

**STUDENT ACADEMIC SUCCESS WORKING GROUP**  
**WORKING GROUP MEMBERS:**

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**WORKING GROUP CO-CHAMP**

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**TITLE:** Graduate Students DEI Programming

**PROBLEM:**

- During their graduate program, graduate students develop their professional identity, with a potential to be DEI facilitators and leaders during their graduate studies and beyond.
- There is no systemically embedded and sustainable DEI programming for graduate students on JMU campus.
- Individual graduate programs and DEI programming have notable accomplishments (e.g., student-led Diversity Initiative within the Combined-Integrated Doctoral Program in Psychology or THRIVE), however a broader and inclusive strategy would address the needs of graduate students and the broader community in a sustainable way. This would also be consistent with general recommendations to integrate social justice and DEI related training throughout curricula.
- Compared to national data, JMU has a much lower percentage of BIPOC and international graduate students: 22.2 % BIPOC students at JMU compared to 33.1 nationally; and 2% international students at JMU, compared to 14.1% nationally. This suggests that BIPOC and international students at JMU may have less institutionalized support than their peers at other institutions. <sup>1</sup>
- JMUs change to a R2 requires a broader focus on how we serve BIPOC students who may be attracted to JMU's status as a research-oriented institution.
- Establishing GAs is consistent with R2 goals and can also pay students for the DEI services they are providing to the university community.

**WORKING GROUP**  
**LEADERSHIP**



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*See following pages for The Recommendation, Rationale and Success Measures*

**RECOMMENDATION:**

- **Proposal:** Establish five Graduate Assistantships dedicated to promoting and engaging in DEI activities for all graduate students on JMU campus
- **Support:** Identify two Faculty Associates to serve as a supervisor or advisor to the five GAs (can be instructional or A&P faculty, appoint bi-annually and base this on an application process.)
- **Sustainable model:** Design of the activities leads to self-sustaining programming in service of both graduate students and broader community:
  - ◇ All graduate students will have access to learning experiences focused on self- and other-awareness related to intersectionality of social identities (intergroup dialogue, Racial Healing Circles, etc.), facilitated by five GAs.
  - ◇ Graduate students who participate in a learning experience will complete facilitator training and become available to serve the larger community.
  - ◇ Those trained facilitators will then apply to become the next DEI graduate assistants and go through a competitive selection process.
  - ◇ In addition to facilitating and educating the next group of facilitators, GAs will engage in advocacy for graduate student experience, research, etc., working closely with Faculty Associates.
  - ◇ During the first year, the Faculty Associates will develop a graduate certificate in DEI for JMU graduate students and coordinate with the School of Professional & Continuing Education to establish the certificate program.
  - ◇ Faculty Associates will educate graduate faculty about working with diverse student populations
  - ◇ Faculty Associates will have the opportunity to engage in research and university-supported DEI efforts, which is an incentive to participate in what would ideally be a competitive application process.
- **Initiative proposed home:** The Graduate School
- **Resources:**
  - ◇ The 5 graduate assistantships would include both stipends and tuition. If the students are going to be doctoral students (which would be preferred) the stipends are approx. \$16K and the tuition is 22,158 per year, so \$38K per student per year. It may be best to plan for out-of-state tuition to allow the most flexibility and to better accommodate potential international students. Faculty associates would receive a stipend of around \$10K per year.
  - ◇ Office space and computer equipment/storage, etc. for the graduate assistants and a budget line item to replace equipment etc. every 3 years. Ideally this would be the responsibility of JMU, and the departments that the faculty members come from could provide funding if necessary. (2K each for startup)
  - ◇ Funding for training for Faculty Associates and graduate students, and conference attendance if possible. (\$2-4K per year on average per participant).
  - ◇ Administrative costs for someone to administer the program. This person will need to search, interview, evaluate and support the 7 people. This could be ¼ of an FTE staff.

***See page 3 for Rationale & Success***

**RATIONALE:**

- The goal of building a racially equitable society includes preparation of future leaders and professionals who value human experience based on the complexity of identities all members of society hold.
- All JMU graduate students will have access to programming that enhances their own DEI value system. All graduate students will also have the ability to actively participate in facilitating this process for others if they choose to complete facilitator training.
- The program creates a culture of community among graduate students focused on diversity.
- The program creates a culture among graduate faculty regarding how to serve diverse students.

**SUCCESS:**

- Established five renewable graduate assistantships with Faculty Associate support for 2022-2023 academic year with guaranteed funding on an annual basis.
- All graduate students have access to at least a fundamental level of DEI programming from The Graduate School through this initiative and from their academic units. This may include required courses, completion of online modules, or research-based activities.
- Assessment of the outcomes provides information about the efficacy of programming (as well as research opportunities). Programmatic adjustments will be made based on assessment data to ensure continuous improvement.
- Finally, while this proposal focuses on development of competencies and leadership among graduate students, we recognize that success of any project depends on the degree of coordinated and intentional efforts to systems change. Therefore, should The Graduate School support implementation of the proposed project, it may be also beneficial to address the following two items, including determine the timing and sequencing of these activities:
  - ◇ The Graduate School could perform an assessment of the THRIVE program. Questions [to](#) address may include: Was it a successful DEI program and what lessons can be expanded upon for the general graduate DEI initiative?
  - ◇ All graduate faculty would be required to complete courses, online training, or demonstrate competency in creating positive learning environments for BIPOC students. Graduate Studies and academic units would consider the following as methods for establishing safe spaces for BIPOC students this may include:
    - ◆ Graduate faculty members to be trained annually on DEI related topics.
    - ◆ Discussions and development of how to have a culture of Graduate Faculty members prepared to work with BIPOC students
    - ◆ Provide professional development opportunities for DEI trained faculty members