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on behalf of the SGDE DEI Committee - Andrew Curley, Eden Kinkaid, Sehdi Mansaray, Jennifer Mason and Dereka Rushbrook

INTRODUCTION

Amid a national reckoning with the realities of racial injustice, and the COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately affecting Black, Indigenous, and People of color (BIPOC) in the United States, the SGDE Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) committee reaffirms our commitment to taking actions that foster inclusive learning environments for students, faculty, and staff. We acknowledge the structural inequities that persist in higher education and this report is an attempt to open critical dialogue on additional work that needs to be done in SGDE to create equitable spaces. We are committed to making SGDE a place where everyone is heard and supported, with attention to elevating underrepresented and minoritized voices in our community.

In doing so, we present findings from the DEI climate survey that was administered to SGDE members between May 29 to July 31, 2020. The survey included open and close-ended questions about the perceptions of respondents on how the department was fairing in terms of DEI indicators, areas that needed improvement, areas where the school excelled, and suggestions on how to improve the current environment.

SURVEY DETAILS

In total, 53 SGDE members completed the survey, which included tenure and career-track faculty, graduate and undergraduate students, and staff. More than 41% (n=22) of survey respondents were graduate students followed by tenure-track faculty (n=15), undergraduate students (n=7), career-track and continuing status faculty (n=6), unspecified affiliation (n=2), and staff (n=1). In terms of survey response rate, Figure 1 shows that tenure-track faculty had the highest response rate at 68%, followed by graduate students (26%), career-track and continuing status faculty (25%), staff (5%), and undergraduate students (2%).

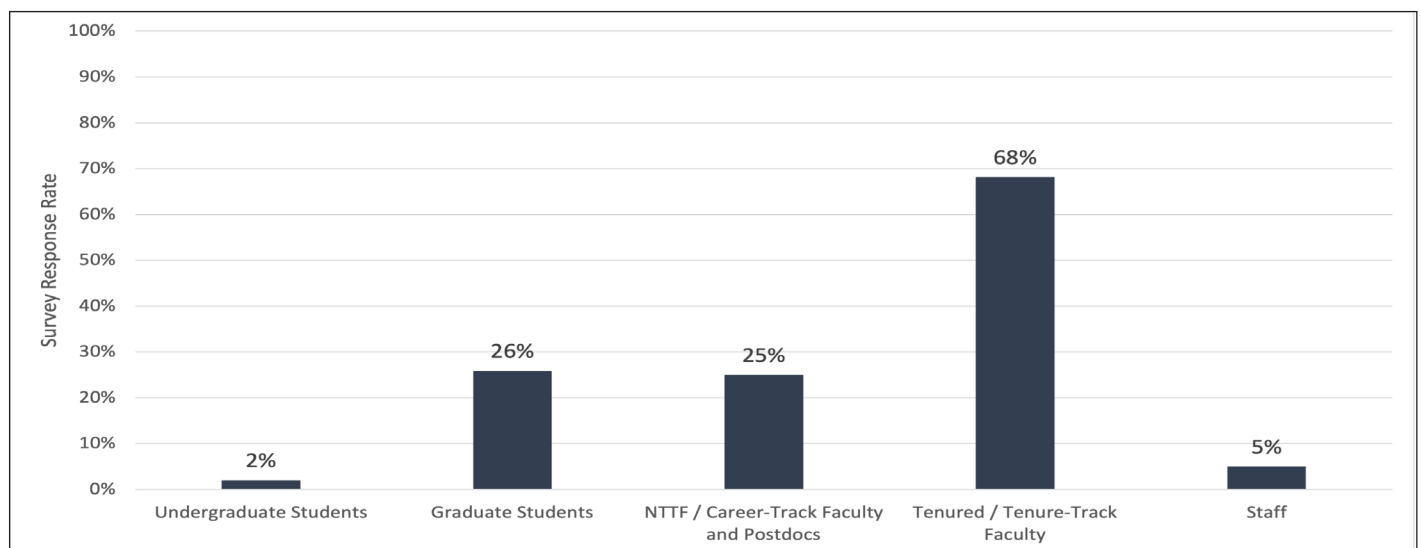


Figure 1: Survey Response Rate by Departmental Affiliation

The survey questions, listed in a series of topic-specific blocks, asked respondents to assess—using a likert scale (i.e., very well, somewhat well, neutral, somewhat poorly and very poorly)—the department’s performance on more than 25 components of DEI¹.

