

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice Taskforce Recommendations

December 19, 2022



Jess & Mildred Fisher
College of Science &
Mathematics



Executive Summary

The Jess and Mildred Fisher College of Science and Mathematics (FCSM) at Towson University (TU) is dedicated to providing students with the opportunity to effectively learn in all of our classes, laboratories, and field settings. As our student body has grown in numbers and in diversity, FCSM needs to reflect on our efforts to include all students in our activities, provide equity where needed, and ensure just approaches are the norm.

This report is the result of a year-long process to engage FCSM stakeholders in discussions regarding all aspects of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ) issues in the college. Faculty and staff contributed to these ideas via two open summits in Spring 2022, a survey instrument in Fall 2022, and other discussions. We make seven concrete recommendations to help the college advance our mission and align with TU's strategic plan. The seven recommendations combine to provide a plan of action toward achieving three connected goals: building *capacity* within the college for effective and sustainable DEIJ work, enhancing *communication* with both internal and external groups about new and existing DEIJ initiatives, and establishing an equitable *culture* which promotes inclusive excellence for all faculty, staff, and students.

This report and its recommendations will assist the next Dean of FCSM in understanding the DEIJ climate in the college, including our current activities, and provide suggestions to leverage the outstanding efforts currently underway. Given TU's ongoing transitions, including a move to Carnegie R2 status, a search for a new president, a new FCSM Dean and new chairs in the majority of FCSM departments, the next few years will be a critical time for the college. The information and recommendations in this report will allow FCSM to leverage the opportunity inherent in new leadership to improve the college culture and ensure we are meeting our goals of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice.

The Charge

In 2020, Towson University released a Diversity Strategic Plan, "[A More Inclusive TU: Advancing Equity and Diversity](#)." This plan provides action items to guide units, colleges, and departments in their efforts to create a more inclusive TU. In January 2022, the Dean of FCSM convened a DEIJ Task Force to identify college-wide needs with respect to diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice issues. The membership of the Task force was constructed to include representatives from varied groups and roles, including faculty, staff, and administrators, and is presented in Appendix 1. The Task Force solicited input from faculty and staff in order to formulate recommendations on ways in which the college can support and facilitate an equitable, inclusive learning and working environment. The following questions guided our work:

Guiding Questions:

1. What structures are in place in other colleges to support and align DEIJ efforts within a college?
2. What barriers are negatively impacting our ability to do DEIJ work within the college?
3. What successful DEIJ work within FCSM can be continued and built upon?

Introduction

Throughout the report, we draw on the idea of *inclusive excellence* as described by the TU Diversity Strategic Plan: "Inclusive excellence takes direct aim at educational disparities and patterns of systemic disadvantage—especially those resulting from historical and contemporary effects of racism." We note that those educational disparities and

patterns of systemic disadvantage may appear differently across the five departments of FCSM. For instance, some departments have significant diversity in the racial background of faculty members, but with that diversity primarily arising from international scholars. Similarly, gender equity is a more acute challenge in certain fields than others. Historically, the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) have excluded many groups and identities (including along racialized and gendered lines, but also based on ability status, national origin, sexual identity, gender identity, etc.), with that exclusion being most acute for Black, Indigenous, and other people of color (BIPOC). We use the phrases “historically marginalized” and “historically underrepresented” throughout this document to be inclusive of all forms of systemic discrimination within the STEM fields but without losing focus on the effects of historical and contemporary racism.

Within the primary aim of addressing and repairing the effects of the historic exclusion of these groups from STEM fields, we identify three overarching goals that guide our recommendations:

- To improve the **capacity** of FCSM to conduct *sustained, effective* work in the area of DEIJ. Improving diversity, equity, inclusion and justice is critical to achieving FCSM’s aspirational R2 goals while supporting excellence in teaching and learning, because inclusive excellence allows all faculty, staff and students to thrive and contribute to their fullest potential. Currently, the capacity of the college to conduct this work is limited in key ways due to college structures and practices (as we describe throughout the report). Our recommendations provide concrete and sustainable ideas for building capacity to conduct DEIJ work within the administrative Office of the Dean, as well as for faculty and staff broadly.
- To enhance **communication** around DEIJ work within FCSM. One significant limiting factor on the college’s ability to reach our DEIJ goals is a lack of communication and coordination across the many organizations, programs, faculty and staff working on DEIJ projects. The structure of academia often pushes individuals to work in silos, stifling innovation and collaboration. Through our recommendations around enhanced structures for communication, we aim to improve the effectiveness and impact of existing DEIJ projects while also promoting new interdisciplinary and collaborative approaches.
- To build an inclusive and equitable **culture** that supports faculty, staff and students of all identities. In alignment with the TU Diversity Strategic Plan, we define inclusion as “the active participation and contribution of all members of a community” to their fullest potential and note that “inclusion is not an automatic result of diversity.” As a college, we must go beyond continue working to intentionally recruit a diverse group of faculty and staff to also ensure that college workplaces are fully accepting of all identities; that the college works to actively disrupt patterns of discrimination, prejudice and bias (conscious or unconscious); and that cultural differences are celebrated as part of a rich community of ideas. Our focus on culture is woven throughout the seven recommendations.

Recommendations

Below, we detail a set of seven recommendations to support and improve Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice (DEIJ) within the college. These recommendations are informed by a wide variety of data collected over the course of a full year (see Appendix 2). The recommendations include:

1. Create a permanent **leadership position** within FCSM focused on supporting DEIJ work
2. Construct and institutionalize mechanisms to **expect, support and reward** DEIJ work
3. Clarify, publicize and/or create effective **reporting** options for DEIJ concerns
4. Increase opportunities for education and **professional development** around DEIJ issues
5. Identify and address issues of inequity with respect to FCSM **staff members**
6. Cultivate a **culture of inclusion and equity** to retain and support faculty and staff from historically excluded communities
7. Increase **transparency and communication** within FCSM governance

The table below illustrates how each of these recommendations is aligned with the larger goals described above, as well as with the University Diversity Strategic Plan.

