



## Movement in Omaha for Racial Equity Research & Policy Report, September 2023

# THE STATUS OF HISTORICALLY UNDERREPRESENTED STUDENTS OF COLOR AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA, OMAHA: INDICATORS OF RACIAL INEQUITY

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

MORE (Movement in Omaha for Racial Equity) is an antiracist organization fighting for racial equity in communities through engagement, education, and advocacy. According to our statement of purpose, the policies and practices of Nebraska's local public institutions, educational systems, and too many of its nonprofit organizations are racist. They are planned, developed, and implemented in a manner that excludes underrepresented people of color and therefore perpetuates racial and ethnic inequities.

This 2023 report provided an analysis of data on Black, Chicano/Latino, and Native American student outcomes from the University of Nebraska, Omaha. MORE found that the leadership of UNO was not entirely transparent in sharing its institutional data on such outcomes. This is likely a reflection of a relative lack of priority on maintaining equity data and utilizing it to inform institutional strategies that would increase the enrollment and success of historically underrepresented students of color.

MORE's analysis of UNO data results in critical findings that reveal a lack of ethnic-racial equity in student outcomes, including:

- The undergraduate enrollment of Blacks is unacceptably low, approximately half of parity with local demographics. On the other hand, the undergraduate enrollment of Chicano/Latino students is strong, above parity.
- The undergraduate enrollment of Native Americans is miniscule, and it hampers the ability to analyze other critical outcomes such as degrees conferred and graduation rates for Native students.
- Whites appear to be underrepresented in undergraduate enrollment, but their numbers might also be reflected in the university's "mixed races" category.
- There is a serious underrepresentation of Black, Chicano/Latino, and Native American students in UNO's graduate enrollment.
- White students are overrepresented in bachelor's degrees conferred while Black, Chicano/Latino, and Native American students are underrepresented. Chicanos/Latinos are represented at especially low levels.

- Black, Chicano/Latino (especially), and Native Americans are underrepresented in graduate degrees conferred.
- There are significant gaps in graduation rates, with Blacks and Chicanos/Latinos having lower rates than whites and the campus average in all years of UNO data.
- Blacks, Chicanos/Latinos in particular, and Native Americans are underrepresented among UNO's total faculty.
- There is significant underrepresentation of Blacks, Chicanos/Latinos, and Native Americans among UNO's full professors. Those groups, especially Chicanos/Latinos, are also underrepresented among the university's associate and assistant professors, respectively.
- Native Americans and Chicanos/Latinos are underrepresented among the staff at UNO.

Based on these findings, our MORE report includes conclusions and recommendations for UNO's leadership, its broader structure of administration, i.e., the University of Nebraska Board of Regents, and elected officials. Our findings foreground the need for local and state, public education institutions to be intentional in their work with historically underrepresented students, including an institutional focus that acknowledges the historic presence of Black, Chicano/Latino, and Native American communities in Omaha, the systemic and institutional racism to which we have been subjected, and the growth of our communities.

## INTRODUCTION

This research and policy report is the first of a series of such papers by Movement in Omaha for Racial Equity (MORE) that analyzes data and information from the University of Nebraska Omaha (UNO). UNO is an important institution in the educational achievement and subsequent socioeconomic mobility of local, historically underrepresented communities of color. MORE is a local nonprofit organization grounded in anti-racism that advocates for racial equity throughout the Omaha Metropolitan Area.

UNO is a public research university that is part of the University of Nebraska system that includes three credit-bearing campuses and a medical center. Formerly known as Omaha University, UNO became part of the UN system in 1968. A largely commuter campus for most of its history, UNO is geographically accessible to Omaha's inner-city communities. As a public institution of higher education, UNO has a responsibility to contribute to the educational achievement and professional development of Omaha's underrepresented communities of color, i.e., Blacks, Chicanos/Latinos, and Native Americans.

For decades, higher education scholars have documented the relative lack of achievement in higher education among historically underrepresented students of color (Gandara and Contreras, 2009; Garcia, 2023, 2020; Harper, 2021, 2019; Hurtado and Alvarado, 2015; Postsecondary National Policy Institute, 2022; Smith, 2015). Such gaps between the achievement levels of Blacks, Chicanos/Latinos, and Native Americans and those of white students are largely the outcome of historic and contemporary structural racism in the U.S., and subsequent institutional racism at all levels of education (Beltran, 2022; Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Garcia, 2023; Persell, 1977).

Fortunately, those same higher education scholars have also identified strategies that colleges and universities can employ to increase the achievement of historically identified students. Smith (2015) identified numerous principles for institutions based on the experience of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBUCs). Likewise, Garcia (2023) proposes a structure for transformation of Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs). In these cases and others,

the objective is to increase student achievement through equity strategies that deconstruct institutional racism. The Native American scholar Waziyatawin (2012) refers to such emancipatory transformations as “decolonization”:

Decolonization ultimately requires the overturning of the colonial structure. It is not about tweaking the existing structure to make it more Indigenous-friendly or a little less oppressive. The existing system is fundamentally and irreparably flawed . . . Decolonization . . . involves challenging colonizer systems **and institutions** that serve to maintain the colonial relationship so they are eventually eradicated completely (Waziyatawin, 2012. Emphasis added).

This historic and contemporary context creates urgency for public colleges and universities such as UNO to monitor closely the achievement levels of their historically underrepresented students and to use disaggregated data on student outcomes to drive institutional strategies that eliminate achievement gaps.

MORE examined data on student outcomes at UNO that reflect the achievement of historically underrepresented students. Our collective decision is to focus on the educational outcomes of Black, Chicano/Latino, and Native American students due to their long, historic presence in Omaha, which features a dimension of neglect by local education institutions that reflects the national pattern of educational underachievement in our communities. We do not include an in-depth analysis of Asian Americans or Pacific Islanders, as these populations do not share the historic experience or national profile of underrepresentation found in our local Black, Chicano/Latino, and Native American communities (Monarrez and Washington, 2020).

Our organization will disseminate our analysis of this data to local communities of color, the broader community, as well as elected officials charged with the responsibility to hold public education institutions accountable for equitable student outcomes. We emphasize that our main purpose in disseminating these reports is to inform our local communities regarding the status of our students in Omaha’s education institutions and to raise the community’s consciousness of necessary policy changes. We hope that our work contributes to the process of decolonizing our communities and their public institutions, which is critical for our self-determination as Blacks, Chicanos/Latinos, and Native Americans. This decolonization process is essential due to the decades of systemic and institutional racism to which our communities have been subjected, and the continuing hindering conditions in our communities and public institutions that result from such racism.

