

**Florida Educational Equity Act Report**  
**CLAS Academic Advising Center**  
**July 2010 – May 2011**

**I. Equal Opportunity Compliance**

Our office has a very diverse staff. Of the 27 employees in the Academic Advising Center (AAC) this year, 18 are female, 5 are African American (4 females and 1 male), 2 are Hispanic/Latino/a (2 females), 1 is of Native American heritage (female), and 1 is Asian American (male). We also have an African (female from Kenya) on our staff. Because of our diverse employees, we have no problem including the relevance of diversity in everything we do, and since we deal with a very diverse student body, it is the only approach that makes any sense.

The most important policy to achieve diversity is to ensure that we encourage diversity in the pool of applicants for jobs we are trying to fill. We make sure that all jobs are advertised appropriately in venues that oversample minority populations in Florida and the nation as well as mainstream venues like the online *Chronicle of Higher Education*. Our Office Manager, Sherrel Brockington, is in charge of personnel and ensures that we routinely post our job openings in the proper venues to attract a diverse pool of applicants.

In our hiring, we embrace valuing diversity as a positive and important aspect of the job, regardless of the candidates' background. To that end, we construct specific questions in our interview process (which is scripted) so that the candidates' attitudes toward diversity are examined in a detailed, in-depth manner. We do this for several reasons. First, we all believe that good advisors must have an open and supportive attitude toward differences in the students, parents, faculty, staff, administrators and community members with whom we routinely interact. Second, because of our advising mandates, we serve a population of students that is overrepresented by minority students. We have specific advising responsibilities for the AIM program that serves at-risk undergraduates on campus. About 70% of the AIM population is African American. Another 20% is Hispanic American, and the rest are predominantly either Asian American or white.

We also hire several student assistants who qualify for work study during the year. Over the years, these students have often been African American students, and their association with our support staff and advisors has generally had a strongly positive effect on their academic success. We essentially "adopt" each of these students and follow their academic careers closely, even after they no longer work in the AAC.

In order to advise more than 11,000 undergraduate majors properly, training advisors to deal with a diverse population is necessary. Our formal and informal training includes many references to this issue. These typically come in the form of case studies or role-playing by the veteran advisors who are tasked with training the newcomers.

Our advisors and staff are also constantly monitored for their respect for diversity. Every student who has an individual advising session with an advisor is sent an e-mail after their session asking them to evaluate their advising experience with the particular advisor whom they saw on that occasion, including responding to the following statements:

- I had non-academic concerns affecting my academic performance and goals, and my advisor discussed these with me.
- My advisor made me feel comfortable in the advising session.
- My advisor was a good listener and allowed sufficient time to discuss my academic concerns.
- My advisor was friendly and approachable.
- My advisor was realistic and honest with me.

Each of these plumbs the issue of diversity, of course, and we also provide students with the opportunity to make open-ended comments about their advising experience. The Director and Assistant Director review these every semester with the advisors to ensure that diversity is respected by all advisors. Additionally, students can rate the support staff in the same fashion or by using paper evaluation forms.

## II. **Equity Accountabilities**

Outreach to diverse populations is a valued tradition in the AAC, and we have a strong record of support in this area. The AAC has a formal advising role with the AIM program, and also is involved in many other support activities for diverse populations.

### The AIM Program

A number of offices and staff members around UF contribute to this program. The AAC has a team of six academic advisors who provide the academic advising for first-year AIM students. The program, in existence since 1997, serves first-year students who are academically at-risk by coordinating for them a year-long learning plan featuring smaller classes developed to enhance mathematics and communication skills. Students qualify for this program based on all or any of the following criteria: first-generation status, family income, and attendance at one of UF's Alliance partner schools.

In the summer of 2010, approximately 320 new students were admitted through the AIM program. The AIM advisors met with the students when they came through orientation and worked with them to get registered for their initial Summer B and Fall 2010 classes. They met with them again in the Fall to help the students choose Spring classes. Throughout the course of the academic year, advisors facilitated workshops on topics such as transitioning from high school to college, effective study skills, enhancing the college experience, and choosing a major. The advisors are available to meet with AIM students to evaluate their academic progress and help them meet their goals. Between 2004 and 2008 (the most recent years for which we have data), the retention rates of students participating in the AIM program from the first to second year of college has been between 91% and 93%.