We acknowledge two key limitations of the survey. First, the response rate is not as high as it should be, especially by departmental affiliation. This makes it tough to generalize and draw meaningful inferences from the data². Second, the survey did not include questions on respondent gender identity, sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, age, and disability status. We aim to address these limitations and capture more diverse identities and responses for better assessment in the future.

SURVEY DETAILS

Highest Rated Competencies

The highest-rated DEI competencies are reported in Figure 2. Survey results indicate that SGDE is currently doing well in four areas: 1) prioritizing diversity in hiring, 2) creating a respectful, welcoming, and equitable atmosphere, 3) commitment to equitable practices, and 4) fair, equitable, and respectful treatment of all SGDE members. Each of these competencies received a median value of 4 out of 5³. Open-ended qualitative comments provide more detailed context.

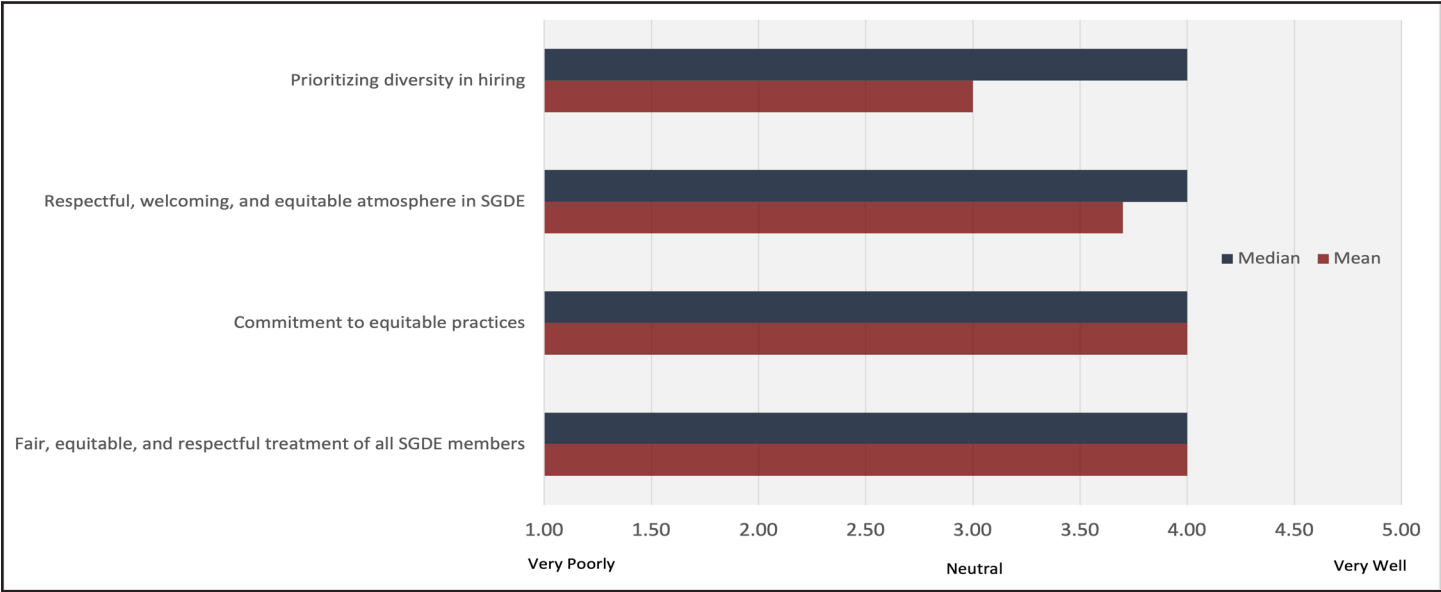


Figure 2: Highest-Rated DEI Competencies

“I think that the School is generally willing to listen and have conversations regarding DEI. I find the atmosphere in the department welcoming and collegial [sic].” — Graduate student

“I think there is a strong commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion in our department, regardless of execution.” — Tenured or tenure-track faculty

“SGD seems genuinely committed to dei, which is not the case in so many other units across UA.” — Tenured or Tenure-track faculty

Highest Rated Competencies... continued

Cross tabulating the survey results by departmental affiliation reveals important differences. Respondent ratings to the question, “How well do you think SGD is doing, with respect to: Fair, equitable, and respectful treatment of all SGDE members?” are illustrated in Figure 3. Here, tenured and tenure-track faculty, along with undergraduate students, gave the school strong ratings on this competency with median values of 5 (very well) and 4 (somewhat well), respectively. On the other hand, career-track and continuing status faculty, as well as graduate students, were more critical, yielding a median value of 3 (or neutral).