## THE METHODOLOGY OF OUR REPORTS

The MORE Data/Research Committee began this project by conceptualizing data on UNO student outcomes, longitudinal and disaggregated by race/ethnicity, that would provide directions toward the degree of equity at the university. The following variables were identified:

### **Enrollment**

- Most recent five years of enrollment data—overall undergraduate students disaggregated by ethnicity-race
- Most recent five years of enrollment data—overall graduate students disaggregated by ethnicity-race

### **Student Outcomes**

- For most recent five years, disaggregated by ethnicity-race--undergraduates:
  - a. Percentage of 1<sup>st</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> year retention
  - b. Percentage of five-year graduation for first-time freshmen and three-year graduation for transfers
  - c. GPA at graduation
- For most recent five years, disaggregated by ethnicity-race: percentage of undergraduate students on academic probation
- For most recent five years, disaggregated by ethnicity-race: percentage of undergraduate students participating in honors programs
- For most recent five years, disaggregated by ethnicity-race: percentage of undergraduate students that matriculate to graduate or professional school
- For most recent five years, disaggregated by ethnicity-race: undergraduate students participating in the Goodrich Scholarship Program
- For most recent five years, disaggregated by ethnicity-race: undergraduate students receiving a UNO scholarship, excluding athletics

Such variables were extracted from scholarly literature on campus climate and student achievement in higher education.

After identifying individual UNO staff in leadership positions, MORE contacted those staff by email requesting the above data. Our assumption was that if UNO indeed was committed to anti-racism and racial equity, they would have such data readily available for their use in developing institutional strategies that provide more supportive conditions for underrepresented students of color. However, the response from UNO officials indicated that our assumption was incorrect. Rather than providing any data directly to MORE, UNO officials sent us a number of links to websites that contained countless data elements on UNO students, faculty, staff, budgets, etc. Some of these links were to reports that UNO submits annually to state or federal sources to maintain their standing as an accredited, public university that receives tax revenue.

The members of MORE's Data/Research Committee examined UNO's data to identify measures of institutional equity in student outcomes. The committee compiled tables to display this data, which are included in this report. The committee then arranged a meeting with UNO officials to discuss the data along with their description of institutional strategies to increase equitable outcomes. Before the meeting, MORE sent a set of questions to UNO's officials to obtain clarity regarding the university's equity efforts. A summary of the meeting's content is provided in our "Results" section of this report. A similar summary was sent to UNO officials following the meeting with a request for their response. Although their follow-up email promised a response, UNO officials did not provide one.

## **RESULTS**

### **Enrollment: Undergraduate and Graduate**

The enrollment of undergraduate and graduate students, respectively, is an important indicator of equitable access to a public institution such as UNO. The enrollment of historically underrepresented students is also a variable that contributes to the persistence and success of those students. Higher education scholarship documents the positive effect of a "critical mass" of underrepresented students. Without such representation in enrollment, underrepresented students are more likely to perceive themselves as marginalized and/or excluded (Gonzalez Stokas, 2023;

Smith, 2015; Tinto, 1993). To measure the degree of racial equity in student enrollment at UNO, it is useful to consider the representation of various racial-ethnic groups among the population served by UNO.

**Table 1: 2021 Demographic Benchmarks—State, County, and City**

	State of Nebraska	Douglas County	City of Omaha
White	62%	68%	66%
Black	12%	11%	12%
Chicano/Latino	19%	14%	15%
Native	1%	1%	<1%
Asian	6%	4%	4%

Although there is some variance across state, county, and city demographics, the mean representation of racial-ethnic communities is 65 percent white, 12 percent Black, 16 percent Chicano/Latino, 1 percent Native American, and 5 percent Asian. We utilize these mean percentages to establish the degree of parity or equitable representation in the enrollment of UNO students.

### *Undergraduate Enrollment*

The tables below (Tables 2-6), taken from UNO’s institutional data, provide a five-year perspective on the undergraduate enrollment at UNO from 2017 to 2021. For **Black students**, first-time freshmen (“Degree Seeking 1<sup>st</sup> time 1<sup>st</sup> year”) range from 6 percent of those new students in 2017 to 9 percent in 2021. The overall size of UNO’s freshman class fluctuated during those five years. As a percentage of overall undergraduate enrollment, Black students ranged from 6 percent to 7 percent across those five years. Considering the demographic benchmark of 12 percent as a comparison, Black students have been and continue to be woefully underrepresented as UNO undergraduates, with miniscule increase over five years.

Among **Chicano/Latino students**, freshmen ranged from 16 percent of the first-year class in 2017 to 19 percent in 2021, with a high point at 21 percent in 2020. Among total campus enrollment of undergraduates, they increased from 12 percent to 16 percent during those five years. Their most degree of representation in enrollment provides them exact parity with local Chicano/Latino demographics, and their recent first-year enrollment indicates that they may continue to meet or exceed such parity.

Although **Native American students** are a relatively small population in Nebraska, at approximately 1 percent of state, county, and city demographics, their numbers among UNO undergraduates are embarrassingly low. Their total of first-time freshmen ranged from four students to nine students, with seven Native American freshmen enrolled in 2021. Accordingly, our First Nation peoples have consistently been less than 1 percent of UNO’s undergraduate enrollment.

**Asian-Americans** are a consistent percentage of UNO enrollment from 2017-2021. For the most part, they make up 4-6 percent of undergraduates, which reflects their representation among state, county, and city populations. The UNO data includes a separate category, not reported here, for international students, so it is assumed that the groups included in these tables are all domestic students. **Pacific Islander** students consistently make up less than 1 percent of enrollment. The category of “**two or more races**” makes up 5 percent of enrollment in virtually every year of this data, which does not indicate if such students are part white or a combination of peoples of color.

White people make up an average of approximately 65 percent of state, county, and city populations. However, the percentage of **white students** among UNO enrollments diminished across the five years of data. White students were 62 percent of new freshmen and 67 percent of total enrollment in 2017, with a decrease to 58 percent and 62 percent, respectively, by 2021.

Thus, it appears that Blacks are the most seriously underrepresented community among UNO's enrollment. Whites are slightly underrepresented although they may also be reflected among the "two or more races" category. Although Native Americans are not clearly underrepresented as a percentage, the total numbers of enrollment are especially small considering that they are the original inhabitants of Omaha. Chicano/Latino enrollment is higher than their percentage of state or local populations and is increasing.