Recommendation	Alignment with Task Force Goals of Capacity, Communication and Culture	Alignment with University Diversity Strategic Plan Indicators
1. DEIJ Leadership Position	Capacity, Communication, Culture	1.1, 1.3, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3
2. Support and reward DEIJ work	Capacity	2.3
3. Reporting options for DEIJ issues	Communication, Culture	4.1
4. Professional development related to DEIJ	Capacity, Communication	1.1, 1.3
5. Equity for staff members	Capacity	2.3.2
6. Inclusive and equitable culture	Culture	2.1, 2.2, 3.1
7. Transparency in governance	Capacity, Communication, Culture	2.3.3

Recommendation 1: Create a permanent leadership position within FCSM focused on supporting DEIJ work

There is a significant need for additional capacity within the Dean’s Office to address issues involving DEIJ. In response to this need, the Task Force recommends the creation of a DEIJ leadership position within the FCSM Dean’s office. In some ways, this recommendation underlies the entire report; establishing a centralized and well-resourced DEIJ leadership position within the Dean’s Office provides a mechanism by which all other recommendations can be enacted and assessed. Such a position could serve as a “one-stop shop” for faculty, staff, students, and external partners, providing critical oversight, leadership, and communication. Additionally, such a position would support the R2 goals of Towson University in several ways. First, by establishing an inclusive and welcoming culture within FCSM, this position would support recruitment and retention of a diverse group of faculty and staff, thereby strengthening and increasing scholarship and research. Additionally, the creation of such a position would strengthen efforts to seek external funding by providing support for including equity goals within grant proposals, particularly given the emphasis on DEIJ from potential funders (for example, within NSF “Broader Impact” statements). In addition, the person in this position could serve as lead on external proposals specifically designed to increase inclusion and equity in FCSM. This recommendation is critical to all three goals of *building capacity, enhancing communication, and establishing an equitable culture*, with particular emphasis on the goal of *capacity*.

The duties associated with this position should include, but not be limited to, coordination of ongoing DEIJ efforts within the college, oversight of grant-writing efforts to launch new DEIJ initiatives (and support for DEIJ content in all grant-writing), organization of professional development opportunities for faculty and staff, ongoing revision and administration of the [FCSM DEIJ Strategic Plan](#), formalization and oversight of the DEIJ committees within the college (including the FCSM Diversity Action Committee) and those at the department level, effective communication of DEIJ opportunities and successes to the college community, and oversight of the creation and implementation of assessment and accountability structures for DEIJ initiatives. We anticipate this position would form close working

relationships with the Assistant Provost for Diversity & Inclusion and the Office of Inclusion and Institutional Equity (OIIE), supporting alignment with the university Diversity Strategic Plan and ensuring that priorities and changes at the university level (e.g., updates to the university Diversity Strategic Plan) are communicated and reflected in college-level work.

One specific goal that this position would support is promoting better coordination of and communication about current and new DEIJ efforts within the college (and with other university offices and external partners). Many such efforts exist currently (see Appendix 3), but each is led separately, often from different departments, and with no structures promoting regular communication among groups or visibility to others. As a result, faculty and staff in the college are often unaware of DEIJ work happening, and each group is regularly in the position of reinventing the wheel. The proposed DEIJ leadership role would enhance the impact of both new and existing DEIJ efforts by providing centralized communication and oversight. This could include maintaining a centralized DEIJ calendar, website, SharePoint site and/or newsletter to coordinate and publicize events. Having such leadership and coordination at the college level would encourage interdisciplinary DEIJ projects, support a pipeline of equity-minded leaders in the college, and build community for those faculty and staff engaged in DEIJ work.

Our data-gathering suggested several possible models for this position, including a Director who receives release time from their home department or an Assistant/Associate Dean position (or a significant part of the portfolio of an Assistant or Associate Dean, fitting particularly well with other duties related to faculty or student success). To create lasting change, the position structure must encourage a long-term commitment to the role and have the appropriate stature and support within the Dean's Office to effectively lead faculty (with both these criteria suggesting that an Assistant or Associate Dean would likely provide more sustainability than a Director position). Regardless of the model chosen for this position, the person selected to fill this role must demonstrate a strong background in and commitment to DEIJ principles and practices. Additionally, to be successful, this position will require significant time (i.e., as a percentage of workload) and full-time staff support (with a staff member who has expertise and education in DEIJ practices), as well as an operating budget to support new DEIJ initiatives and travel to pursue professional development opportunities.

Recommendation 2: Construct and institutionalize mechanisms to expect, support and reward DEIJ work

In addition to the centralized capacity provided by a leadership position in the Dean's Office, a broad base of support from all faculty and staff is needed to truly make progress toward the college's DEIJ goals. There exists considerable efforts and interest in DEIJ work from faculty and staff across the college (as evidenced by the strong turnout at both DEIJ summits in Spring 2022). However, without institutional structures to expect and reward this work, it will continue to be done on essentially a volunteer basis by passionate faculty and staff, many of them members of historically marginalized groups. This both limits the capacity of the college to engage in DEIJ work (because it is not formally recognized within existing workload structures) and inhibits the career success of faculty and staff committed to this work, sometimes leading to burnout and demoralization. Therefore, the DEIJ Task Force recommends the creation of mechanisms by which DEIJ work is expected, supported, and rewarded for both faculty and staff in FCSM. Our specific recommendations, which particularly support the goal of *capacity*, are detailed below.

- A.) *Work with the College PTRM Committee to construct and codify reporting options for DEIJ work.* Currently, there is no dedicated space for reporting DEIJ activities either annually (i.e., within the Annual Report and Annual Plan) or comprehensively (i.e., within Tenure, Promotion or Comprehensive 5-Year Review dossiers). As a result, such work often goes unreported, and is thus invisible and uncompensated. This has a significant limiting effect on faculty ability to allocate their worktime to DEIJ activities, particularly for tenure-track faculty and lecturers. We recommend working with the College PTRM Committee to design opportunities for DEIJ activities to be specifically reported, ideally as an expectation for *all* faculty. For instance, FCSM could construct a checklist of DEIJ events for the year (e.g., Dialogue training, etc.) and expect at least one of these

activities be completed by every faculty member each year. The ongoing review of the University ART document, recent changes to the Merit procedures, and current efforts within FCSM to clarify workload expectations as part of the R2 transition makes these changes timely.

- B.) *Provide DEIJ-focused training for Department Chairs and other college leaders.* We recognize that changes to the College PTRM document are a long-term endeavor. To ensure that faculty and staff are supported in and rewarded for this work in the short term, we recommend that Chairs and the Dean participate in on-going workshops/trainings to recognize the value of this work and explore how to incorporate expectations for DEIJ activities into existing annual review and promotion and tenure review processes. For instance, should faculty wish to invest significant time in DEIJ activities, they should discuss their plans with their department chairs and ensure that these activities are recorded on their AR for merit consideration. Staff would also discuss their engagement in DEIJ activities with their supervisors during the annual review process.