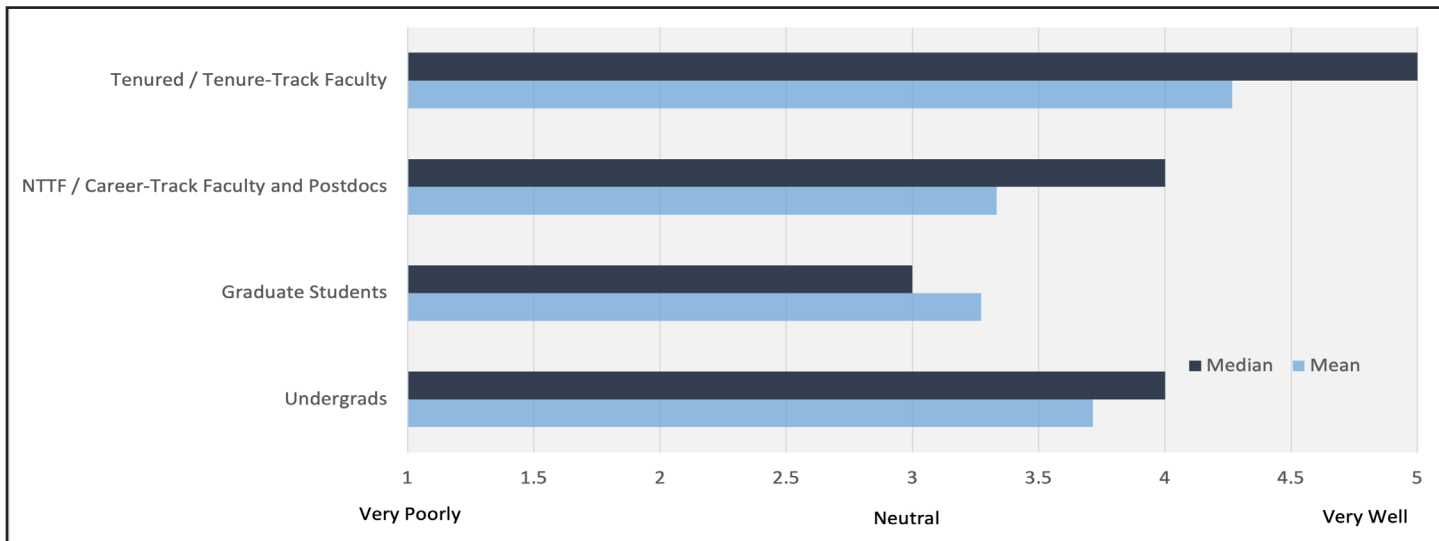


Figure 3: Respondent Ratings by Departmental Affiliation to “How well do you think SGD is doing, with respect to: Fair, equitable, and respectful treatment of all SGDE members?”

Lowest Rated Competencies

The lowest-rated DEI competencies are reported in Figure 4. Of the more than 25 DEI components, “retention of minority faculty members” emerged as the lowest-rated competency, with a median value of 2.75. Other low-rated DEI competencies, with median values of 3, include: 2) inclusion of faculty, staff, and students from local underserved communities in SGDE, 3) retention of minority graduate students, and 4) prioritizing diversity in undergraduate student enrollment.