**Table 2: University of Nebraska Omaha: Undergraduate Student Enrollment by Race-Ethnicity, 2021**

	Degree Seeking 1 <sup>st</sup> time 1 <sup>st</sup> year	Degree Seeking Undergraduates
Black	197 (9%)	875 (7%)
Chicano/Latino	402 (19%)	1,943 (16%)
Native	7 (<1%)	40 (<1%)
White	1,250 (58%)	7,461 (62%)
Asian	128 (6%)	567 (5%)
Pacific Islander	1 (<1%)	12 (<1%)
Two or more races	99 (5%)	565 (5%)
Total	2,166	12,010

From: UNO website, "Common Data Sets"

**Table 3: University of Nebraska Omaha: Undergraduate Student Enrollment by Race-Ethnicity, 2020**

	Degree Seeking 1 <sup>st</sup> time 1 <sup>st</sup> year	Degree Seeking Undergraduates
Black	166 (7%)	870 (7%)
Chicano/Latino	465 (21%)	1,980 (16%)
Native	6 (<1%)	32 (<1%)
White	1,287 (58%)	7,814 (62%)
Asian	127 (8%)	563 (4%)
Pacific Islander	4 (<1%)	18 (<1%)
Two or more races	108 (5%)	604 (5%)
Total	2,223	12,535

From: UNO website, "Common Data Sets"

**Table 4: University of Nebraska Omaha: Undergraduate Student Enrollment by Race-Ethnicity, 2019**

	Degree Seeking 1 <sup>st</sup> time 1 <sup>st</sup> year	Degree Seeking Undergraduates
Black	154 (7%)	800 (7%)
Chicano/Latino	387 (19%)	1,746 (14%)
Native	7 (<1%)	39 (<1%)
White	1,232 (60%)	7,691 (64%)
Asian	113 (5%)	537 (5%)
Pacific Islander	0 (<1%)	13 (<1%)
Two or more races	90 (4%)	548 (5%)
Total	2,067	12,063

From: UNO website, “Common Data Sets”

**Table 5: University of Nebraska Omaha: Undergraduate Student Enrollment by Race-Ethnicity, 2018**

	Degree Seeking 1 <sup>st</sup> time 1 <sup>st</sup> year	Degree Seeking Undergraduates
Black	154 (7%)	780 (6%)
Chicano/Latino	409 (19%)	1,685 (14%)
Native	9 (<1%)	35 (<1%)
White	1,304 (60%)	8,000 (65%)
Asian	101 (5%)	489 (4%)
Pacific Islander	0 (<1%)	12 (<1%)
Two or more races	89 (4%)	559 (5%)
Total	2,151	12,230

From: UNO website, “Common Data Sets”

**Table 6: University of Nebraska Omaha: Undergraduate Student Enrollment by Race-Ethnicity, 2017**

	Degree Seeking 1 <sup>st</sup> time 1 <sup>st</sup> year	Degree Seeking Undergraduates
Black	129 (6%)	750 (6%)
Chicano/Latino	330 (16%)	1,525 (12%)
Native	4 (<1%)	29 (<1%)
White	1,290 (62%)	8,308 (67%)
Asian	96 (5%)	437 (4%)
Pacific Islander	6 (<1%)	16 (<1%)
Two or more races	106 (5%)	551 (4%)
Total	2,065	12,333

From: UNO website, “Common Data Sets”

### *Graduate Enrollment*

UNO’s data shows two semesters of recent graduate student enrollment from fall 2021 and spring 2021. Black student enrollment is only about one-third the percentage of Blacks in state and local populations while Chicano/Latino enrollment is about one-half. Native American

students total a single digit in both semesters while Asian students are slightly underrepresented compared to population numbers. Pacific Islanders make up less than 1 percent of enrollment. Unlike undergraduate enrollment, white students at the graduate level are overrepresented.

**Table 7: University of Nebraska Omaha: Graduate Student Enrollment by Race-Ethnicity, Fall 2021**

Black	127 (4%)
Chicano/Latino	265 (8%)
Native	4 (<1%)
White	2,216 (71%)
Asian	88 (3%)
Pacific Islander	2 (<1%)
Two or more races	107 (3%)
Total	3,131

UNO Website, “Fact Book 2021”

**Table 8: University of Nebraska Omaha: Graduate Student Enrollment by Race-Ethnicity, Spring 2021**

Black	136 (4%)
Chicano/Latino	211 (7%)
Native	3 (<1%)
White	2,222 (73%)
Asian	85 (3%)
Pacific Islander	4 (<1%)
Two or more races	91 (3%)
Total	3,057

UNO Website, “Fact Book 2021”

## Degrees Conferred

Degrees conferred and graduation rates, respectively, represent arguably the most important academic outcomes for college and university students (Garcia, 2023). UNO’s data provides a five-year perspective on the percentage of each ethnic-racial group among students that earned a bachelor’s degree, master’s degree, or doctoral degree from 2016-17 to 2020-21. We compare the percentage of degrees conferred with each group’s representation among undergraduate or graduate enrollment.

### *Bachelor’s Degrees Conferred*

While Black students make up 6-7 percent of undergraduate enrollment at UNO, their percentage of bachelor’s degrees conferred was consistently 5 percent except for 2016-17. Thus, they were slightly underrepresented among degrees conferred. Chicanos/Latinos were approximately 16-19 percent of enrollment but only 4-5 percent of bachelor’s degrees conferred, a significant underrepresentation. Native American bachelor’s degrees conferred were miniscule, with a high of 11 total degrees conferred in 2016-17 and a low of 4 degrees in 2020-21.

Asian American bachelor’s degrees were 3-4 percent of the total, slightly less than the Asian American percentage of undergraduate enrollment. Pacific Islanders’ bachelor’s degrees conferred mirrored their percentage of undergraduate enrollment at less than 1 percent. The



percentage of bachelor's degrees conferred by "two or more races" was higher than their undergraduate enrollment and increased steadily from 6 percent to 11 percent during the five years of data.

White students made up slightly more than 60 percent of undergraduate enrollment by 2021. Their percentage of bachelor's degrees conferred was 75 percent in 2016-17 and steadily decreased to 69 percent by 2020-21, an overrepresentation compared to enrollment. Whites and two or more races were the only groups that were overrepresented among bachelor's degrees conferred. Chicanos/Latinos were the group most underrepresented among that outcome while Blacks and Asian Americans, respectively, has lower rates of underrepresentation.

### *Graduate Degrees Conferred*

UNO's provides data on both master's and doctoral degrees conferred over the same five year period as data on Bachelor's Degrees. Black students are 2-4 percent of master's degrees conferred, a level close to their graduate enrollment at the university, 4 percent. While Chicano/Latino students make up approximately 8 percent of graduate enrollment, they are only 1-2 percent of master's degrees conferred. Native American students are virtually invisible in the data on both graduate enrollment and degrees conferred. Asian American students are close to equitable representation among master's degrees conferred. White students are represented at a level among master's degrees conferred, 69-74 percent, close to their graduate enrollment level of 71-73 percent.