Several new enhancements in AIM advising include a family newsletter, reaching out to students in the residence halls and facilitating programs specifically targeting students in the AIM population expressing an interest in careers in the health fields. The newsletter first went out during the Fall 2008 semester and has become a regular fall/spring publication since then. Its objective is to keep families informed about university regulations, resources and critical dates so that they can play an active role in supporting their students' academic endeavors. In Summer 2010, the AIM team organized small receptions on the weekends in five of the residence halls that had the largest number of AIM students. Our objective was to reconnect with students after they attended Preview and started classes. We invited students to become better acquainted with us and each other and to bring with them any questions they wanted to discuss.

Many AIM students come to UF wishing to gain admission into graduate professional programs. Unfortunately, the majority of them are under-prepared and uninformed. In Fall 2009, the AIM team designed a special section of SLS1102 (First Year Florida) for AIM pre-health students. This was repeated in Fall 2010. The goal is to help students become more aware of options in the health care professions, as well as to teach them about the requirements and the process involved in applying for these professional programs.

### Florida Opportunity Scholars

The Florida Opportunity Scholars (FOS) Program, directed by the Office of the Vice President of Student Affairs, has been in existence since Summer 2006 and provides first-generation college students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds with a full grant and scholarship package for the duration of their undergraduate careers. The average class size admitted has been roughly 400 students. The FOS Support Committee consists of representatives from the Dean of Students Office, the AIM Program, Student Financial Affairs, Housing and Residence Education, the Career Resource Center and the University Counseling Center and the AAC.

Two AAC advisors joined the support committee in the fall of 2008. In consultation with the other support committee members, the AAC advisors developed an academic intervention strategy that seeks to proactively reach out to FOS students who show signs of struggling academically. Specifically, at the conclusion of each semester, AAC advisors started running a search to identify FOS students who earned any combination of two or more of the following grades: C-, D+, D, D-, E, E0, E1 or W.

Based on the students' majors, AAC advisors have been alerting advisors in those corresponding colleges and requesting assistance in providing these students additional support. Each college has been following-up with their students in the manner they deem appropriate.

The AAC advisors have based the individual interventions for CLAS students on the kind of course(s) in which the poor performance occurred. In the case of courses that are counting for general education or elective credit, advisors follow-up with a general well-being check, inform the students about appropriate university resources and remind each one about what's at stake with regards to their FOS status. Because courses for a major may affect a student's overall UF status in a much more significant manner, advisors place academic holds in these cases so that the students must come in to discuss the situation before registering for the next semester. Advisors discuss with students the challenges that have affected their performance and make appropriate recommendations, which might include taking advantage of specific university resources, pursuing a university petition, suggesting ways in which to improve study skills or even steering a student towards a different major that might better match his/her strengths. Over the past academic year, 45-50 CLAS FOS students per semester have appeared on the advisors' report and anywhere between 7 and 12 of these per semester have actually been placed on academic probation.

### Ambassadors of Liberal Arts and Sciences (ALAS)

In Fall 2009, the AAC developed a new program to recruit CLAS students to represent the college. We selected and trained Ambassadors to assist the college in a variety of ways including: tabling during peak periods of AAC traffic to assist with quick questions as well as routing students properly; designing several presentations for CLAS students on topics such as choosing courses, dual degrees and double majors and letters of recommendation; providing registration assistance to new transfer students during orientations, and assisting advisors at recruiting events.

Of the 33 students selected for ALAS, 36% have diverse backgrounds - 6 are Hispanic/Latino/a, 3 are African American and 3 are Asian American. Two of our ambassadors participated in the AIM program.

During Spring Semester, Ambassadors participated in recruitment efforts organized by the Office of Admissions: African-American Student Recruitment Conference in February 2010 and the Hispanic and Latin American Student Recruitment Conference in March 2010.