Recommendation 3: Clarify and/or create effective reporting options for DEIJ concerns

The DEIJ Task Force recommends ongoing education and transparent communication of effective reporting options for DEIJ concerns. FCSM faculty and staff are generally aware that reporting mechanisms for hate and bias incidents exist within OIIE and/or OHR, but most faculty and staff do not know how to access these reporting mechanisms and/or do not understand how they work. This lack of knowledge makes it difficult to rely upon and promote the use of these mechanisms. In order to achieve this level of transparency and communication, specific time should be set aside each semester for this ongoing professional development as an FCSM community. It is well-established that going against the dominant culture is very difficult and that incidents of bias and discrimination are often dismissed as imagined or not important; as a result, many go unreported. We recommend that the Dean's Office support both formal and informal reporting of DEIJ concerns in order to foster an inclusive *culture* and stronger *communication*; our specific recommendations are listed below.

- A.) *Clarify and publicize existing structures for reporting DEIJ concerns.* While OIIE administers a structure for reporting hate and bias incidents, very few faculty/staff in FCSM know about its existence. Faculty, staff, students, and administrators in FCSM need to be regularly educated on these mechanisms, including how and when to make a report, their responsibility to address and/or report certain issues, what to expect after making a report, and potential follow-up actions if the issue is not resolved by their direct supervisor. Publicizing the bias incident reporting structures (through mechanisms including digital/permanent signage, slides on the Science Commons screen, syllabus statements, direct outreach by department chairs, etc.) is an important component of promoting a culture of equity. We also recommend that the Dean's Office review the reporting structure to ensure that there is no possibility of retaliation against reporters.
- B.) *Construct new structures for informal reporting and consultation.* There is a need to create standard operating procedures for DEIJ matters or inquiries that may not be perceived to necessitate the use of current reporting mechanisms. Faculty and staff may have a need for guidance in determining if an incident rises to the level of an official report. Having an established person within FCSM trained in this role would increase the likelihood that a FCSM community member would seek their guidance, as they would not only be a familiar face but also someone who understands the specific context and culture within FCSM. Creating procedures for informal consultation around lower-level matters (or before filing a formal report) can facilitate resolution before issues escalate, creating a culture where the FCSM community feels comfortable in their reporting options and confident that the use of the mechanism will lead to a solution.

Recommendation 4: Increase opportunities for education and professional development around DEIJ issues

One message from FCSM faculty and staff that came through strongly at both DEIJ summits was the desire for additional professional development (PD) opportunities around these issues. Such opportunities for professional

development could help promote an engaged and expert workforce ready to take on future leadership opportunities. Indeed, DEIJ training is critical to creating a safer and more equitable workspace for all employees. Offering additional training and professional development opportunities available to all faculty and staff centered on DEIJ issues would support the *capacity* of the college to engage in inclusive teaching and scholarship, while enhancing a *culture* of continuous improvement.

- A.) *Develop and offer PD opportunities that address the needs of FCSM and identify and promote engagement with PD offered by other university offices and external partners.* There are a variety of PD opportunities offered university-wide through offices such as FACET (Faculty Academic Center of Excellence), the OIIE, and other groups. Engagement by FCSM faculty in these existing programs could be facilitated through the enhanced communication structures provided by a DEIJ leadership position in the Dean's Office. However, there are also many aspects of STEM teaching, learning, and scholarship which are unique to the FCSM context, and for this reason, we also recommend offering PD opportunities specifically targeted to the needs of FCSM faculty (some possible ideas for the content of these opportunities can be found within Appendix 2 as part of our data-gathering). Another option would be FCSM-specific follow-up sessions to university offerings. Finally, we recommend creating and implementing specific training for emerging FCSM leaders and particularly for incoming department chairs. Department chairs have a significant impact on, and responsibility for, the culture of their department and would benefit from explicit attention to DEIJ issues.
- B.) *Create equitable expectations and incentives for faculty and staff to participate in PD within their workload.* We notice that although the college PTRM policies mention "evidence of improvement of personal knowledge of subject content or teaching methodologies" as one criterion for assessing faculty teaching performance, there are currently no dedicated spaces within the Annual Report or comprehensive review dossiers for faculty to describe their participation in any professional development. This has the effect of making such participation generally un-reported and therefore invisible labor. This leads faculty with myriad demands on their time to prioritize activities that directly support their career trajectories. Particularly in a profession that strongly promotes the idea of lifelong learning and a teacher-scholar model, these structures provide a perverse incentive to ignore on-going professional development, limiting faculty and staff capacity in the long term. Thus, in alignment with Recommendation 2, we encourage the Dean's Office to identify ways to explicitly expect and support faculty and staff engagement in PD offerings. Aspirationally, we would like to see all FCSM faculty and staff expected to participate in ongoing PD on DEIJ issues at least once per year as described above in Recommendation 2.

Recommendation 5: Identify and address issues of inequity with respect to FCSM staff members

Attending to equity for FCSM employees working in *staff positions* specifically will be critical to supporting justice and inclusion goals within the college. The planned transition to R2 status will have a considerable impact on staff workloads. For this reason, improving equity for staff is critical to support the university's mission and aspirations as well as the staff members themselves. We also note specifically that it is often staff who most directly support the DEIJ work of the college through their leadership in programs like Bridges, Hill-Lopes, TOPS and other student-facing programs. Thus, decisions and structures that impact staff members often have an outsized impact on DEIJ programs. Our specific recommendations for supporting FCSM staff, aimed at improving the *capacity* of the college, include the following:

- A) *Revisit the organizational chart for the college and provide clarity around staff reporting and communication.* Currently, the college organizational chart is hierarchical and department-focused in structure. However, multiple staff members, including those facilitating DEIJ programs, sit outside the traditional department structure and are not otherwise accounted for within the organization chart. This leaves those staff without a clear line of reporting or communication, opportunities for advancement, or a

clearly defined community of practice. We recommend that this organizational chart be reconsidered, following evidence-based best practices.

- B) *Provide opportunities for staff input in college decision-making bodies and appropriate release time for staff to participate.* Currently, there is no role for most staff on many important college decision-making structures, including College Council, Leadership Council, and most college committees. Adding staff member positions to these bodies would add to the diversity of viewpoints represented in college decision-making. At the same time, we are cognizant that participation in these committees might become onerous and time-consuming if it does not come with a reduction in other duties. Thus, this recommendation requires explicit support for reassignment of work duties.
- C) *Provide structures for staff retention and advancement.* Currently, opportunities for staff advancement or promotion are extremely limited or nonexistent. This has an impact on staff retention, as most staff members need to leave the university for any opportunity for career development. No private organization would find this acceptable; the talent drain and need for recruitment and mentoring of new staff members is considerable. We recommend that the Dean's Office work with OHR and the Provost's Council to advocate for additional career pathways for staff. Another aspect of this issue is that many staff working on DEIJ initiatives specifically have positions funded through grants and other "soft money." Not only do these staff lack job security and often work on year-to-year contracts, but they are also ineligible for critical benefits such as family leave or retirement contributions. We recommend that the Dean's Office conduct an audit of all staff in the college to determine how many are on full state contracts with retirement plans and leave benefits and how many are not. Looking forward, we also recommend that the Dean's Office should work to construct and disseminate a guide for those in FCSM who submit grants that details how to plan and advocate for their grant-funded staff to promote long-term sustainability. This would help achieve our R2 goals of increasing external funding while also improving college capacity by institutionalizing knowledge and preventing faculty from re-inventing the wheel each time they write a grant with a funded staff position.