The number of UNO doctoral degrees conferred is small, ranging from 29 to 40 total degrees. Thus, the number and percentage for each ethnic-racial group fluctuates. White students earned 65-80 percent of doctoral degrees from 2016-2021. The number of each student group of color is so small as to be less than 1 percent of doctoral degrees conferred in many of the years covered by this data.

**Table 9: University of Nebraska Omaha: Degrees Conferred by Race-Ethnicity, 2020-21**

	Bachelor's Degree	Master's Degree	Doctoral Degree
Black	121 (5%)	30 (4%)	1 (3%)
Chicano/Latino	105 (4%)	12 (2%)	0 (<1%)
Native	4 (<1%)	2 (<1%)	0 (<1%)
White	1,636 (69%)	577 (73%)	26 (81%)
Asian	87 (4%)	16 (2%)	1 (3%)
Pacific Islander	4 (<1%)	0 (<1%)	0 (<1%)
Two or more races	267 (11%)	66 (8%)	1 (3%)
Total	2,372	793	32

UNO Website, "Completions Report, 2020-21"

**Table 10: University of Nebraska Omaha: Degrees Conferred by Race-Ethnicity, 2019-20**

	Bachelor's Degree	Master's Degree	Doctoral Degree
Black	109 (5%)	26 (3%)	3 (8%)
Chicano/Latino	104 (5%)	10 (1%)	0 (<1%)
Native	4 (<1%)	2 (<1%)	0 (<1%)
White	1,592 (72%)	647 (74%)	24 (65%)
Asian	65 (3%)	30 (3%)	0 (<1%)
Pacific Islander	3 (<1%)	1 (<1%)	0 (<1%)
Two or more races	216 (10%)	51 (6%)	0 (<1%)
Total	2,224	162	37

UNO Website, "Completions Report, 2020-21"

**Table 11: University of Nebraska Omaha: Degrees Conferred by Race-Ethnicity, 2018-19**

	Bachelor's Degree	Master's Degree	Doctoral Degree
Black	112 (5%)	34 (4%)	0 (<1%)
Chicano/Latino	104 (5%)	9 (1%)	0 (<1%)
Native	5 (<1%)	1 (<1%)	0 (<1%)
White	1,612 (71%)	622 (70%)	30 (73%)
Asian	83 (4%)	18 (2%)	2 (5%)
Pacific Islander	1 (<1%)	0 (<1%)	0 (<1%)
Two or more races	211 (9%)	55 (6%)	5 (12%)
Total	2,269	891	41

UNO Website, "Completions Report, 2020-21"

**Table 12: University of Nebraska Omaha: Degrees Conferred by Race-Ethnicity, 2017-18**

	Bachelor's Degree	Master's Degree	Doctoral Degree
Black	124 (5%)	26 (3%)	0 (<1%)
Chicano/Latino	95 (4%)	12 (1%)	0 (<1%)
Native	8 (<1%)	1 (<1%)	0 (<1%)
White	1,792 (74%)	609 (69%)	29 (73%)
Asian	64 (3%)	13 (1%)	0 (<1%)
Pacific Islander	1 (<1%)	0 (<1%)	1 (3%)
Two or more races	187 (8%)	35 (4%)	1 (3%)
Total	2,419	880	40

UNO Website, "Completions Report, 2020-21"

**Table 13: University of Nebraska Omaha: Degrees Conferred by Race-Ethnicity, 2016-17**

	Bachelor's Degree	Master's Degree	Doctoral Degree
Black	65 (3%)	19 (2%)	1 (3%)
Chicano/Latino	101 (4%)	10 (1%)	0 (<1%)
Native	11 (<1%)	1 (<1%)	0 (<1%)
White	1,793 (75%)	622 (69%)	20 (69%)
Asian	65 (3%)	19 (2%)	1 (3%)
Pacific Islander	1 (<1%)	0 (<1%)	0 (<1%)
Two or more races	146 (6%)	37 (4%)	2 (7%)
Total	2,405	907	29

UNO Website, "Completions Report, 2020-21"

## Graduation Rates

Graduation rates represent a specific, powerful measure of student success in higher education (Mayhew et al., 2016). UNO's data base provides graduation rates for the campus overall as well as rates disaggregated by ethnic-racial group. The graduation rates are provided at four-, five-, and six-year rates during a five-year period from 2011 to 2015. Some groups are especially impacted by the need to work during college, limited cultural and social capital that enables students to choose a major in a timely fashion, a transition to an institutional culture that favors the dominant ethnic-racial group, and other variables that contribute to a delay in graduation (Bowen et al., 2009; Charles et al., 2009; Ibarra, 2001; Smith, 2015). Thus, MORE focuses on the 6-year graduation rates of UNO students as a basis for comparison. We compare the differences in these 6-year graduation rates among ethnic-racial groups at UNO, using overall campus graduation rates as benchmark.

The campus 6-year graduation rate was 47 percent in 2011. By 2014, it rose to 52 percent and then dropped slightly to 51 percent in 2015. It is important to note that only a few ethnic-racial groups had enough raw numbers of students to generate a meaningful graduation rate. Others, e.g., Native Americans and Pacific Islanders, had very small numbers of graduates and their graduation rates fluctuated wildly as a result. During the five-year period in which data is available, Native American graduates ranged from 1-5 students and their graduation rate ranged from less than 1 percent to 100 percent. Thus, we can tell very little about Native American students' success from this data. Similarly, the graduation rates of Pacific Island students ranged from less than 1 percent (2 students) to 100 percent (1 student).

The numbers of Asian American students were higher, and their 6-year graduation rates ranged from 51 percent to 62 percent by 2015, higher than the campus average. In each of the five years of data, Asian Americans had the highest graduation rates of all ethnic-racial groups.

Black students' graduation rates ranged from 27 percent to a high of 39 percent (36 percent by 2015), lower than the overall campus. The graduation rate for Chicanos/Latinos reached 40 percent by 2015 after ranging from 37 percent to 45 percent, lower than the campus' average in each year of data.

The graduation rate of white students met or exceeded the campus average in all five years of data. Their graduation rate ranged from 48 percent in 2011 to 54 percent in 2015.

