

**Project Title** Building Community for Staff of Color – Community-based Dialogue

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**What are you proposing to do and how will you do it?**

Through community-based dialogues rooted in empowerment, healing and truth this initiative aims to bring together staff of color and support their growth at UC Merced. The empowering monthly sessions will focus on four main themes: healing, community, retention and advancement. The goal of community-based dialogues is to ultimately improve climate for staff of color and create a support network as staff face work/life challenges.

**How will the program contribute to and enhance UC Merced's campus climate as a more equitable and inclusive place to study, research and work?**

At UC Merced, student success results from a collaboration and shared responsibility among students, faculty, staff, and administration. Of those responsible, staff of color work tirelessly to serve students and faculty but rarely find the time to build community outside of work.

Through the Dean of Students Office I am proposing a new initiative for staff of color to come together once a month to build and strengthen a community of educators. I hope that through collaboration and informal mentorship, staff of color can meet outside of their day-to-day and work on healing, community, retention and advancement, and ultimately create deep and personal connections amongst one another. I strongly believe that happy and healthy staff directly impact student success at our campus.

Staff members of color (non-white) make up 61% (equivalent to 655 of 1,078) of professional staff members on campus, of which the majority self-identify as first generation like our student population. In the most recent Staff Engagement survey of 2018, 49% of staff members have reported thinking of leaving the University within the year. Additionally, in a question asked about discrimination or exclusion at the institution, 50.5% of respondents expressed exclusionary/discriminatory behavior based on job classification.

Based on the data shared above, I am making the correlation that staff retention and motivation is a concern and that the institution does not currently have mechanisms in place to address this growing concern. As a member of staff of color community who identifies as first generation and a product of the UC system, I have struggled in my four years of being employed at UC Merced to develop personal connections outside of campus and, if given the opportunity, would utilize this type support in my professional growth.

Through this initiative I hope to reframe the “old-boy network or club”, a social network where white staff and faculty build social and business connections, to a space where staff of color can do the same. By being strategic in our mission, this initiative can create an environment outside of campus where building community for staff of color can exist.

**Describe how this project is a new, high impact, collaborative, experimental and/or sustainable approach to enhancing and/or addressing an area of campus climate.**

The initiative I am proposing is new because the work will really focus on the personal development of staff of color in an informal setting. Through community-based dialogues staff will be able to shed their titles, classifications and work stress and really focus on building genuine relationships with colleagues. Through this informal setting, folks will be able to share personal insights, skillset for success and lessons learned through their personal and professional life to informally mentor other participants.

This initiative will be open to all staff who identify as a person of color across the entire campus. Events will be scheduled outside of work in the evening and on weekends to accommodate various work schedules.

**Describe the expected difference(s) the project will make on the issues addressed, the audience(s) it will serve and the number of people it will affect. (Proposals must describe and include supporting impact data from documented climate surveys, findings or statistics.)**

In the latest IRDS report from Fall 2018, 70% of executive leadership identified as white and 40% of management and senior professionals identified as people of color (non-white). As staff turnover continues to rise, the development of staff of color is crucial to ensure that informal networking supports staff through the management pipeline. I define informal networking here as a space where connections are made about new positions, encouraging self-promotion, building confidence, managing imposter syndrome and building a strong and collective community. Ultimately, by retaining staff of color we'll be directly impacting the students we serve.

**How will the project bring together two or more campus entities, advance mutual goals and/or share knowledge? Specifically identify how the project will be integrated into the activities of teaching, research or public service.**

By creating a space where a sense of community is at the foundation, staff of color across the campus will be given an opportunity to bridge the gaps between professional structures that have been for the most part only benefitted white males. This is why my initiative aims to reframe the current structure by creating a space where shared experiences and knowledge is transferred not just from top down but across all sides. The framework I plan to use to develop the community-based dialogues will be Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy and Tara Yosso's community cultural wealth. Freire's critical pedagogy is rooted in the belief that oppressed groups should question and challenge the dominant culture to achieve critical consciousness. Yosso's community cultural wealth model includes six types of cultural capital oppressed groups may use to reframe their experiences; aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistance. By challenging and reframing the "old-boy network" I alluded to earlier, I intent to use Yosso's framework and counter-storytelling to empower staff of color to share their own stories and create a new narrative that focuses on how staff of color maneuver the professional pipeline on this campus.

