

UI Athletics Diversity Task Force Report

Background

The UI Athletics Diversity Task Force was established in the spring of 2018 to address African American male student-athlete graduation rates at Iowa. The Task Force was formed at the encouragement and with the full support of UI Athletics and campus administration. The Task Force serves as a subcommittee of the UI Path Forward: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion – Collaboration (DEI-C) Committee which aims to create and sustain a welcoming, collaborative environment for all members of the community as part of the UI campus-wide strategic plan. The Task Force is committed to addressing what is a prevalent concern nationally (FBS African American male student-athlete graduation rate - 54%)¹ as well as support the UI campus paradigm shift to more closely examine DEI work at the departmental level by instilling departmental accountability and ownership.

Committee Members

Broderick Binns	UI Athletics
John Bruno	Subcommittee Chair, UI Athletics
Eddie Etsey	UI Athletics
Andrew Francis	UI Athletics
Nicole Grosland	Faculty Athletic Representative
Raina Harmon	UI Athletics
Charles Martin-Stanley	Graduate Student Representative
Jamal Nelson	Office of Student Life
Mel Sanders	Subcommittee Chair, UI Athletics
Melissa Shivers	Vice President for Student Life, Interim Chief Diversity Officer
Liz Tovar	Task Force and Subcommittee Chair, UI Athletics
Vacant	Associate Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Process

The committee proposed a two-year timeline for this project that includes a three-phase process. Phase I was completed in January 2019 to better understand the departmental climate in UI Athletics towards diversity and the experiences of African American male student-athletes. Phase II will include the development and implementation of a two-year Action Plan which outlines effective strategies that support African American male student-athlete persistence and graduation. Phase III of this project will include a review of intended outcomes as a result of the implemented strategies and tasks outlined in the Action plan.

¹ NCAA FBS 2008-2011 Graduation Rate Report

Goals

1) To be among the top three institutions within the Big Ten Conference with the highest African American male graduation rate by closing the gap between African American male student-athletes and their White student-athlete male peers.

2) Achieve national recognition for UI Athletics efforts on diversity and inclusion by contending for the Diversity and Inclusion Award through the NCAA.

Phase I: Summary of Findings

During the fall 2018 semester interviews were conducted with 24 current and former African American and White student-athletes, 15 staff members who serve in either a senior level or mid-level management position within UI Athletics, and 11 staff members who hold positions as coach, director of operations, athletic training, or strength and conditioning.

Overall, African American male student-athletes reported positive experiences within the campus and general community, however team specific themes arose regarding climate between African American student-athletes and white student-athletes.

- Perceived power differentials between students and coaches/leadership prohibiting effective communication.
- Perceived differential in disciplinary measures.
- Team policies limiting personal authenticity.
- A perception shown during the recruiting process suggesting a more inclusive environment.
- Lack of connection with the support system (team and community) that recruited them.

The Athletics Department is committed to policies and practices that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion. However, there is a need for greater awareness and intentional action on the part of administrators and coaches in addressing the concerns of African American student-athletes. Below are themes that may impact the departmental climate.

- Commitment to improve diversity among non-coaching staff members, including senior administrators, middle-level managers, and support staff.
- Commitment to improve career advancement opportunities for current coaches, in particular underrepresented minority staff and coaches.
- A commitment to provide more mentorship opportunities for African American student-athletes.
- Improved strategies for recruiting diverse student populations.
- Student-athlete expectations during the recruiting process and lack of playing time were reasons for African American student-athlete departures.

Findings from the Phase I assessment indicate that departmental and team-specific cultures and policies, as well as playing time, are factors that contribute to a lower success rate of degree attainment for African American male student-athletes at Iowa. Both qualitative and

quantitative data did not support academic factors as barriers for African American male student-athlete persistence at Iowa. For example, of the 64 African American student-athletes on scholarship in the 2008-2011 cohort groups, only 13 student-athletes left the University of Iowa while not academically eligible². In addition, 17 students transferred and graduated from a different institution according to the National Student Clearinghouse.

Phase II: Action Plan

The following section includes the recommended action plan along with strategies and critical tasks that assist the UI Athletics Diversity Task Force with achieving the committee's goals and are based upon the findings from Phase I. Additionally, the UI Athletics Diversity Task Force Action Plan supports and is aligned with the following goals of the UI Path Forward: DEI Action Plan.