Recommendation 6: Cultivate a culture of inclusion and equity to retain and support faculty and staff from historically excluded communities

The DEIJ Task Force recommends measures be taken to cultivate a culture of equity and inclusion to retain and support faculty and staff from historically excluded communities. The demographics of the FCSM faculty and staff do not mirror the demographics of its student population, despite long-term concern about this issue (see [Institutional Research \(IR\)](#) for current student demographics and Appendix 5 for faculty demographics within FCSM by department). FCSM and TU have put structures in place to improve the inclusivity of faculty searches, such as the Inclusion Advocates program and training for search committees. However, there are no explicit structures in place to help retain and support faculty and staff from historically marginalized communities once they are hired. Indeed, FCSM has struggled to support and retain such faculty and staff, with particular struggles to retain Black faculty. These challenges need to be explicitly acknowledged and addressed by FCSM at the college and departmental levels, and leadership must commit to proactively identifying and eliminating non-inclusive practices, policies and systems that create barriers to success for people from historically marginalized groups. An inclusive and equitable culture at the faculty and staff level will positively impact the academic journeys and successes of all students in the college. A non-exhaustive list of specific mechanisms for creating an inclusive and equitable culture is presented below. The capacity added by a leadership position within the Dean's Office (as described in Recommendation 1) would be critical to ensuring that these are carried out.

- A) *Inventory and evaluate faculty and staff support practices and create new practices where applicable.* This includes evaluating mentoring practices to determine if the needs of all faculty and staff, and in particular, faculty from historically marginalized groups, are being met. It also includes other support for faculty and

staff from historically marginalized populations, such as [affinity groups](#), as well as looking to evidence-based best practices. An inventory of these various support options would provide a recruitment boost when hiring faculty from marginalized groups and would support their retention. It is likely that this inventory will identify areas where our existing mentoring and support practices fall short (anecdotally, one such area is mentoring structures for Associate Professors preparing for a possible promotion to Professor). The Dean's Office should then work with the academic departments as well as other university offices (e.g., FACET) to address such gaps and ensure that all faculty and staff have equitable access to mentoring and support.

- B) *Consider additional mechanisms for data gathering and analysis around faculty retention, including through the exit interview process.* Both IR and OIIE collect and maintain a variety of data sources around faculty, staff, and student demographics (demographics of current FCSM faculty can be found in Appendix 5). We recommend that the Dean's Office commit to regular review, analysis, and dissemination of these data (including data about hiring and retention) in support of our DEIJ goals. We also recommend an assessment of the exit interview process when faculty or staff leave the university. Although the Provost's office does exit interviews, there is a need for greater transparency on what that interview will consist of and what will be done with any information shared. Anecdotally, faculty and staff are leaving the university without completing the exit interview, and valuable information is being lost. This could potentially be avoided by putting a personal, college-familiar face to the exit interview process for faculty and staff, and by ensuring that email access is not disconnected before exit interviews take place. This is particularly urgent because we have noticed that although only a small number of faculty have left FCSM in recent years (across multiple departments and programs), such faculty have disproportionately been members of historically marginalized groups (and many of them did not participate in the exit interview process). In aggregate, across the college, we may have a significant retention issue, particularly for Black faculty and staff.
- C) *Work intentionally to improve college culture, including by conducting on-going assessments of inclusivity.* Although many of the recommendations in this report rely on specific actions, we also want to emphasize the importance of inclusive leadership as a driver of cultural change. The Dean's Office leads and influences college culture through their language, actions, and priorities. Thus, we recommend that the Dean's Office and other college leaders should use a DEIJ lens in all parts of their work and investigate and implement best practices for creating an inclusive culture. A critical aspect of this work is ongoing assessments of the inclusivity of college culture. One theme that arose in our data gathering was a perception that issues of inclusion often remain hidden until they become an acute problem. To be truly informed about the culture of the college, we suggest that the Dean's Office create processes and procedures for eliciting information regularly about inclusion issues. This might include regular check-ins between supervisors/chairs and all new faculty and staff, with processes to ensure that such check-ins regularly include attention to issues of inclusion and culture, and that information flows upwards to leadership. Finally, we suggest that the Dean's Office include a positive attention to DEIJ in college communications (both internal and external), celebrating the diverse nature of the college and highlighting work in this area.
- D) *Ensure physical accessibility and inclusivity of all college spaces.* Equitable access to physical space is an essential component of an inclusive environment and many aspects of the new Science Complex were specifically designed to be welcoming and appealing to students, faculty and staff (e.g., numerous places to study, collaborate, and relax between classes, a central Commons for college-wide events and programming, etc.). However, the new building also presents significant accessibility challenges for many members of the community. While it is not possible to revisit the overall building design with a more equitable and inclusive lens, there are other solutions to these issues. We recommend that the college regularly assess accessibility issues in both the Science Complex and 7800 York Road and prioritize working with the appropriate groups on campus to ensure issues are immediately addressed.

Recommendation 7: Increase transparency and communication within FCSM governance

Our final recommendation is also our broadest and focuses on building an inclusive and equitable culture within the college through additional clarity, communication, and transparency about how decisions are made within FCSM. Like our first recommendation, this will support the more specific action items detailed here by promoting trust and buy-in among faculty, staff, and students. Thus, the DEIJ Task Force recommends that FCSM review existing college and department level committees and councils to ensure equity and transparency in membership, communication, policies and procedures. With respect to governance, this review should consider how college- and department level committees and councils are formed (e.g., elected or appointed), who is represented (e.g., faculty, staff, students) and their role in decision making (e.g., advisory versus governing, voting members vs. ex officio and non-voting). Clear guidelines should be provided for how the work of committees and councils will be communicated to all members of FCSM, especially for staff that do not fall within departments and report directly to the Dean. Our recommendations for increasing transparency and equity within FCSM governance, in order to support all three goals of *building capacity, enhancing communication, and establishing an equitable culture*, include the following:

- A) *Review college policy documents (e.g., PTRM Policy, College Council Bylaws, Organizational Chart, etc.) with an eye to equity and inclusion.* Our current policy documents generally pre-date a focused attention to DEIJ and are often blind to equity and inclusion concerns. Our specific recommendations for the Organizational Chart are presented within Recommendation 5 and the College PTRM documents are discussed within Recommendation 2. Overall, we recommend that the Dean's Office commit to an ongoing review of policy documents for equity, inclusion and transparency. The Task Force supports the current review and revision of the College Council Bylaws, and particularly encourages the College Council to maintain their focus on equity and inclusion (including staff) within that revision.
- B) *Review the college committee and decision-making structure for additional transparency, fairness, and accountability.* Currently, it is unclear how strategic decisions in the college are made; although there is room for input from multiple groups (e.g., College Council, Leadership Council), there is a lack of clarity about how advice from those stakeholders is considered and acted upon. There are also concerns about how membership in college committees and councils is determined and how these leadership roles can be allocated equitably. We recommend that committee policies and procedures be reviewed with respect to appointment and/or election of committee members and chairs; term limits on service; transparency and communication (e.g., publicly available agendas, minutes, and opportunities for input); and clarifying the specific role and charge of each college committee and governance body (including whether it is an advisory versus decision-making body). We also recommend creating accountability structures to ensure that each FCSM committee and decision-making body are accomplishing their goals and upholding standards of equity and inclusion.

Conclusion

The Taskforce echoes the recommendation of the TU Diversity Strategic Plan to work with “both urgency and patience.” We note that the current period of transition in leadership (with a new Dean and four new department chairs) provides a truly unique opportunity for change. We urge the Dean’s Office to seize this opportunity to transform FCSM practices and procedures to promote inclusive excellence for all faculty, staff, and students. Although much of this can be specified and driven by the DEIJ leadership role (as described in Recommendation 1), we are conscious of how such work can often be siloed and treated as an add-on rather than an essential part of the everyday work of the college. Thus, we encourage the Dean’s Office to make equity and inclusion concerns a primary lens for decision making.

The Dean is the caretaker of the college and has ultimate responsibility to create a culture of inclusive excellence. In the past, much of the critically important work around DEIJ has been happening as invisible labor by faculty, staff, and students, often those from historically marginalized groups. Looking to the future, we hope to see leadership that will guide and inspire change from the top, while celebrating and supporting the efforts rising from the ground up. In this way, we can work to create an inclusive and just college where all faculty, staff and students thrive.

Appendix 1: Task Force Membership

Name	Membership	FCSM Role	Position & Department
Trudymae Agboka	Jan 2022 – June 2022	Staff	Student Success Program Coordinator, Department of Biological Sciences
Michelle Casey	January 2022 – Present	Faculty	Assistant Professor, Department of Physics, Astronomy, and Geosciences
Laura Gough	January 2022 – Present	Faculty	Professor & Department Chair, Department of Biological Sciences
Richard Patterson	July 2022 – Present	Staff	Administrative Assistant I, Department of Chemistry
Kristin Pinkowski	January 2022 – Present	Staff	Hill-Lopes Scholars Program Coordinator
Vonnie Shields	January 2022 – Present	Administration	Associate Dean, Jess and Mildred Fisher College of Science and Mathematics
		Faculty	Professor, Department of Biological Sciences
Sandy Spitzer	January 2022 – Present	Faculty	Professor, Department of Mathematics & Director of STEM Education Center
Mary Stapleton	January 2022 – Present	Staff	Director, TU Center for STEM Excellence

Appendix 2: Data Collection

DEIJ Summit Feedback (1/25/22 and 5/1/22):

The DEIJ Task Force hosted two College-wide summits during the spring of 2022: a half-day [DEIJ Summit in January](#) before the start of classes and a 2-hour lunch [DEIJ Summit in May](#) during Finals week. The goals of these summits were 1) to collect information and insight from a broad range of FCSM faculty and staff voices, specifically focusing on issues related to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice work going on within the college and 2) to familiarize attendees with the broad range of DEIJ work currently happening within the Fisher College of Science and Mathematics. Both summits were planned by the Task Force in collaboration with the Office of Institutional Inclusion and Equity (OIIE) and facilitated by a combination of OIIE staff and Task Force members. Both the January and May Summits were well attended with 34 and 45 participants, respectively. A summary of the feedback received during these summits is provided below.

- A) There is significant DEIJ work being done across FCSM, but better **coordination, communication, and messaging** are urgently needed to make this work more efficient and impactful. The importance of having a dedicated position in the Dean's Office with responsibility to manage and coordinate this work (such as a DEIJ Fellow or Assistant Dean) has been consistently highlighted by participants at both summits. When asked: What top action(s) are most critical for following up on today's meeting? one summit participant responded, *"Well, based on the breakout groups I participated in, I would say building capacity in the Dean's office for advancing and coordinating DEIJ in the college is an imperative."*
- B) There is a need for **data collection related to DEIJ issues and greater transparency or availability of existing reports**.
 - a. Assessment of courses with DEIJ goals, DEIJ programs, or other DEIJ initiatives. One summit participant highlighted the fact that we *"need vigorous assessment of the status quo and our progress"*.
 - b. Faculty/staff retention
 - c. Student retention
- C) There is a significant need for **professional development/training around DEIJ issues for faculty, staff, and chairs**.
 - a. Existing opportunities need to be better publicized and attendance at these events formally recognized/rewarded in some way
 - b. Introductory training that defines terms and invites in faculty or staff with no background in DEIJ efforts are of interest to many
 - c. Professional development for chairs or others in leadership roles on what resources are available to them and how to best interface with the Office of Institutional Inclusion and Equity or the Provost's office would be beneficial
 - d. For example, one summit attendee responded, *"It would be helpful to have more DEIJ training across the college. Not all faculty/staff have the same understanding/ awareness, level of comfort with addressing DEIJ issues. TU needs to value the professional development that is necessary for faculty to increase their awareness and proficiency with addressing DEIJ issues."*
- D) Additional processes for **reporting and responding to issues of bias and other DEIJ issues**, as well as more information about existing processes, would help to promote a positive and inclusive climate. One summit breakout group reported that it was *"news to multiple people at the table that there is a formal process"* to report issues of bias at the university level.
- E) **Diversity, equity and inclusion for FCSM staff**, particularly those working on DEIJ initiatives, is critical. This can happen through planning for sustainability (at the early stages of externally funded work), ensuring representation and decision-making power in key college organizations and committees, and

providing time within staff workload agreements for DEIJ work and professional development. May Summit participants summarized the discussion in their breakout group thusly, *“Some staff members have to take a vacation day to attend a DEIJ training for their work at the university! How can we create a college policy that allows staff to pursue this work or these training opportunities without leaving it up to each and every supervisor/department chair?”*

