Subcommittee—Recruitment and Retention of African American Students

Subcommittee Members: Joffery Gaymon, Katrina Akande, Madison Birckhead, Royrickers Cook, Kevin Coonrod, Vini Nathan, Lastella Paradise, Mya Strickland, Ja’Lia Taylor and Bill Hardgrave.

Objectives:
- Increase Black student enrollment
- Increase aid allocated to Black students
- Improve the racial climate
- Improve retention and graduation rates of Black students

Completed:
To increase Black student enrollment
- Pilot a flexible admissions model—deployed a test flexible model based on a holistic review.
- Deployed non-cognitive based short essay prompts. All applicants reflect and respond to a situation where they experienced or witnessed unfairness. Applicants have an opportunity to reflect on an experience, demonstrate understanding, learning and growth.
- Alabama’s valedictorian and salutation are guaranteed admission to the university and the Honors College. The top two students will also receive priority consideration for scholarships.
- Launched the Common Application

To increase aid allocated to Black students
- Shifted at least 10% of scholarship funds towards need/non-merit aid and reduced the cost of attendance for students with unmet-need. Award more scholarships to transfer students.
- Shifted oversight of PLUS Scholarship to Enrollment Management to ensure strategic deployment of funds. Increase annual awards. New awards will range from $5,000-$8,000. Shift the oversight of President’s Graduate Opportunities Program (PGOP) funds to the Graduate School.

To improve the racial climate
- Document and celebrate the history of diversity at Auburn. Student Center renaming and updated campus tour script.
• Develop an “Inclusive Language Guide” and toolkit. Hometown news, student showcase—clear messaging on Affordability, Ability and Fit.

To improve retention and graduation rates of Black students
• Held follow-up meetings with provost and Sr. VP for Academic Affairs and Sr. VP for Student Affairs to discuss the next steps.

Immediate Next Steps:
To increase Black student enrollment
• Establish full benchmarks with SEC, SREB and top-performing institutions for Black students
• Leverage partnerships with GearUp Alabama and Black Belt Community Foundation
• Increase enrollment of students participating in DiCE
• Annually track and report on funds allocated towards diversity scholarships

To increase aid allocated to Black students
• Identify new funds to increase need-based aid
• Ensure students with the greatest need can experience the FULL Auburn experience
• Increase the number of diversity scholarships

To improve the racial climate
• Conduct a climate survey in spring 2021
• Continue to document and celebrate the history of diversity at Auburn
• Continue to develop an “Inclusive Language Guide” and toolkit
• Improve retention and graduation rates of Black students
• Select champions responsible for equitable student success and a process for continuous improvement
• Survey non-returning students

Future Planning Required:
To increase Black student enrollment
• Evaluate the test-optional model
• Reimagine the centralized and decentralized recruitment mode

Increase aid allocated to Black students
• Revisit the fundraising campaign and develop a plan to focus on affordability and access

To improve the racial climate
• Develop an African American studies and Women's and Gender Studies major, potentially name it “John Lewis Department of Civil Rights, Equity and Inclusion.”

To improve retention and graduation rates of Black students
• Change metrics for student organization incentives. Evaluate funding for student organizations, block seating, etc. Reward organizations based on diversity and inclusion.