**Table 14: University of Nebraska Omaha: Graduation Rates by Race-Ethnicity, 2015 Cohort**

	Total Number	4-year	5-year	6-year
Black	163	10%	27%	36%
Chicano/Latino	305	9%	35%	40%
Native	5	<1%	25%	25%
White	1,249	29%	47%	54%
Asian	74	22%	58%	62%
Pacific Islander	4	67%	67%	100%
Two or more races	51	27%	47%	54%
Total	1,887			51%

From UNO Website, "IPEDS GradRate," 2021-22 Report and Fact Book 2021

**Table 15: University of Nebraska Omaha: Graduation Rates by Race-Ethnicity, 2014 Cohort**

	Total Number	4-year	5-year	6-year
Black	78	9%	22%	32%
Chicano/Latino	178	15%	38%	45%
Native	2	<1%	<1%	<1%
White	896	27%	46%	52%
Asian	38	18%	50%	55%
Pacific Islander	1	100%	100%	100%
Two or more races	69	28%	41%	46%
Total	1,262			52%

From UNO Website, "IPEDS GradRate," 2021-22 Report and Fact Book 2021

**Table 16: University of Nebraska Omaha: Graduation Rates by Race-Ethnicity, 2013 Cohort**

	Total Number	4-year	5-year	6-year
Black	83	8%	19%	27%
Chicano/Latino	205	13%	35%	42%
Native	4	<1%	25%	25%
White	1,028	27%	48%	54%
Asian	43	21%	42%	56%
Pacific Islander	2	<1%	<1%	50%
Two or more races	67	19%	37%	43%
Total	1,432			52%

From UNO Website, "IPEDS GradRate," 2021-22 Report and Fact Book 2021

**Table 17: University of Nebraska Omaha: Graduation Rates by Race-Ethnicity, 2012 Cohort**

	Total Number	4-year	5-year	6-year
Black	90	9%	29%	36%
Chicano/Latino	164	9%	32%	43%
Native	1	100%	100%	100%
White	1,029	24%	46%	51%
Asian	59	19%	44%	51%
Pacific Islander	1	<1%	<1%	<1%
Two or more races	66	17%	41%	52%
Total	1,410			49%

From UNO Website, "IPEDS GradRate," 2021-22 Report and Fact Book 2021

**Table 18: University of Nebraska Omaha: Graduation Rates by Race-Ethnicity, 2011 Cohort**

	Total Number	4-year	5-year	6-year
Black	82	10%	32%	39%
Chicano/Latino	156	13%	30%	37%
Native	3	<1%	67%	67%
White	1,023	21%	41%	48%
Asian	31	26%	45%	52%
Pacific Islander	1	<1%	<1%	<1%
Two or more races	64	17%	36%	39%
Total	1,360			47%

From UNO Website, "IPEDS GradRate," 2021-22 Report and Fact Book 2021

## Faculty and Staff

One of the institutional strategies used by colleges and universities across the U.S. to improve racially equitable student outcomes is to increase faculty and staff diversity. Scholarly literature documents the positive contribution of diverse faculty and staff to the success of underrepresented students such as Blacks, Chicanos/Latinos, and Native Americans (Bristol and Martin-Fernandez, 2019; Garcia, 2023; Harper, 2021; Hurtado and Alvarado, 2015; Smith, 2015). Faculty of color have shown a greater likelihood of teaching diverse curriculum, conducting research on diverse communities, and using active, culturally inclusive pedagogy in the classroom (Hurtado and Alvarado, 2015). However, such scholarship also documents the slow progress in achieving greater diversity of administrators, faculty, and staff in higher education (Gonzalez Stokas, 2023).

### *Faculty*

UNO provides data on the ethnic-racial composition of its faculty from 2012 to 2016 and from fall 2020 to fall 2021. The data from 2012 to 2016 contains full-time faculty representation but does not disaggregate between faculty levels, e.g., full professors, assistant professors. MORE uses the undergraduate enrollment data as a benchmark to assess the degree of faculty diversity at UNO, with the assumption that the full-time faculty of a public university should reflect its student body.

Black faculty make up 4-5 percent of the total UNO faculty from 2012 to 2016, compared the Black student enrollment of 6-9 percent. Thus, Black faculty are slightly underrepresented. Chicano/Latino faculty are consistently 3 percent of faculty throughout the five years of data, far below the 16-19 percent of student enrollment. Native American faculty representation seems to reflect the less than 1 percent level of student enrollment, but the numbers themselves are extremely low. Asian American and Pacific Island faculty are combined in one category in the faculty data, and are consistently overrepresented among the faculty compared to student enrollment. While white student enrollment decreased from 67 to 62 percent during a five-year period, white faculty representation was between 76 and 78 percent from 2012 to 2016, an overrepresentation.

The more recent faculty data from 2020 and 2021 is disaggregated by professional level so that faculty at different levels of the tenure-track process, i.e., full professors, associate professors, and assistant professors can be compared along with part-time instructors and

lecturers. The representation of tenure-track faculty is more critical, as those professors serve on faculty senate committees that help administrators determine institutional policies that impact underrepresented students of color. In contrast to instructors and lecturers, tenure-track faculty also determine the research agendas of academic departments, including the degree to which they reflect or marginalize communities of color.

In 2020 and 2021, there were only 4 Black professors at UNO, the highest level of faculty. They represented only 3 percent of the total of professors. There were 4 Chicano/Latino professors in 2020 and 3 in 2021, representing only 3 and 2 percent of the total. Thus, Black and Chicano/Latino professors, respectively, were well underrepresented among UNO professors in recent data. There was only one Native American professor in each of the two years, representing less than 1 percent of the total. Asian American/Pacific Island professors were significantly overrepresented at 17 and 18 percent of the total. White professors were 71 and 76 percent of the total, above the representation of white students enrolled.

Blacks were slightly underrepresented among associate professors and assistant professors. Chicanos/Latinos were considerably underrepresented among both categories of faculty. The statistical “N” for Native Americans was so low that it skews any consideration of representation among faculty. Asian American/Pacific Island faculty are slightly less overrepresented in these two categories compared to professors. Whites remain quite overrepresented in these two categories as well.

**Table 19: University of Nebraska Omaha: Full-Time Faculty by Race-Ethnicity, Fall 2021**

	All Faculty	Professor	Associate Professor	Assistant Professor	Instructor	Lecturer
Total	665	152	152	168	110	55
Black	29 (4%)	4 (3%)	7 (5%)	10 (6%)	5 (5%)	2 (4%)
Chicano/Latino	36 (5%)	3 (2%)	9 (6%)	14 (8%)	5 (5%)	5 (9%)
Native	5 (1%)	1 (<1%)	3 (2%)	0 (<1%)	0 (<1%)	1 (2%)
White	471 (71%)	115 (76%)	114 (75%)	91 (54%)	90 (82%)	43 (78%)
Asian/Pacific Islander	60 (9%)	28 (18%)	11 (7%)	12 (7%)	3 (3%)	1 (2%)
Two or more races	7 (1%)	1 (<1%)	1 (<1%)	2 (1%)	2 (2%)	1 (2%)

UNO Website, “Fact Book 2021”