- F) **Mechanisms to support and reward DEIJ work** are necessary for long-term sustainability. Some ideas that were discussed included:
- Funding for DEIJ efforts is necessary to demonstrate institutional commitment, support the work that is already being done, ensure sustainability for externally funded programs, and reduce the reliance on uncompensated labor.
 - Providing a place within the Annual Report document and P&T dossiers specifically for reporting work on DEIJ initiatives *and* for reporting engagement with professional development and trainings. One January summit participant stated simply, *“make diversity work ‘count’ for promotion and tenure.”*
 - Ensuring that DEIJ service roles are appropriately considered within faculty and staff workload or compensated through stipends.
 - Creation of a FCSM award for Excellence in Inclusion and Equity
- G) Opportunities to collaboratively **discuss DEIJ issues with colleagues** are valuable and necessary! One summit participant remarked, *“Can this be a regular meeting? This is a rapidly changing area and if faculty want to gather data and propose new initiatives, we need to regularly connect with others doing similar work.”*

Fall 2022 Task Force Feedback Form Results

The Task Force created a digital feedback form for any TU faculty or staff member to provide anonymous input and to the Task Force. A link to this form was sent out from the Dean’s office on two occasions to solicit input. The form asked the following open-ended questions:

- What are some strengths of FCSM with regard to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and/or Justice?
- What are some barriers that exist in FCSM that inhibit Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and/or Justice?
- What other thoughts would you like to share with the DEIJ Task Force and/or FCSM leadership about Diversity, Inclusion, Equity, and/or Justice?

A total of 18 responses were received and the input is summarized below.

What we do well

- Attracting a diverse student body
 - Diverse Student Body
- Momentum and Passion
 - Some faculty/staff passionate about work and show individual leadership
 - Opportunities to discuss and provide feedback on DEIJ culture in FCSM
 - Programming supporting students from marginalized communities
- Student Support
 - STEM RLC
 - B2B/B2D
 - CURES

Challenges

- Leadership
 - Lack of concerted, strategic and effective DEIJ leadership within FCSM

- Demographics of FCSM faculty, staff and leadership do not match demographics of students
- DEIJ not a priority in FCSM
- Staff are overworked and more staff are needed
- Physical barriers
 - Physical building structures are ableist (hard to see boards, hard to hear)
- Reporting mechanisms
 - Hierarchical structure of academia and resulting power differentials inhibit voicing concerns
 - Lack of mechanisms for reporting concerns about leadership (e.g., chairs) without fear of retribution
- Preparedness and ability of faculty and staff to engage with DEIJ efforts
 - Lack of understanding of contemporary DEI pedagogy, terminology, current issues/trends
 - Faculty and staff lack skills and knowledge to engage in inclusive STEM instruction
 - Lack of training opportunities with specific, concrete examples of addressing DEIJ in STEM teaching and research
 - Missing out on opportunities without more support staff to support DEIJ efforts
 - Fear of engaging in difficult discussions in classrooms and concern about lacking skills to successfully engage in these conversations
 - Some members of leadership lack a sophisticated understanding of DEIJ issues
- Clarity around goals and purpose of DEIJ efforts
 - Lack of clear goals with respect to DEIJ efforts
 - Lack of clarity about what is meant by 'DEIJ efforts'
- Culture
 - Current climate is not inclusive of POC and women faculty
 - Difficulty retaining faculty of color
 - Lack of sense of urgency in need to hire faculty of color among chairs and faculty
 - Lack of incentives (e.g., workload, no place in AR or PTRM binder to describe this type of work) and requirements to attend DEIJ trainings
 - Reluctance to give people new opportunities (e.g., because needed in old role like course, program, etc.)
 - Resistance among faculty members to engaging in DEIJ work
 - Some faculty/staff suggest there are no barriers or challenges with respect to DEIJ issues within FCSM
 - Some faculty feel that DEIJ committee needs to be more diverse
- Transparency and Communication
 - Need college-wide external equity audit
 - Lack of transparency in Diversity Action Committee policies and procedures
 - Lack of transparency in hiring process with respect to diversity (e.g., info on candidate pool demographics versus interview pool demographics)
 - Perceived inequities in resource distribution (example given was UEBL)
 - Poor communication among departments, Dean's office and groups within the college
 - More opportunities to discuss DEIJ issues in formal and informal ways
- Student Support
 - Barriers of acceptance to TU for students without access to AP and IB and advanced courses and limited extracurricular options in high school

Appendix 3: Existing FCSM DEIJ Programs

Below is a list of formal programs within FCSM that contribute to the college's DEIJ mission. Please note there are many more activities, temporary or informal programs and resources than are listed here.

Bridges Program

Program Coordinator: Kiosha Murphy

Faculty Leaders: Michelle Snyder and Elana Ehrlich

The Bridges program comprises the Bridges to the Doctorate (B2D) and the Bridges to the Baccalaureate (B2B) program. Both programs are funded by the NIH for five years and are renewable. The aim of the Bridges program is to change the face of the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) workforce by promoting the participation of underrepresented minority students in biomedical research.

FCSM Diversity Action Committee

Chair: Vonnie Shields

The Fisher College's Diversity Action Committee is comprised of the FCSM Associate Dean, who serves as the chairperson, and one representative from each of the five departments housed within the college.

Hill-Lopes Scholars Program

Program Coordinator: Kristin Pinkowski

Faculty Leaders: Cindy Ghent, Beth Kautzman, Peko Tsuji

The Hill-Lopes Scholars Program is built upon 3 pillars: professional development, community, and career exploration. The Hill-Lopes Scholars Program provides transformational support to STEM majors at Towson University, in order to advance and retain women in the STEM workforce. Selected scholars participate in monthly professional development meetings, community building opportunities, and explore various STEM careers through panel discussions, alumni events, open programming, outside guests, mentoring meetings with faculty members and conference attendance.

STEM Programs

Director: Sharlene Roberson

Our STEM Programs Community includes the STEM Residential Learning Community and the TOPS Learning Community.

The STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) Living Learning Community (LLC) was established in 2013 with the goal of providing a residential environment that fosters both academic and social success for a diverse group of FCSM majors interested in science and mathematics. Living in the STEM LLC is a great way for students to connect with other students, faculty and staff; build community; and enhance their learning experience at Towson University. This experience assists students in navigating challenging first-year courses and in making life-long friendships as well as helping students explore opportunities around research and their future careers.

Towson Opportunities in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics, TOPS) is a program initially founded by a grant from the National Science Foundation in 2007 and institutionalized by FCSM when grant funding ended. It is dedicated to increasing the number of students from the Baltimore area successfully completing a B.S. degree in science or mathematics from Towson University.