1. Create and sustain an inclusive and equitable campus environment.
2. Recruit, retain and advance a diverse campus community of faculty, staff and students.

Communication Plan

The communication plan is intended to inform key stakeholder groups about the Athletics Department commitment for addressing the above concerns. The key stakeholder groups include Diversity Task Force interview participants, UI Athletics staff, Presidential Committee on Athletics and members of the Path Forward: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion – Collaboration (DEI-C) Committee.

March 25 – Meeting with student-athlete leaders, including Multicultural Focus Group and Iowa Student-Athlete Advisory Committee representatives to review the Diversity Task Force Action Plan.

March 29 – Update to key stakeholder groups regarding the Diversity Task Force and information pertaining to the Path Forward: DEI Action Plan, Climate Survey Profile and Digest release.

April 4 – Path Forward: DEI Action Plan, Climate Survey Profile and Digest release

April 5 – Open forum to discuss Diversity Task Force key findings and action plan

April 10 – Head coaches meeting discussion

April 10 – All-Staff meeting discussion

April 22 – Review of the Diversity Task Force Action Plan by the Path-Forward Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Collaboration Committee

June 17 – Incorporate Diversity Task Force Action Plan into the campus DEI Action Plan

² NCAA Academic Portal

Action Plan

Two-year intended outcomes

1. Enhanced reporting mechanisms to address African American student-athlete concerns.
2. Expanded knowledge of staff, students, and coaches regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion.
3. Expand the support structure for African American student-athletes outside of UI Athletics.
4. Student-athletes report a stronger sense of community and inclusion within UI Athletics.
5. Promote diversity, equity, and inclusion as a core value articulated within every sports program.

Strategies and Critical Tasks

Sustain and support the work of the UI Athletics Diversity Task Force.

- The Diversity Task Force should function in an advisory role to the senior administration to help ensure the effective implementation of the Diversity Task Force Action Plan.
 - Establish an active response protocol to readily address student concerns in a timely fashion.
 - Include listening sessions and communication mechanisms as part of the plan.
 - Annually evaluate and compare the national graduation rate for African American male student-athletes at FBS schools as compared to African American student-athletes at Iowa.
 - Ensure that each sports team sets annual goals pertaining to their underrepresented minority Graduation Success Rate.
- Establish an African American student-athlete advisory group that reports to the Athletics Director, the Big Ten Advisory Commission Representative, and the Associate Athletics Director for Student-Athlete Academic Services.
 - Meet at least yearly to discuss prevailing concerns of African American student-athletes at Iowa.
- Conduct a yearly meeting between African American student-athletes and the President's Office, the Associate Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, and the Vice President for Student Life.
- Utilize campus-wide metrics and tools to evaluate the departmental climate on a yearly basis.
- Implement an accountability structure within the UI Athletics Diversity Plan that celebrates DEI successes, and establishes meaningful consequences.
- Ensure that the UI Athletics Diversity Task Force Action Plan is embedded within the UI Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Action Plan.

Place a stronger emphasis on the recruitment and retention of underrepresented ethnic minority staff.

- Recruit, hire, and retain underrepresented minority candidates for personal support staff positions.
 - Provide best practices guide to committee members to prevent unconscious bias during searches.
 - Cultivate a diverse network of candidates for mid-level, senior management and coaching positions.
- Establish a permanent, management position that addresses diversity issues by the fall 2020.
 - The position should have an indirect report line to the Associate Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.
- Encourage feedback from African American student-athletes as to their reasons for departure prior to graduation.

Provide training for coaches and support staff.

- Public statement to staff, student-athletes, and coaches, that UI Athletics is actively addressing African American student-athlete concerns and graduation rates.
- Develop sport-specific programs to address issues pertaining to diversity that offer a safe environment to discuss controversial topics.
- Break down barriers for open communication by utilizing and promoting campus resources such as the Campus Inclusion Team.
- Provide educational opportunities for coaches on effective strategies during the recruiting process.
 - Discuss the academic and personal support resources necessary for incoming African American students.
 - Encourage feedback from African American parents of current student-athletes about their experience during the recruitment process.
- Regularly provide staff and coaches with community and campus resources that serve African American student populations.
 - Establish key DEI competencies for all staff.

Create and maintain mentorship opportunities with the support of campus and community partnerships.

- Establish cross-cultural mentorship opportunities within teams.
- Establish a yearly partnership between the Office of Student Life and Athletics to develop social opportunities for African American student-athletes.