

2020–22

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Access Progress Report

Since we last revised USC Annenberg’s Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Access Plan in 2019, we have achieved notable progress in some DEIA areas: We increasingly center and highlight diverse perspectives in our public programming; implement more inclusive approaches for teaching and student mentoring; support community engagement programs for youth in our neighboring communities; and prioritize increased diversity of our faculty, student and staff populations. These achievements represent years of rigorous and focused efforts to realize the principles of diversity and equity at the core of our school, a reflection of the deep level of commitment on the part of the entire USC Annenberg community.

But the powerful response and conversations within our school community in the midst of the Black Lives Matter protests in the summer of 2020 was truly a reckoning. As these pivotal events shined a glaring light on the depths of our nation’s systemic racism, it became clear that a racial justice lens was necessary to examine our own school community — from admissions, hiring, and retention practices to curriculum and teaching methods. Our initial steps were structural, involving revamping our governance mechanisms, bringing in new leadership, and launching a working group to jumpstart what would be a productive two years of meaningful change at USC Annenberg.

Our notable accomplishments outlined below demonstrate measurable progress and point the way to continued change. However, we acknowledge this is only the beginning. As we move forward, we are committed to continuing an inclusive process of concerted planning and vigorous action, tracking data and outcomes, and adjusting strategies to drive meaningful change.

Ensured principles of DEIA are embedded in every core function and area of the school, and scaffolded by clear governance and infrastructure:

- Established DEIA task force in Fall 2020, appointed DEIA associate dean, and in Fall 2021 added a Diversity Council to formalize the role and embed it firmly into school practices.
- Launched a Summer 2020 working group tasked with assessing DEIA challenges including: culture, training, curriculum, professional practices and public programming, with reports submitted in Fall 2020.
- Held a “Candid Conversations” series focused on DEIA issues at USC Annenberg with faculty and staff (survey found participants were overwhelmingly positive about the process).

- Our Black faculty and staff created a Black Faculty and Staff Council, whose mission is to ensure that USC Annenberg is committed and dedicated to anti-racism, Black success and inclusion. I have been working closely with the Council and in particular with our strong cohort of Black faculty —tenured and RTPC — as they plan an ambitious scholarly agenda for the Council.

Centered DEIA practices in curriculum and teaching:

- Launched the USC Annenberg Teaching Collaborative with instructors highlighting pedagogical approaches and teaching tips tied to DEIA issues.
- USC Annenberg CET Fellows curated a list of DEIA teaching resources, now available on Blackboard.
- Incorporated DEIA priorities into annual faculty merit review process.
- Instituted regular updates to program syllabus templates to foster and underscore DEIA policies and priorities.

Developed and implemented faculty, staff and student DEIA training:

- Launched diversity and inclusion training workshops, beginning with training led by Shaun Harper, executive director of the USC Race and Equity Center, on “Strategic Approaches to Diversifying Our Faculty” in Spring 2018.
- Collected research and tested options for training and professional development among faculty, staff and USC Annenberg Media Center (FY21).
- Provided mandatory training to USC Annenberg Media Center student leaders and many faculty through the Maynard Institute in Fall 2020.
- Launched Media Center student training series in Fall 2021, led by Dr. Shaun Harper and co-developed with USC Annenberg faculty.
- Developing mandatory DEIA training program for master’s students in our public relations and communication master’s programs for pilot launch in Spring 2022, full rollout in Fall 2022. (collaboration with Ed-Tech company Minerva).
- Conducted a series of six staff professional development training sessions from November 2020 through July 2021 centered around creating a culture of inclusiveness and equity. The sessions, led by organizational psychologist Dr. Corey Yeager, integrated the school’s Culture Journey findings and included DEIA training, dialogues, breakout discussions, and 1:1 conversations.

Centered and highlighted diverse perspectives in our public programming:

- Created A Path Forward web page for USC Annenberg community with a space to come together to engage with issues of racial justice, with a DEIA resource list open to faculty and student input.
- Developing a “Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Event Planning Guide” with our MarCom team. In addition, a required acknowledgement field was added to the school’s event request form to affirm organizers’ commitment to incorporating a diversity and inclusion strategy into event conception, planning and execution.
- Institute for Diversity and Empowerment at USC Annenberg helmed signature events on campus exploring issues of difference, identity and culture in media, such as R.A.P. Lessons: Bridging Race, Arts, and Placemaking — a six-week video exhibition throughout Wallis Annenberg Hall.