STEM Education Center

Faculty Director: Sandy Spitzer

The STEM Education (STEM ED) Center is a collective of faculty with specializations in Math, Science, Engineering and Computer Science Education, including faculty across all FCSM departments. The goal of the STEM ED Center is

to support the TU STEM Education community and new FCSM faculty by hosting a series of Inclusive STEM Pedagogies discussions which are open to all FCSM faculty and staff and monthly seminars for all first-year, full-time FCSM faculty.

TU-Research Enhancement Program

Faculty Directors: Laura Gough and Matt Hemm

Funded by a five-year, \$1 million grant from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, TU-Research Enhancement Program (TU REP) promotes the development of CURE (Course-based Undergraduate Research Experiences) courses throughout FCSM, provides professional development for FCSM faculty in CURE development and inclusive pedagogy, and works to support students who are interested in research. Data suggest that from 2017 to 2021, almost three times as many students participated in research in Biology CUREs compared with the number of students mentored in independent research in faculty labs during the same time. These data also show that the students in CUREs are more diverse racially/ethnically and more likely to be transfer students than those conducting independent research.

Physics, Astronomy and Geosciences Diversity Committee

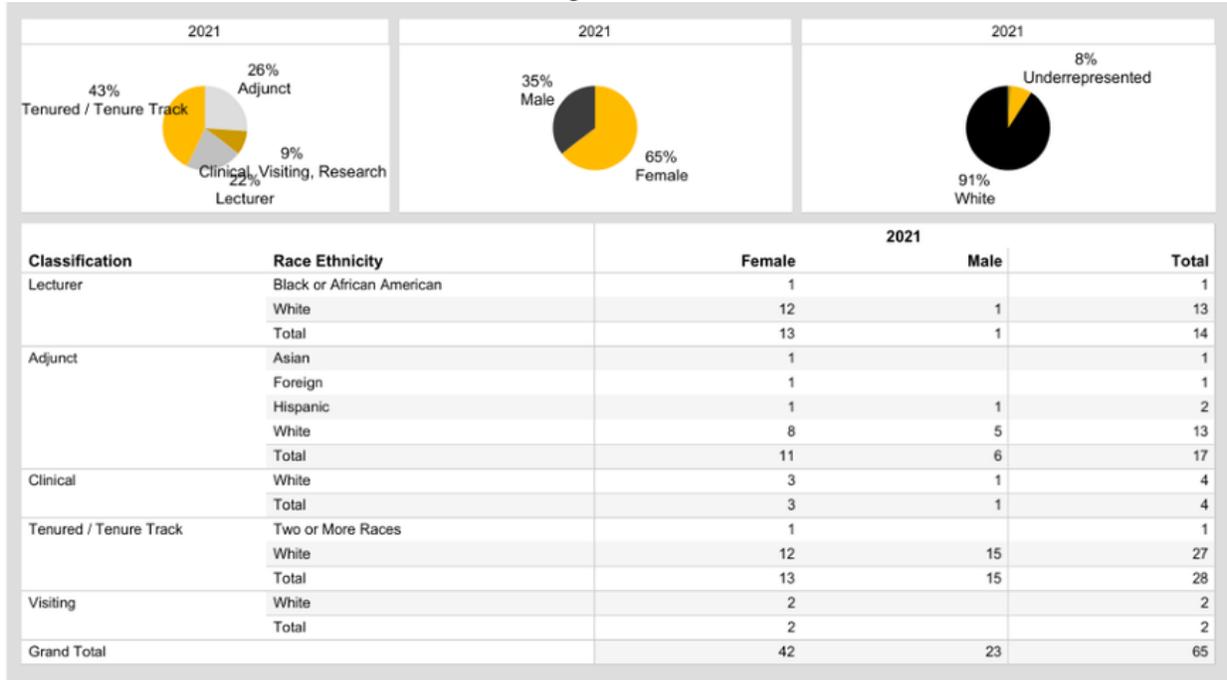
Faculty Chair: Pamela Lottero-Perdue

The Physics, Astronomy and Geosciences (PAGS) Diversity Committee worked with OIIE as a pilot group adding resources to the DEI Knowledge Base as well as hosting monthly informal discussions of DEIJ issues as they relate to pedagogy.

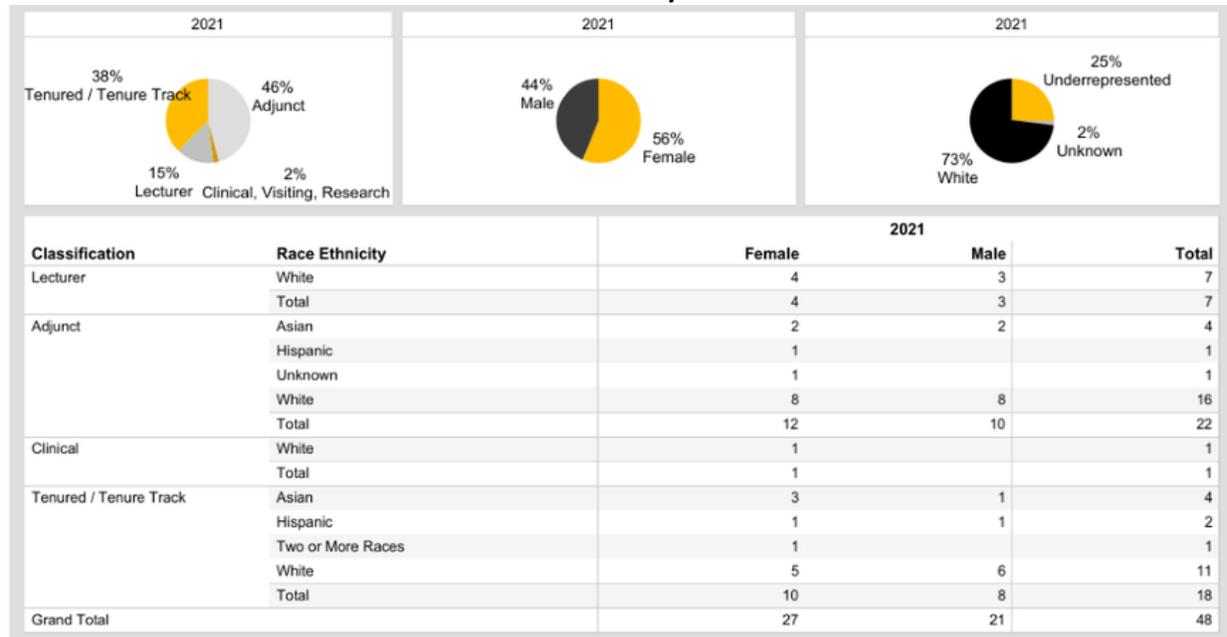
Appendix 4: FCSM Departmental Faculty Demographics (2021)

The charts below (prepared by the Office of Institutional Research) provide an overview of faculty demographics for each department in FCSM. Please note that such data for staff are unavailable, as it is not systematically collected by any university office.