The 2010-2011 edition of CLAS Ambassadors is equally as diverse the charter edition and continues to reflect the diversity of our college in a positive way through an expanding set of responsibilities for the college, especially with regard to alumni relations.

### Student Organizations

AAC advisors support educational equity through support of and outreach to diverse student organizations. Below are several examples of these activities:

- An AAC advisor is the faculty advisor to Health Educated Asian Leaders (HEAL). HEAL is an organization of students representing various health related fields at the University of Florida. Their goal is to unite and build a network of diverse students with similar interests and career goals. Students are provided with the resources needed in order to be successful in furthering their professional ambitions.
- The Pre-Health advising team in the AAC supports the efforts of UF's PreMed AMSA student group to retain minority, underrepresented and disadvantaged students in pre-health tracking. One program we have zealously promoted is the Minority Pre-Medical Forum, which is run every fall semester. The Minority Affairs Committee in PreMed AMSA put together the programming and recruitment of medical schools that have a strong emphasis or mission to promote diversity in the healthcare workforce.
- An AAC advisor is the faculty advisor for Gamma Eta, a multicultural sorority.

### Outreach Activities

During July 2010, AAC advisors participated in the Office of Admissions' Outstanding High School Scholars Program for African American students.

During the Spring 2011 semester, AAC advisors (and our Ambassadors) participated in the Office of Admissions African-American Student Recruitment Conference and the Hispanic and Latin American Student Recruitment Conference.

In June 2011, AAC advisors will participate in the Office of Admissions' Outstanding High School Scholars Program for Latin American/Hispanic students.

### **III. Diversity in Services**

The AAC dedicates a significant proportion of our time and resources to students with diverse backgrounds. In the 2010-2011 academic year, we have provided individual advising to 31,318 students thus far. The following table compares the percentage of students from different backgrounds who received individual advising from the AAC with the percentage of those students in the overall UF undergraduate population for Fall 2009 (Fall 2010 data not yet available):

AAC Student Advisees 2009-2010*		UF General Student Body 2009**
African American	16.4%	10.3%
Hispanic	17.7%	15.5%
Asian	10.1%	8.7%
American Indian	0.7%	0.6%
White	43.3%	60.7%
Non-Resident Alien	0.4%	1.4%
Not Reported	11.36%	3.1%

\*based upon 32,516 visits between July 1, 2010 and April 27, 2011 (AAC data)

\*\*source: UF Fact Book for Fall 2009

As you can see from the above data, the students we serve on a regular basis are much more likely to be from diverse backgrounds than the undergraduate population in general. These data indicate convincingly that we are, in effect, a key player in delivering educational equity at UF.

#### **IV NEW INITIATIVES**

We will continue to assess, enhance and improve our current activities that promote educational equity, especially through our work with AIM and FOS students, student organizations, and our Ambassadors.

One new initiative we are planning is to obtain more information about the first-generation college students enrolled in CLAS, particularly those who are not part of a program such as AIM or FOS. We will begin to determine what their concerns are and how their collegiate perspectives may vary from other populations. Many of these students are investing in their future through loans and part-time work. Many of these students may also come from families where English may not be the language spoken at home, and they may be the first natural U.S. citizens in the household to attend an American institution of learning. Once we have a clearer picture of this group, we will develop ways to target our support for their educational engagement and success.

#### **V ACCOLADES**

We are very proud of the fact that the AIM students, who enter UF “at risk,” persist into their sophomore year at very high rates. We feel the proactive advising we do with these students helps them develop strong connections with the AAC advisors and enhances their retention as students and their relatively high graduation rates. An AAC advisor who was part of the AIM advising team and who taught the AIM

Pre-Health section of SLS1102 (First Year Florida) was named University Advisor of the Year for 2009-2010. She was just named Outstanding Advisor: Professional Role by the National Academic Advising Association in April 2011.

In addition, our new Ambassador program has received excellent feedback from the students participating as well as students in CLAS.