- Created USC Annenberg and HBO Diverse Voices Forum, a year-long series designed to connect HBO's top talent and producers with USC Annenberg students and faculty to explore the role of diversity in the future of entertainment. Featured guests included: Academy Award-winning actor Mahershala Ali; Anna Deavere Smith, writer, producer and star of HBO's Notes from the Field; Jeffrey Wright, actor, activist and star of HBO's O.G. and Westworld; and Issa Rae, creator, writer and star of the HBO series Insecure.
- Commemorated numerous important historical moments to draw connections to our present and future, including a panel exploring the legacy of the Chicano Moratorium from Latino reporting and journalism education within USC Annenberg to the #SomosLAT movement.

Centered diverse perspectives in student media with faculty and curricular support:

- Assembled a faculty working group for student media training and practices that reviewed literature and best practices for educating and training students and drafting a set of recommendations for faculty, media center and student media advisors.
- The USC Annenberg Media Center newsroom began a source diversity tracking initiative to benchmark current practices and set goals for improvement to ensure we are elevating diverse voices and perspectives.
- Launched a student-led Equity Board in the USC Annenberg Media Center to provide oversight and insight throughout the newsroom to help every student journalist understand how best to report on underrepresented communities. The board advocates for ethical practices across desks, inclusive hiring throughout the newsroom, and an overall environment of acceptance.
- Created the Media Center's Guide for Equitable Reporting Strategies and Newsroom Style, authored by a journalism master's student with guidance from faculty.
- Student-led creation of content reflected increasingly diverse perspectives, including: Dimelo, USC's only bilingual, student-run news desk designed to amplify the Latinx voice; Black., a vertical for students to produce stories about Black issues for all platforms, which went live Fall 2021; elevASIAN, USC Annenberg's first Asian American vertical aiming to redefine what being "Asian American" means by highlighting untold perspectives, cultures and histories across the APIDA spectrum and beyond; and a Community Zine project produced in partnership with LA Taco, highlighting the diverse food culture of Los Angeles, and distributed in South LA neighborhoods.
- Grew diversity of backgrounds, perspectives, and expertise among part-time/adjunct faculty serving alongside our full-time faculty as instructors, advisors and coaches in our Media Center. The Media Center team has become a highly diverse group of part- and full-time faculty of whom 22% are Latinx, 24% Black, and 5% Asian.

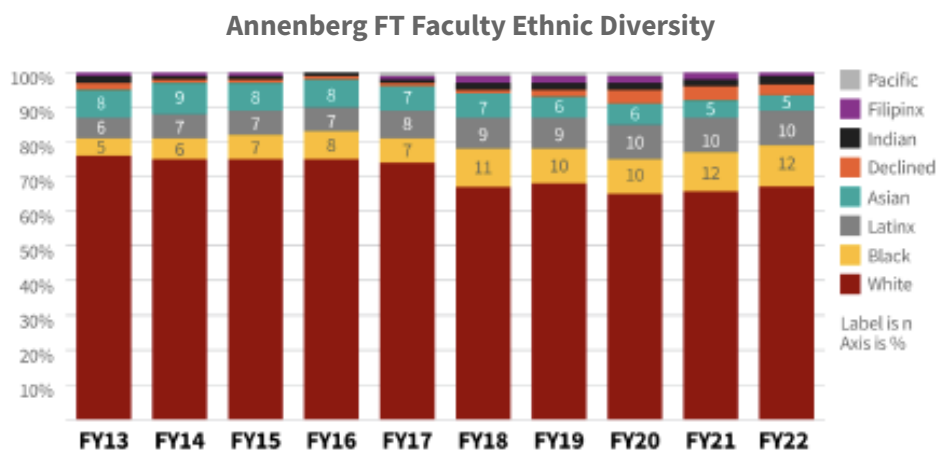
Developed and implemented strategies to increase diversity, access and equity in admissions practices and initiatives with the goal of increasing the number of BIPOC students in our undergraduate programs:

- Expanded and enhanced recruitment efforts to attract grads from minority serving institutions (MSI), including playing a lead role in USC's inaugural Minority-Serving Institutions information session in Fall 2021.

- Building on our longstanding relationships with Historically Black Colleges and Universities, held Annenberg's first HBCU virtual recruitment fair in Fall 2020 and revised it for Fall 2021.
- Exploring articulation agreements with the nine colleges of the LA Community College District to enhance the number of diverse students (including first-generation, low socio-economic backgrounds, and historically underrepresented) transferring to journalism.