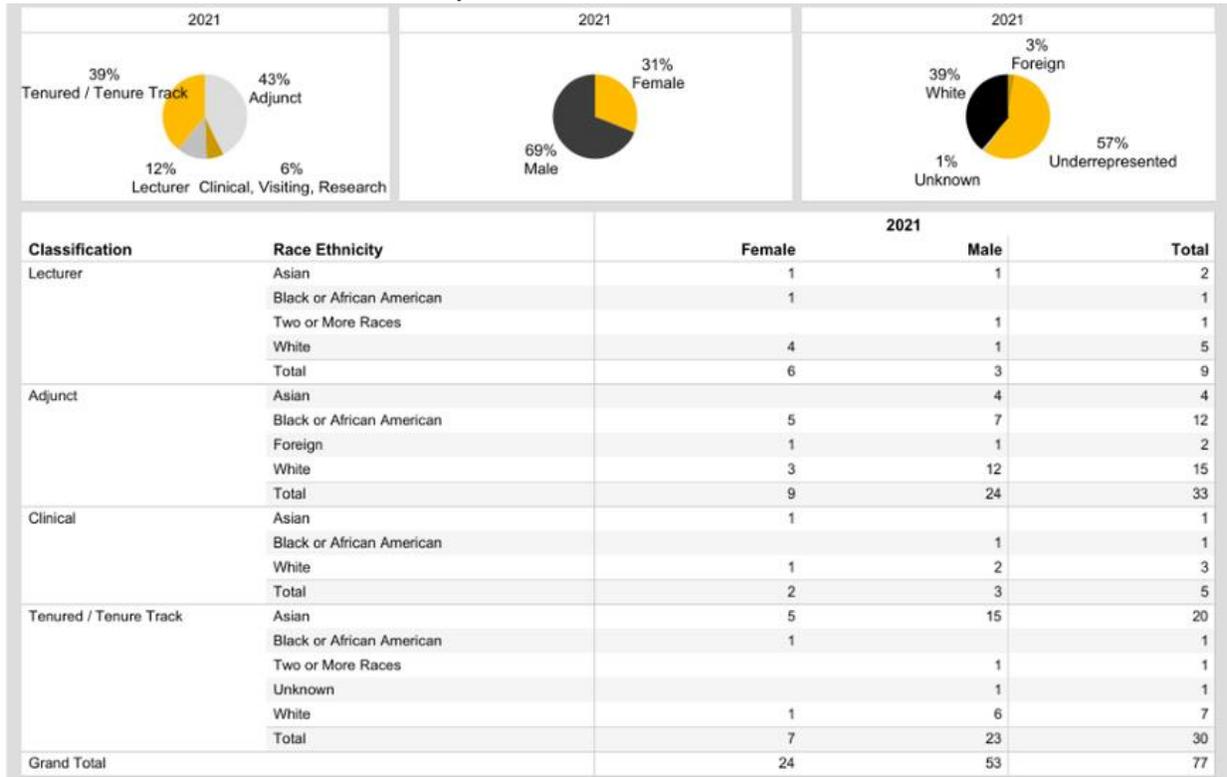
Biological Sciences



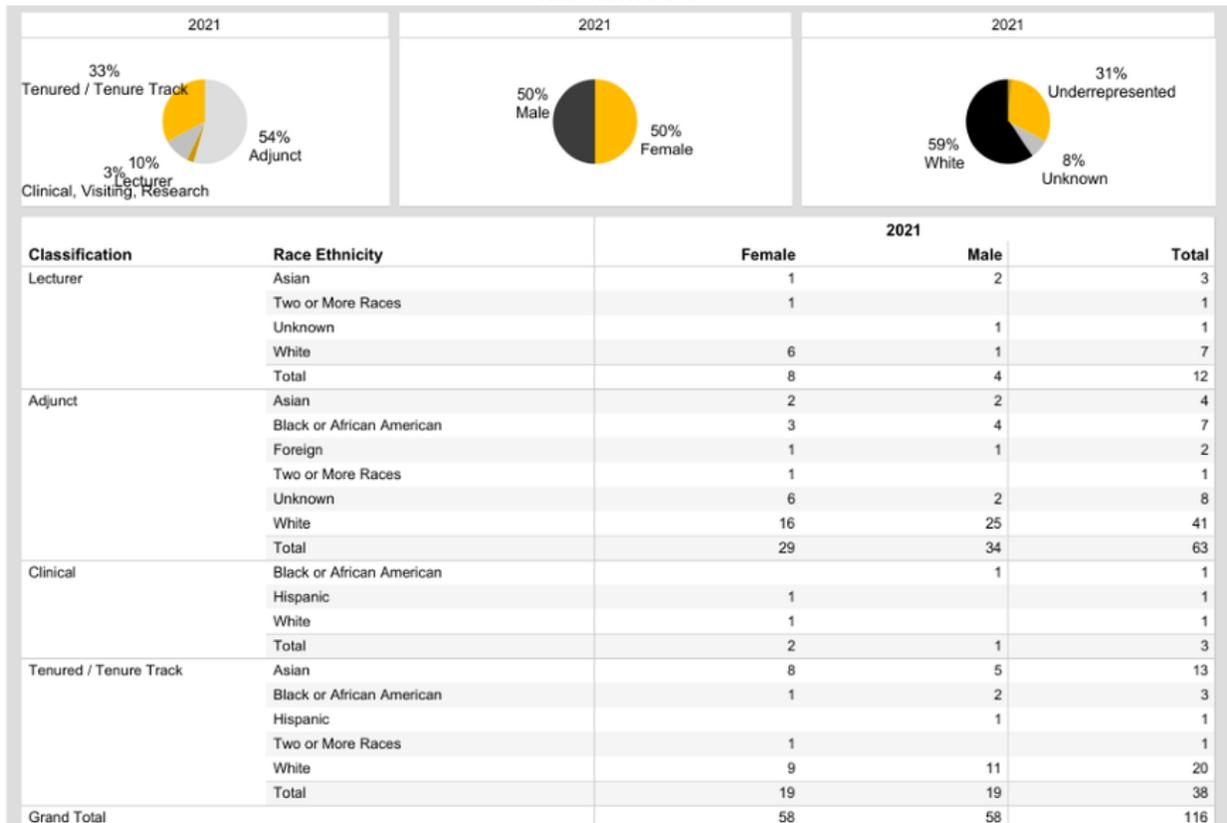
Chemistry



Computer and Information Sciences



Mathematics



Physics, Astronomy, and Geosciences