**Table 20: University of Nebraska Omaha: Full-Time Faculty by Race-Ethnicity, Fall 2020**

	All Faculty	Professor	Associate Professor	Assistant Professor	Instructor	Lecturer
Total	609	157	137	99	96	55
Black	22 (8%)	4 (3%)	7 (5%)	5 (5%)	4 (4%)	1 (2%)
Chicano/Latino	29 (5%)	4 (3%)	9 (7%)	7 (7%)	4 (4%)	4 (7%)
Native	6 (<1%)	1 (<1%)	4 (13%)	0 (<1%)	0 (<1%)	1 (2%)
White	448 (74%)	111 (71%)	120 (88%)	82 (83%)	83 (86%)	31 (56%)
Asian/Pacific Islander	52 (9%)	27 (17%)	10 (7%)	11 (11%)	1 (1%)	0 (<1%)
Two or more races	9 (1%)	2 (1%)	2 (1%)	1 (1%)	4 (4%)	0 (<1%)

UNO Website, "Fact Book 2021"

**Table 21: University of Nebraska Omaha: Full-time Faculty by Race-Ethnicity, 2012-2016**

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Black	23 (5%)	23 (4%)	21 (4%)	22 (4%)	27 (5%)
Chicano/Latino	16 (3%)	18 (3%)	19 (3%)	17 (3%)	18 (3%)
Native	11 (2%)	11 (2%)	12 (2%)	11 (2%)	12 (2)
White	391 (78%)	404 (78%)	424 (78%)	414 (77%)	429 (76%)
Asian/Pacific Islander	37 (7%)	39 (8%)	44 (8%)	48 (9%)	52 (9%)
Two or more races	1 (<1%)	2 (<1%)	3 (<1%)	3 (<1%)	4 (<1%)
Total	501	520	546	537	566

From UNO Website, "Diversity of UNO Faculty, Staff, Students 2010-2016"

### *Non-Faculty Staff*

The representation of UNO staff by ethnic-racial group is provided for the years 2012-2016. The non-faculty staff are often the most frequent point of contact for underrepresented students, providing academic advising, counseling, program services, campus employment, and other resources that are designed to facilitate the adjustment and success of those students. It is imperative that the staff reflects student enrollment.

The representation of Black staff across these five years is very close to that of the undergraduate student enrollment. On the other hand, Chicano/Latino staff are significantly underrepresented, 3-5 percent compared to 16-19% of enrollment. Native American staff are few in number, consistently less than 1 percent. Asian American staff are also slightly underrepresented compared to enrollment. The white staff at UNO are highly overrepresented, at 81-85 percent compared to 62-67 percent of student enrollment.

**Table 22: University of Nebraska Omaha: Non-Faculty Staff by Race-Ethnicity, 2012-2016**

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Black	67 (8%)	66 (7%)	71 (7%)	80 (8%)	90 (8%)
Chicano/Latino	29 (3%)	29 (3%)	32 (3%)	41 (4%)	56 (5%)
Native	5 (<1%)	5 (<1%)	7 (<1%)	6 (<1%)	6 (<1%)
White	754 (85%)	806 (85%)	821 (84%)	868 (83%)	881 (81%)
Asian	26 (3%)	30 (3%)	26 (3%)	27 (3%)	30 (3%)
Two or more races	2 (<1%)	6 (<1%)	6 (<1%)	8 (<1%)	7 (<1%)
Total	887	944	972	1,045	1,083

From UNO Website, “Diversity of UNO Faculty, Staff, Students 2010-2016”

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the data, the degree of ethnic-racial equity at UNO appears to be quite uneven and severely lacking in several critical areas. Equally troubling is UNO’s reluctance to maintain and disseminate data on student outcomes that would provide a critical perspective on the university’s equity, diversity, and inclusion. Such data should be routinely maintained and monitored by university leadership to inform institutional strategies designed to increase the success of underrepresented students of color.

UNO’s data reveals both positive and negative results. A reiteration of the salient findings from this data includes the following:

- The undergraduate enrollment of Blacks is unacceptably low, approximately half of parity with local demographics. On the other hand, the undergraduate enrollment of Chicano/Latino students is strong, above parity.
- The undergraduate enrollment of Native Americans is miniscule, and it hampers the ability to analyze other critical outcomes such as degrees conferred and graduation rates for Native students.
- Whites appear to be underrepresented in undergraduate enrollment, but their numbers might also be reflected in the university’s “mixed races” category.
- There is a serious underrepresentation of Black, Chicano/Latino, and Native American students in UNO’s graduate enrollment.
- White students are overrepresented in bachelor’s degrees conferred while Black, Chicano/Latino, and Native American students are underrepresented. Chicanos/Latinos are represented at especially low levels.
- Black, Chicano/Latino (especially), and Native Americans are underrepresented in graduate degrees conferred.
- There are significant gaps in graduation rates, with Blacks and Chicanos/Latinos having lower rates than whites and the campus average in all years of UNO data.
- Blacks, Chicanos/Latinos in particular, and Native Americans are underrepresented among UNO’s total faculty.
- There is significant underrepresentation of Blacks, Chicanos/Latinos, and Native Americans among UNO’s full professors. Those groups, especially Chicanos/Latinos, are also underrepresented among the university’s associate and assistant professors, respectively.
- Native Americans and Chicanos/Latinos are underrepresented among the staff at UNO.



These findings generate several recommendations by MORE, including those for UNO's leadership and others for state and federal elected officials charged with ensuring public accountability for the university's service to communities of color. These recommendations are made in the context of a thorough recognition of the characteristics of our local Black, Chicano/Latino, and Native American communities, including their long historic experience as subordinate ethnic groups subject to systemic and institutional racism, communities that have suffered from subsequent educational underachievement, and that continue to grow as a portion of the Omaha metropolitan population.

*Recommendations for UNO and the Nebraska Board of Regents:*

### **Institutional Mission and Leadership**

- As a requirement for any public institution of higher education that receives government funds, including funds from state, county, and/or federal sources, UNO should provide to the public, including elected officials, data, and information on the dimensions of equity identified by this MORE report. None of this data or information should be withheld from the public.
- UNO's web site information and our contact with their institutional leadership indicates that the university has a low level of underrepresented people of color among their leadership staff. UNO should develop and implement strategies designed to increase the representation of underrepresented people of color in high administrative positions. These include positions in which individuals serve as part of the president's cabinet. Institutional strategies should include mentoring and leadership development programs that identify underrepresented staff and provide them experience and education to increase their qualifications to serve at the highest administrative levels.
- UNO should have a strategic plan that places ethnic-racial diversity, equity, and inclusion among the highest priorities. Such plans should emphasize the role of ethnic-racial diversity, equity, and inclusion to the institutional mission and its essential contribution to institutional excellence. UNO's plan should also specifically identify the ethnic-racial groups, i.e., Blacks, Chicanos/Latinos, and Native Americans, that have been historically neglected by the university and that deserve reparations in terms of institutional strategies. If necessary, UNO should contract with external consultants to develop such a strategic plan.
- UNO's chief diversity officer should report directly to the president. This person should have a substantive budget and staff to monitor, report on, and improve ethnic-racial diversity and equity at all levels of the institution. To ensure the position's accountability, the president should appoint and utilize an ethnically-racially **inclusive** community advisory group composed of community members with a vested interest and proven track record of advocacy for equity in higher education. The advisory group should issue an annual report of its goals, activities, and findings.
- UNO should have an inclusive advisory group of Blacks, Chicanos/Latinos, and Native Americans with which the president and other institutional leadership interacts regularly. Individuals appointed to such advisory groups should demonstrate experience and knowledge regarding the experience of underrepresented students in higher education rather than passive individuals that merely rubber-stamp institutional policies and practices. The advisory group should monitor all manifestations of ethnic-racial diversity and equity at the institution and disseminate an annual written report on their findings.