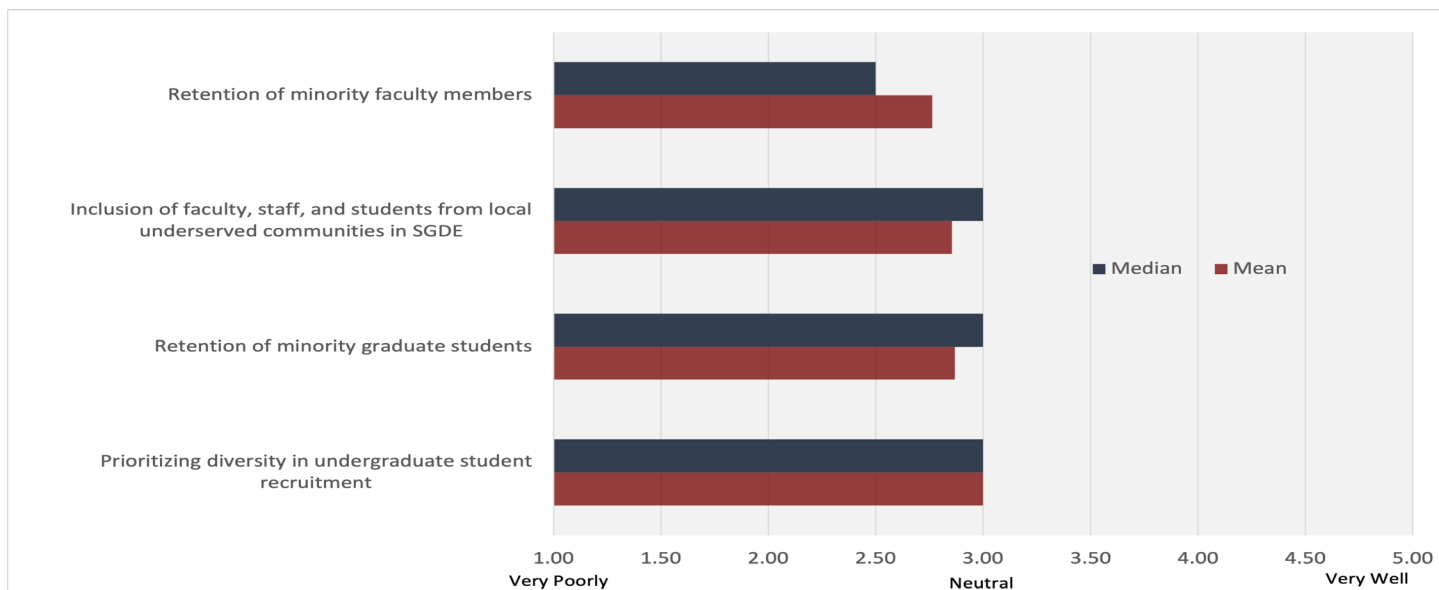


Figure 4: Lowest-Rated DEI Competencies.

Survey respondents provided the following insight and critique around these competencies:

“Generally friendly and welcoming department, but struggles to recognize and address culture of whiteness. Graduate recruitment needs to prioritize diversity and inclusion. Need department level policies for addressing and responding to microaggressions and racism in a timely, effective, and responsive manner.” — Graduate student

“...accepted graduate students continue to be overwhelmingly white and I am not sure how the school is attempting to promote and include grads from marginalized groups. And why are there not any courses offered on race at the graduate level?” — Graduate student

Similar to the highest-rated competencies, scores varied by departmental affiliation. The assessment of how well the school is doing in retaining minority faculty members is illustrated in Figure 5. Ratings among tenured and tenure-track faculty (median value of 4) were considerably higher than ratings among graduate students and career-track and continuing status faculty (median values of 2). Most tenured and tenure-track faculty feel that the school is doing “somewhat well” in retaining diverse faculty while sentiments among graduate students and career-track faculty is more closely aligned with a “somewhat poorly” evaluation. This pattern is consistent for evaluating the school’s performance in prioritizing diversity in graduate student recruitment (Figure 6) and including faculty, staff, and students from underserved communities in SGDE (Figure 7).