In order to achieve this, this initiative plans to work closely with the Staff and Faculty of Color Association (SFCA), Staff Assembly, and Chancellor's Advisors Advisory Council on Campus Climate, Culture and Inclusion (CCCI) in order to outreach to staff. Using current research on best practices for supporting students of color in higher education, this initiative plans to support staff of color across campus to strengthen our own development so we can then turn around and educate our students.

**Describe the leadership, capacity and qualifications of the individual or group to implement the project. (Proposal specifically describes the leadership, capacity and qualifications of the individual or group to implement the project and specifically describes how each individual will implement the components of the project. Project Managers are in good standing with the University.)**

As the Case Manager in the Dean of Students office my role is to weave student success in all the work we do. Through this initiative I am proposing to provide staff of color the same opportunities for growth and success as we do our students.

With the guidance of the Associate Vice Chancellor and Dean of Students, Dr. Jonathan Grady, I plan to organize, plan and implement the community-based dialogues. Both Dr. Grady and I are involved in various campus initiatives such as: Diversity Awareness Initiatives Committee, Staff and Faculty of Color Association, Queer Ally Program and Staff Assembly. Additionally, we are trained in various intervention approaches such as restorative justice, motivational interviewing and leadership development. We plan to implement strategies and techniques used in these programs/committees/trainings to guide the work of this initiative.

**Describe how likely the project is to be continued and incorporated or replicated by other organizations on campus and demonstrate why. (Demonstration of likelihood is supported with facts.)**

This work can be replicated and modeled to strengthen other marginalized communities, such as women in STEM and LGBTQ+ staff. Based on the needs of the group, this initiative can meet the budget realities of all departments on campus as it may be scaled down or scaled up. The framework and foundation of this initiative can be developed and modified to meet the needs of any marginalized group; including faculty and staff groups.

On February 20th, 2019 I held a launch event for this initiative at a local venue in Merced where eighteen staff of color attended. In a survey given out at the end of the event, 85.7% stated that attending the launch even had a positive impact on their wellbeing. Additionally, participants stated that the top two most useful aspects of the event where feeling connected and building community. While this was only the first event, 100 % of participants stated they are likely to attend future events and will recommend this type of event to other. For visual representation of launch event please click here: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/qVisXP1RPyzFYpep7>.

With funding support we'll be able to outreach to more staff and provide food; something that

was mentioned several times on the survey. I plan to continue to host events every month as I find the work important and needed on our campus; even if funding is not approved.

**Provide the full timeline – from start to completion – for the project.**

July – Begin outreach by holding a focus group with leaders of color to discuss venue options for the semester

August – 1st event (venue: TBD, theme “Unity”)

September – 2nd event (venue: TBD, theme “Resistance”)

October – 3rd event on Saturday (venue: TBD, theme “Survival”)

November – 4th event (venue: TBD, theme “Community/cultural expectations”)

December – 5th event (venue: TBD, theme “Self-Care”)

January – 6th event (venue: TBD, theme “Self-Advocacy”)

February – 7th event (venue: TBD, theme “Networking”)

March – 8th event (venue: TBD, theme “Familial expectations”)

April – 9th event (venue: TBD, theme “Branding yourself”)

May – 10th event (venue: TBD, theme “Finding our WHY”)

June – 11th event (venue: TBD, closing event)

**What are your project goals and expected outcomes?**

As a result of attending these events, participants will:

Healing

- Report improvement on campus climate

Community

- Feel connected to the UC Merced campus

Retention

- Identify at least one mentor of color

Advancement

- Recognize management pipeline opportunities others have utilized

**What is your definition of success? How will you measure it?**

Healing

- Work with Office of Campus Climate and IRDS to look at staff of color data on campus climate and measure morale at the end of the year

Community

- More involvement from staff of color in leadership training events and committees

Retention

- Identify at least one mentor of color pairing staff of color to each other and measuring the progress of the mentorship

Advancement

- Recognize management pipeline opportunities others have utilized and measure each participant’s advancement in their career

**What tools will you use to collect the data needed to measure the progress and success of each expected outcome? When will you use them?**

I plan to use Qualtrics/Google equivalent survey/assessment strategies to collect data before officially launching events and at the end of the year to measure the outcomes.

~~Project sponsoring unit~~Leave this field blank

UC Merced Sponsor Dean of Students Office

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Budget form [2019-20\\_dei\\_grant\\_budget\\_form.xlsx](#)

Application form (if submitting a PDF)