## Underrepresented Student Enrollment

- Local public colleges and universities should develop and implement a plan to maximize the enrollment of underrepresented students, particularly Black and Native American students, respectively. Such “critical mass” is a variable that contributes to the subsequent success of our students (Hurtado and Alvarez, 2015). Such a plan should be developed by a broad section of the campus that includes both academic and student affairs. Specific institutional entities should be responsible for implementing enrollment strategies. The group responsible for planning enrollment strategies should assess annually those strategies as well as annual enrollment data.
- UNO should implement only anti-racist admissions criteria and processes. Standardized test results should not be utilized for undergraduate or graduate school admission.

## Underrepresented Student Success

- All public colleges and universities should develop and implement a comprehensive, detailed plan to maximize the success of underrepresented students. Success should be defined as “traditional” academic outcomes such as retention, achievement, transfer, and graduation, as well as “liberatory” outcomes such as ethnic identity development, an anti-racist consciousness, and a commitment to social justice (Garcia, 2023). Institutional strategies to maximize underrepresented student success should apply principles from the scholarly literature on our students, including validation (Rendon and Muñoz, 2011), sense of belonging (Strayhorn, 2012), community wealth (Solorzano and Delgado Bernal, 2001), bicultural social capital (Stanton-Salazar, 2001), and others.
- Student success plans should clearly identify one individual or entity with primary responsibility for underrepresented student success. Likewise, that individual or entity should have a clear reporting line to the campus’ chancellor or president along with the authority and resources necessary to fulfill their responsibility. Although efforts to maximize the success of underrepresented students should involve all segments of the campus, e.g., both academic and student affairs, the principle that “all faculty and staff are responsible for student success” is much too diffuse. Strict coordination of all efforts is necessary to ensure focused institutional energy and to avoid the duplication of services.
- All services designed to contribute to the success of Chicano/Latino students should be thoroughly assessed annually by individuals with knowledge of college student development. Ideally, such assessments should include both qualitative and quantitative dimensions.
- UNO should review annually its outcomes, including disaggregating data by ethnicity-race to compare dominant and subordinate groups, respectively.
- UNO should develop or expand model programs that have demonstrated success in facilitating positive outcomes among underrepresented students, including the Goodrich Scholarship Program.
- UNO should monitor the participation by underrepresented students of color in High Impact Practices (Kuh, 2008) that have demonstrated success with those students. These institutional strategies should be marketed heavily for underrepresented students, and their impact on those students’ success should be assessed and reported regularly.

## **Underrepresented Faculty**

- UNO should develop and implement a comprehensive, detailed plan to increase the representation of underrepresented faculty of color across all academic disciplines (Hurtado and Alvarado, 2015; Smith, 2015). If necessary, campuses should hire an external consultant to develop effective strategies.
- UNO should utilize “cluster hires” to ensure the hiring of a group of underrepresented faculty across academic disciplines that cluster around academic foci that are relevant to communities of color. These cluster hires should not be limited to STEM fields. Such cluster hires can avoid violation of state anti-discrimination laws by focusing on areas of research and/or teaching rather than the ethnicity of faculty themselves.
- UNO should develop and implement mentoring programs for new underrepresented faculty that ensure institutional support for them and maximize their retention as faculty. Such programs should carefully guide such faculty through the process of tenure and promotion.
- UNO should review its process and outcomes of faculty tenure, including the results of tenure decisions by faculty ethnicity for at least the past five years. Where necessary, UNO should change elements of their tenure process to ensure an anti-racist, equitable process.

## **Diverse Curriculum**

- UNO should make a commitment to fully support a department of Black Studies, a department of Chicano/Latino Studies, and a department of Native American Studies (Hurtado and Alvarado, 2015; Sleeter and Zavala, 2020; Smith, 2015).
- UNO should provide sufficient budget, faculty, and staff to ensure a broad array of courses offered by these departments. Their courses should be offered at both lower and upper division levels.
- At least one course in Black Studies, Chicano/Latino Studies, or Native American Studies should be required to earn a bachelor’s degree from UNO.

## *Recommendations for State or Federal Legislators*

- State legislators should demand that as a condition of public funding, all Nebraska state institutions must monitor access and success, defined broadly, for underrepresented students. The Nebraska Unicameral, through its appropriate committees, should publish their findings from these audits annually.
- The Nebraska Unicameral should develop an ad hoc legislative commission to analyze the current status of Nebraska’s underrepresented students in higher education. The legislature should pass an Interim Study Resolution and hold hearings throughout the state to gather and analyze input. The members of such a commission should include representatives from community organizations such as MORE that have demonstrated experience in higher education.
- Federal elected officials representing Nebraska should assign staff to maintain regular communication with community organizations such as MORE. Such communication should lead to greater collaboration that holds public higher education institutions accountable for effectively serving underrepresented students.

- Federal elected officials should implement regulations to prohibit public institutions of higher education such as UNO from receiving federal grants from entities such as the National Institute of Health and the National Science Foundation without those institutions providing evidence of anti-racist, supportive structures, policies, and practices toward underrepresented students. Institutions should be required to go beyond mere “nondiscrimination” to demonstrate actions that remove historic barriers to access and success for underrepresented students.

MORE provides these recommendations with both the hope and expectation that, with appropriate pressure from the communities of color that it serves, as well as oversight from elected officials, UNO will maximize institutional equity for underrepresented students of color. Such action on their part should contribute greatly to a higher rate of achievement for underrepresented students, and a stronger, more positive social and economic fabric for the entire state of Nebraska. For this to occur, one element is especially critical: education institutions such as UNO are **public**. They must be **transparent** about their service to underrepresented students and be **accountable** to our community.