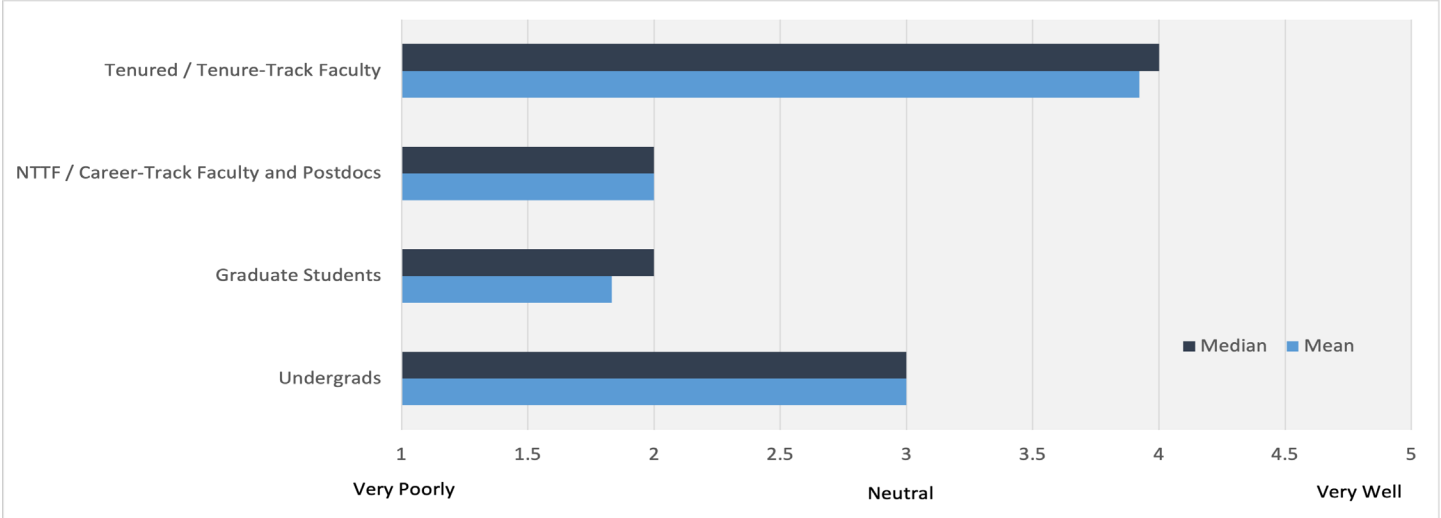


Figure 5: Respondent Ratings by Departmental Affiliation to “How well do you think SGDE is doing, with respect to: Retention of Minority Faculty Members?”

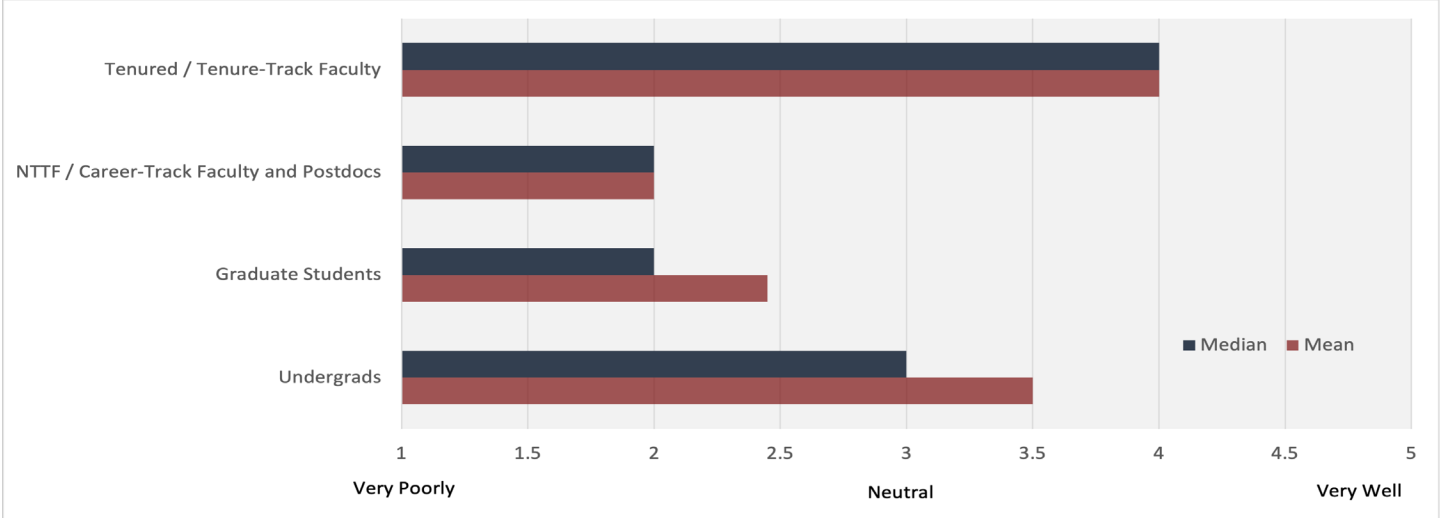


Figure 6: Respondent Ratings by Departmental Affiliation to “How well do you think SGDE is doing, with respect to: Prioritizing Diversity in Graduate Student Recruitment?”