Identified and implemented strategies to strengthen faculty diversity, equity and inclusion:

- Continued to evolve, develop and apply best practices for faculty screening, recruitment and hiring, including ensuring diverse representation in faculty search committees, requiring committee members to complete the school's designated DEIA training before serving; advertising open positions in a range of outlets that target diverse readerships; and ensuring candidate pools comprise broad representation (and restarting searching when this is not the case).
- Demonstrated measurable progress toward increasing diversity of faculty across all areas of difference (see chart below and Academic Excellence: Faculty section).
- Strengthened efforts to foster an inclusive faculty community by creating a mentoring culture that supports advancement and promotes equal opportunity for all faculty, and by valuing and rewarding activities of our faculty that promote diversity and inclusion.



Increased faculty diversity, including growing racial and ethnic representation and achieving gender equity in the faculty ranks:

- Since FY18, 40% of the 20 newly hired full-time faculty are underrepresented minorities (35% Black, 5% Latinx); 15% are Asian, and 45% are white. These hires have increased our gender diversity as well; 55% are female or non-binary and 45% are male.
- As of FY21, representation among USC Annenberg tenure-track and RTPC faculty members stood at 12% Black (12 out of 102), 10% Latinx (10), 8% Asian (8), 1% Pacific Islander (1), and 66% white (67)—approaching, and in some cases exactly reflecting, national demographics. Our balance of men to women is 57% to 42% and 1% non-binary.

- Increased the racial and ethnic diversity of our adjunct and part-time faculty from 2017 to 2021. The proportion who self-identify in Workday as Black or African American has increased from 5% to 10%, as Hispanic or Latino from 8% to 12%, and as Asian from 6% to 8%, while the proportion who self-identify as white decreased from 74% to 54%. Actual diversity is likely greater since a significant proportion (23% in 2021) of our adjunct and part-time faculty declines or omits to self-identify.

Expanded faculty's scholarly and professional expertise in key domains:

- Reinforced our health communication thought leadership with faculty who employ cutting-edge approaches and merge online and offline partnerships with urban communities to study Black and Latinx health inequities and social justice-facing data science.
- Added depth and breadth to our media studies with new faculty experts in transnational media and explorations of race, politics and gender across mass media, sports media and popular culture.
- Expanded and updated our scholarly portfolio in science and technology (STS) studies, networks and computational communication, mobile and emerging media technologies, artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning, and big data in advertising and public relations.
- Added distinguished RTPC faculty in public relations, arts and culture journalism, and political journalism, extending or restarting searches as necessary to ensure candidates met the criteria of both advancing communication across diverse constituencies and demonstrating the level of excellence required to be a member of our faculty.

Established equitable faculty promotion, professional development and compensation practices:

- In FY19, USC Annenberg achieved the milestone of equitable faculty compensation, with salary equity at 100% of parity or more for nearly all categories.
- Consistently review salaries at each of the ranks to look for any evidence of inequity for faculty from underrepresented minorities. Faculty of color are among the most highly compensated in their respective ranks on the tenure track. However, in FY19, we found some cases where RTPC URM faculty were below the median. We made appropriate equity adjustments, equalizing to peers with comparable rank, instructional profiles and professional standing, and have continued to review, adjust and maintain parity in the years since.
- Analyzed and assessed merit review process for bias related to gender, race/ethnicity and rank, determining that while no bias appeared across gender or race/ethnicity, a clear bias emerged when faculty rank was considered (i.e., faculty of lower rank were consistently awarded lower merit scores). As a result, our schools are creating new guidelines for evaluating faculty on the basis of rank.

Advanced equitable practices for adjunct and part-time faculty:

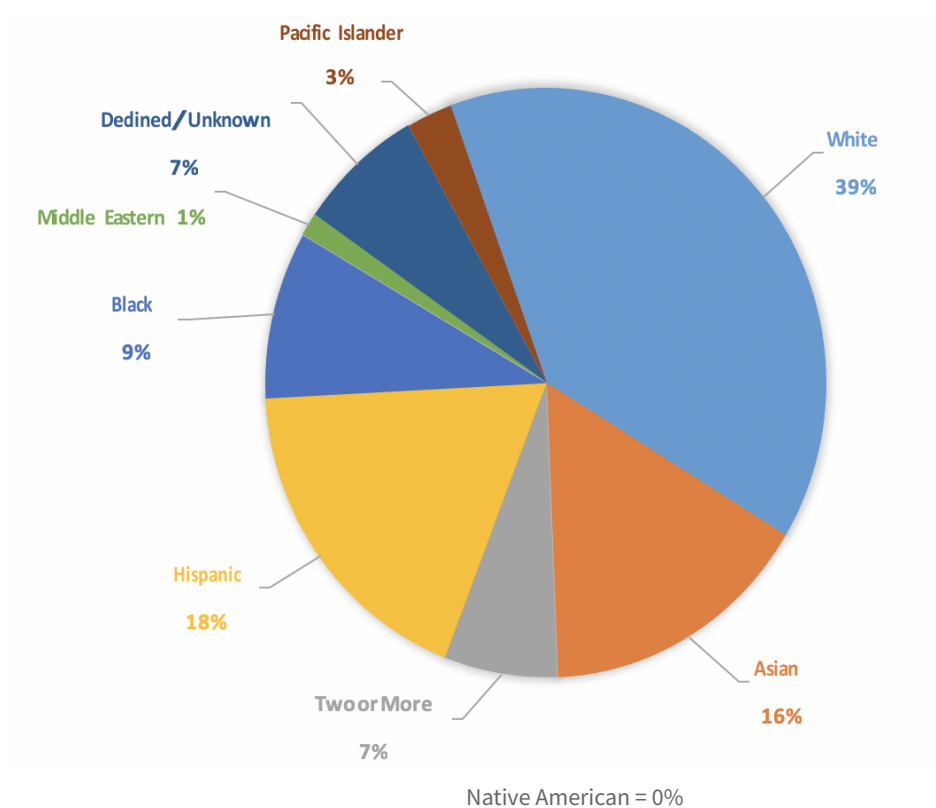
- Sought and received approval to provide a one-time, equity-based increase in compensation for part-time/adjunct faculty members — and have continued systematically to raise their compensation since. This process has taken several years to implement given our large number of adjunct and part-time faculty.

- Created and appointed to the position a liaison to adjunct faculty for greater representation and advocacy, who worked to improve teaching support, access to resources and training.
- Created opportunities for adjunct and part-time faculty to participate more fully in the life of the school through advisory and service roles, social events, and inclusion in regular faculty and all-school meetings.

Evolving developing, tracking and applying best practices to ensure diverse representation among staff:

- We are committed to identifying and reducing potential biases in screening and hiring qualified, diverse candidates. Although we have better metrics and documentation related to recent increases in diversity hiring with our faculty, we will work to evolve, develop, track and apply best practices to our staff hiring process to ensure diverse representation at all levels of the school. Our current gender ratio for staff is 35% male and 65% female. The staff demographics are illustrated on the following chart.

Current staff demographics



Increased equity and access for students to study abroad:

- Increased equity and access to study abroad programs. In most recent complete study abroad year (AY19-20), 15% of total participants were Pell Grant recipients (29 students); 34% of participants in semester-long programs were students of color (42 students); and 13% of participants in semester-long programs were first-generation students (16 students). 86% of participants in spring break programs were students of color (24 students).

Expanded student mentoring programs and affinity groups to help create a stronger sense of belonging:

- Reached 200 new students with revamped mentoring programs: Our Student Communities mentoring program introduced 113 incoming first generation students and students of color with more than a dozen faculty, staff, and alumni mentors in AY 2020-21; our Peer-to-Peer Mentors program paired 29 upper division USC Annenberg student mentors with 78 first-year and new transfer students, with extremely positive feedback.
- Established a new global mentorship program specifically to support our graduate students in China, engaging close to 90 students and 40 alumni, with 100% positive feedback about the experiences and matches.
- Innovated a new professional mentor program, Seeing ME in the Media, which matches BIPOC and first-generation students with media professionals; participation doubled (to 62 matches) in its second year.
- Initiated Annenberg Cross-Cultural Student Association, a student-led group whose goal is to foster a more inclusive community by promoting cultural awareness through DEIA-themed events.

Increased financial assistance to ensure equitable access among students to the full USC Annenberg experience:

- Pioneered two donor-supported funds to help address the unique needs of this generation of students and remove barriers to student success: our Student Success Fund (to increase access to student experiential activities) and Student Emergency Assistance Fund (for unexpected personal or family circumstances). These funds have proven critical to our students during financially precarious times and have established a model that other units at USC are now adopting.
- Since the funds were launched in 2017 and 2018, 703 awards have been granted totalling \$1,046,190.
- These funds are a fundraising priority and have shifted from current use to an endowment that now stands at \$2.5M.
- Introduced an Unpaid Internship Stipend as part of the Student Success funding, which awarded \$500 stipends totaling \$62.5K in FY21 to help support access to professional development.
- During the two years impacted by the pandemic (FY21 and FY22), our Student Emergency Assistance Fund and Student Success Fund supported 426 students and disbursed \$648K in funds.