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## APPENDICES

### **Appendix A**

Emailed by MORE to UNO staff before meeting, June 2023

Meeting: MORE Board Members and UNO Staff

June 16, 2023

#### Trends in UNO Data

For undergrad enrollment, (2017-21), whites are represented, Chicanos/Latinos well represented, Blacks significantly underrepresented, Native students underrepresented (benchmark is 2021 averages of populations of City of Omaha and Douglas County).

For graduate enrollment, whites are overrepresented while all people of color are underrepresented.

For bachelor's degrees conferred 2016-21, whites are overrepresented while all students of color are underrepresented, Blacks and Chicanos/Latinos significantly so (benchmark is undergraduate enrollment).

The master's degrees conferred 2016-21, feature minimal representation of Blacks and Chicanos/Latinos.

The 6-year graduation rate for the 2015 cohort was 51% for all students. Asian Americans (62%) and whites (54%) were above that total while Blacks (36%) and Chicanos/Latinos (40%) were well below the total.

For all faculty in 2021, in comparison to undergraduate enrollment, white faculty were overrepresented (71%) as were Asian American faculty (9%), while Blacks (4%) and Chicanos/Latinos (5%) were well underrepresented. There were only six Native faculty (<1%).

For all non-faculty staff in 2016, white staff were significantly overrepresented (81%) while Chicano/Latino staff were severely underrepresented (5%). There were only six Native staff (<1%).

#### Questions

1. How do you build and maintain an equitable degree of diversity in undergraduate and graduate enrollment? What are the benchmarks used to determine representation or parity?
2. What concrete steps can UNO take to build and maintain a diverse faculty and staff?
3. The data we've examined indicate racial/ethnic disparities in both undergraduate and graduate enrollment, degrees conferred (both Bachelor's and Master's), 6-year graduation, and the representation among both faculty and staff. To what factors do you attribute these disparities, and what specific actions would UNO have to take to eliminate these disparities?

4. Who are the individuals or units charged with responsibility to eliminate disparities in student outcomes based on race/ethnicity and what actions have they taken to do so?
5. Does the UNO strategic plan include specific actions to achieve equity in student outcomes among racial/ethnic groups as well as equity in achieving diverse faculty, diverse staff, and diverse curriculum? What are such actions and how are they measured?
6. How does UNO monitor and measure “progress” in achieving equity among students, faculty, and staff?
7. How do you identify populations of historically underserved students? What strategies do you implement to monitor their performance and enhance their outcomes?
8. How are incoming students assessed to identify a need for supportive interventions?
9. How does UNO monitor data disaggregated by race/ethnicity to identify disparities in the grade point averages of undergraduate students, as well as specific courses in which underrepresented students of color struggle at a disproportionate rate?
10. How would you describe the diversity of the UNO Chancellor’s cabinet?

## **Appendix B**

Emailed by MORE to UNO staff, July 2023

Meeting—UNO and MORE, June 16, 2023 (emailed to UNO staff after meeting)

Representing UNO: Keristiena Dodge, Rich Klein, A.T. Miller, Candace Batton.

Representing MORE: A’Jamal Byndon, Karen Abrams, Alex Johnson, Jack Dunn, Patrick Velasquez.

- The UNO representatives stated that the chancellor is restructuring aspects of UNO’s operations, including data driven strategies for service provision to students.
- Such changes are recent—it will take time for them to be reflected in institutional outcomes data.
- Data will be used for more than maintaining compliance with state and/or federal governments, but also to chart institutional policy and practice directions.
- There exists a need for a comprehensive data warehouse.
- UNO is utilizing some strategies developed by private sector sources.
- An expanded student success hub will center students beginning in the fall.
- The chancellor has initiated a strategic planning process with more emphasis on increasing student performance.
- The UNO strategic planning process could feature a town hall led by the chancellor that includes community entities such as MORE.
- Four years ago, UNO began taking more steps to diversify its faculty, including implicit bias training through the Center for Faculty Excellence.
- Department chairs are trained to conduct bias-free faculty searches; such searches are halted if the pool of finalists is not diverse.
- The UNO faculty hiring process is described in an online link.

- Uno has strategies for faculty retention, including affinity groups. However, those groups need to build trust with UNO leadership.
- UNO has Black and Chicano advisory groups, respectively, that interface with external communities.
- UNO has brought together representatives from Academic Affairs and Student Affairs, respectively, to analyze successful, small programs such as the Goodrich Scholarship Program, to identify elements that make it successful, to establish best practices, and to “scale up” those programs to establish an institutional culture that increases equity in student outcomes.

The UNO representatives asked, “what can we do?”

- The MORE representatives’ response: provide more transparency in providing data and identifying strategies to increase equity in student outcomes.
- We clarified: MORE will compile and disseminate a report to local communities of color along with local and state legislators that provides and analyzes UNO outcomes and strategies.
- MORE requests that UNO representatives provide key data, e.g., faculty composition disaggregated by ethnicity, and descriptions of programs and other strategies to increase equity, including the results of the analysis of UNO “model programs.”
- MORE also requests information on the UNO Black and Chicano advisory groups, respectively.
- The MORE representatives emphasized that UNO’s written response to the questions we submitted would be very helpful to ensure accurate data and descriptions of institutional strategies in the pending MORE report.

## **Appendix C**

Email response from UNO staff, August 2023

Dear Dr. Velasquez,

Thank you for bringing MORE and UNO leadership teams together to discuss the work our university is doing to support the development of learners across the Omaha area.

While we are not able to provide question-by-question responses with the data we have available, the following summary will provide an overview of our ongoing efforts to improve diversity and equity among students, faculty, and staff:

Overall, UNO’s strategic goal under Chancellor Li’s leadership is to enhance the social mobility of our learners through our workforce development and student performance efforts. As we discussed, the outcome of this university-wide, strategic effort will have a direct, positive impact on diversity and equity.

UNO is committed to fostering an environment in which all students, faculty, and staff thrive, and our diverse university community is supported. We aren’t where we want to be yet, but we have made great strides in the past two years. The establishment of the division of Institutional Effectiveness and Student Success in 2022 has made UNO more capable than ever before with tracking and



reporting data moving forward, so it may take time for our efforts to be noticeable in our data.

Ongoing campus-wide efforts that will support the diversity of our student body include exploring the adoption of competency-based learning models in some areas, diversity among our recruitment staff, addressing courses with high failure rates, and efforts to connect all students with paid internships, which supports retention for all students.

Similarly, efforts to recruit and maintain a diverse faculty population include recruitment training to reduce unconscious and implicit bias, a faculty mentoring program, a faculty DEAI advisory committee, and a faculty exit protocol.

I hope this overview, our conversation, and data we have provided are helpful in the creation of your report.

Thank you,

Keristiena

**Keristiena Dodge**

Chief of Staff

Office of the Chancellor

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