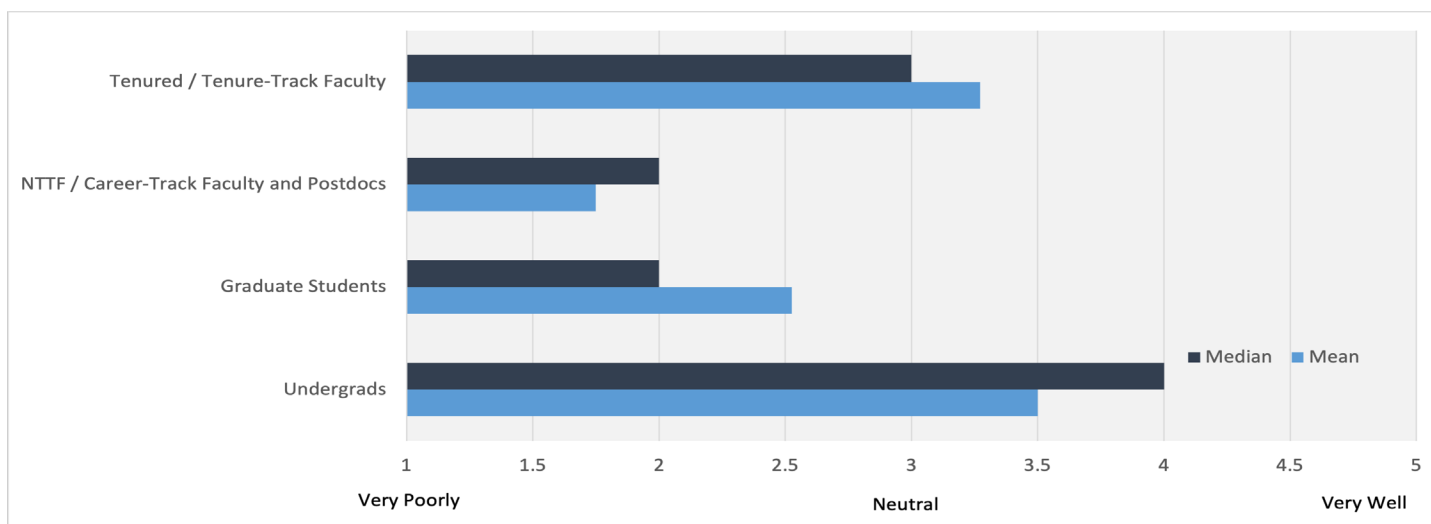


Figure 7: Respondent Ratings by Departmental Affiliation to “How well do you think SGD is doing, with respect to: Fair, equitable, and respectful treatment of all SGDE members?”

RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTION ITEMS

The SGDE DEI Committee recommends the school adopt the following action items, at a minimum, to address the lowest-rated DEI competencies:

1. Retention of minoritized faculty members.

Absent exit interview data from minoritized faculty that have left SGDE, what other sources of data do we have that would allow the school to enact policies to support faculty from underrepresented, diverse, and marginalized backgrounds?

Action Item 1: The school should implement an exit survey asking minoritized faculty about their experience in SGDE to better understand reasons for leaving.

Action Item 2: SGDE departmental leadership should reach out to UArizona Diversity & Inclusion to determine what specific policies should be implemented to create a more supportive and inclusive environment for faculty from diverse backgrounds.

Action Item 3: Beginning in Fall 2022, the DEI Committee should adapt the SGDE Climate Survey to collect additional data (e.g., gender identity and sexual orientation, age, and disability status) and report on the degree to which the school is realizing an inclusive and supportive environment for all minoritized faculty members.

2. Inclusion of faculty, staff, and students from local underserved communities in SGDE.

Action Item 1: SGDE faculty should more fully define this competency by identifying specific examples of how the SGDE community can build inclusive engagement of underserved and diverse communities through research, teaching, and service.

Action Item 2: SGDE departmental leadership should actively encourage faculty to report and explain how their contributions (through research, teaching, and service) contributes to community learning, as well as social, racial, economic, and environmental justice as part of the annual review process (APR). Examples include, but are not limited to: 1) creating research partnerships with local NGOs, 2) collaborating with community-based organizations to build experiential classroom learning opportunities (e.g., Community School Garden Program), and 3) sharing expertise, in a volunteer capacity, to empower local communities.

Action Item 3: Begin a dialogue between the DEI Committee and departmental leadership to create a SGDE Guest Speaker policy. The policy should outline principles for making compensation available to in-town speakers, preferably from diverse backgrounds and with diverse perspectives, to assist instructional pedagogy and build mutually beneficial relationships with community partners.

