WCOB students attend classes and participate in lectures and forums related to the Leadership Exchange in the evening. This program is established to provide students an opportunity to create an atmosphere of learning, engagement, and productive dialogue between their peers, faculty, and staff from Appalachian State University and selected HBCU (Historically Black Colleges & Universities) partners. This phase of the Leadership Exchange will take place in Fall 2017.

While current forums are geared towards students, we look to offer programming in the future to meet the needs of faculty and staff. Faculty in our college have indicated that they are unable to incorporate diversity into their syllabus because they don't have suitable foundational knowledge or adequate support. This will be the focus of our diversity initiative for 2018-2019.

The *College of Business Recruitment Ambassadors* are students who value diverse perspectives, inclusion, and empower others through education. Each Fall, selected students will partner with the Office of Undergraduate Admissions counselors to train and travel to at least four designated schools. Two high schools and two community colleges will be visited in the Greensboro area to form a relationship with prospective business majors through presentations and informal question and answer sessions. While the primary goal is to recruit a more diverse student body and form stronger bonds between our University and academic institutions in North Carolina cities, we also hope to expose prospective students to opportunities in business. This program is scheduled to be piloted in Fall 2018; however, planning of the program has already begun.

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's 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 judgement. This event will be hosted later this spring.

LEARN MORE

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



CONTACT PERSON

Jamie A. Parson, J.D.

DAT Chair

Assistant Professor

andersonja2@appstate.edu

828.719.1200

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

ⁱⁱ Based on 2015 Data from Appalachian State IRAP; 4% in IOHRM, 9% in MBA, numbers from MS in Accounting are not reflected in this report