3. Retention of minoritized graduate students.

Retention of graduate students of color depends on three interrelated factors: 1) recruitment, 2) admission, and 3) retention.

Action Item 1: Although recruitment and retention of faculty of color will help in the recruitment of graduate students of color, the DEI Committee calls for a DEI subcommittee to work jointly with the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) to consult with the UArizona Graduate College on ways to recruit more diverse graduate students.

Action Item 2: The SGDE Development Committee should consider creating a SGDE scholarship to support students from underrepresented and marginalized communities.

Action Item 3: The SDGE DEI and Graduate Admissions Committees should reexamine evaluation criteria used in the graduate admissions process to ensure that students of color, as well as students from diverse backgrounds (e.g., first-generation, gender identity and sexual orientation, persons with disabilities, and veterans) are represented in recruitment, admission, and retention.

Action Item 4: The Graduate Admissions Committee should reach out to the UArizona Diversity & Inclusion Office, as well as peer institutions that are leading these efforts (e.g., Michigan State University), to outline an action plan for creating a more supportive and inclusive environment for graduate students of color and students from diverse backgrounds. This, we believe, would foster a sense of belonging among graduate students.

4. Prioritizing diversity in undergraduate student enrollment.

Action Item 1: The Director of Undergraduate Studies (DUS) and departmental leadership should review undergraduate student data (i.e., racial/ethnic, gender identity and sexual orientation, etc.) on an annual basis.

Action Item 2: The Undergraduate Curriculum Committee should survey instructors of undergraduate courses, particularly in terms of introductory offerings, to quantify (and track progress) the number of SGDE courses that offer inclusive pedagogical approaches and/or cover racial, social, economic, and environmental justice.

Action Item 3: The Director of Undergraduate Studies, in collaboration with support staff in SBS, should reach out to UArizona Diversity & Inclusion and the UArizona Undergraduate Admissions offices to determine what initiatives should be implemented to recruit more diverse undergraduate students in SGDE.

Action Item 4: The Director of Undergraduate Studies should reach out to undergraduate students—through student course surveys (SCS) or convening a town hall meeting in 2021-2022, for example—to assess student satisfaction with SGDE courses offering inclusive pedagogical approaches and/or covering racial, social, economic, and environmental justice.

5. Gathering new DEI data.

Action Item 1: The DEI Committee recommends administering a DEI survey in Fall 2022 (and every other year following even-numbered years). The anonymous survey needs to, at a minimum, include questions on 1) gender identity and sexual orientation, 2) race/ethnicity, and 3) socioeconomic class (SES). We recommend consulting with the UArizona Diversity & Inclusion Office on what questions to ask and what competencies to test. The DEI Committee should also consider a survey example from the [University of Michigan](#).

Action Item 2: The DEI Committee should strategize how to improve the survey response rate (e.g., more carefully considering the timing of when the survey is administered) to ensure a more representative sample.

Action Item 3: To better understand divergent ratings (see above), we recommend that future survey instruments include open-ended questions after each question block to allow respondents to explain their quantitative ratings. This, we believe, would provide necessary and important insight for understanding the degree to which ratings differ by departmental affiliation and other individual characteristics.

Action Item 4: The Graduate Admissions Committee should contact the UArizona Graduate College and find out what individual identifying applicant information is available, if any, for tracking progress on applicants, admissions, and retention of students from diverse backgrounds.

¹ Click [here](#) for a digital copy of the DEI Climate Survey.

² Sample size issues prevent us from controlling for noise-related inference issues. Improving survey response or weighting the cases to reflect the departmental population, in the future, would allow for a more detailed analysis.

³ The comments we have pulled out in the text above were representative of at least two or more types of responses received in the survey. However, the survey responses contain some outlier comments, voiced by individuals, but which we feel should not be lost sight of in our attempt to show representative responses. At one end of the spectrum, an individual questioned the values of DEI initiatives noting, "DEI per se is folly. It has no clearly defined benchmarks, metrics, nor objectives, beyond the subjective and vague notions of 'diversity'. This is absurd." At the other end of the spectrum, two individuals commented that efforts to create equity within SGDE for women and for indigenous people are wholly inadequate. One individual noted, "the lack of compassion to indigenous groups. This is a land grant institution. Lack of acknowledge(ment) of the land this institution sits on."