

Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management – PRTM  
College of Natural Resources, North Carolina State University

Departmental Plan for Diversity in Doctoral Programs

May 9, 2022<sup>1</sup>

**BACKGROUND:**

This diversity plan is the result of the participation of the Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management (PRTM) in the Alliances for Graduate Education and the Professoriate - North Carolina (AGEP-NC) project that seeks to transform department's culture and practices to prepare under represented minority (URM) dissertation students for faculty careers. Specifically, the AGEP-NC project charged a corps of faculty (Fellows) with the support of their department heads and directors of graduate programs (DGPs) to develop formal plans for promoting dissertation completion and progression to faculty roles of URM doctoral students. This plan is informed by a baseline assessment of the number of URM doctoral students in PRTM and the results of a climate survey that the AGEP-NC program conducted in 2021 among PRTM graduate faculty and doctoral students in 2021 (79% response rate; 15/19 faculty; 11/14 doctoral students). Based on the AGEP-NC guidelines, this plan is limited to URM doctoral students who are U.S. citizens.

*Baseline Assessment:* A demographic inventory of the number of doctoral students enrolled and graduated from PRTM in the past three academic years (August 2018 – May 2021) indicates that PRTM has very good retention rates (100%) of their URM doctoral students. However, data indicate the need to increase the recruitment of URM students into the PRTM doctoral program.

*Strengths Identified:* Baseline information and climate survey results show that PRTM has several strengths in mentoring doctoral students. Both faculty and students indicated a robust dedication to scholarly preparation, especially related to guiding research, help with authoring/co-authoring a paper, giving/receiving career advice, and facilitating presentation of research at a regional or national conferences. The majority of doctoral students also indicated that they strongly agree (highest end in a 5-point Likert scale) with understanding their faculty advisor's expectations (64%), their advisors respecting their opinions and contributions (55%), and feeling safe voicing their feelings to their advisor (64%).

<sup>1</sup> This departmental plan, drafted by the AGEP-NC Fellow (Dr. Barbieri) with the input from the Graduate Program Director (Dr. Leung) and Associate (Ms. Singh), the current and past chairs of the Graduate Program Advisory Committee - GPAC (Dr. Hipp, Dr. Cutts), and the Department Head (Dr. Mowatt). After addressing suggestions provided by the AGEP-NC leadership team (March 2022), the revised plan was presented to the PRTM GPAC (April

11, 2022) for further deliberation and approval. On May 11, 2022, it was submitted to the PRTM leadership team for further action.

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PRTM has in place several practices seeking the success of graduate students overall. (1) PRTM has a handbook (a summary of department's policies and expectations for master's and doctoral students) that is explained during the student orientation and is available online. (2) Graduate students enter the program under the advisement of a faculty member whose research expertise is in line with the student's interests. (3) It is customary (although not required) that doctoral students having a pre tenured faculty as advisor also have a tenured faculty as a co-advisor. (4) The DGP hosts a full day orientation program before classes start to provide information and guidelines to help incoming graduate students transitioning to their research and/or teaching responsibilities and PRTM environment. (5) The PRTM Graduate Student Association is well organized and inclusive, and has proved to serve as a peer-mentoring group. (6) A senior graduate faculty member (currently the DGP) teaches a 1 credit doctoral seminar course (PRT 801) which needs to be taken for 4 semesters, that is designed to provide a holistic preparation of doctoral students for their future career, covering a wide range of topics (e.g., scientific writing, jobs in extension).

*Obstacles and Opportunities Identified:* Climate survey results pointed a few areas of growth related to the recruitment of URM graduate students and overall departmental cultural environment. Regarding recruitment, most faculty indicated that increasing the number of URM students was currently a moderate decision factor when accepting applicants to the doctoral program (75%) when they believe it should be considered at a great extent (67%). Furthermore, faculty perceived that although having URM students in the doctoral PRTM program is a formal goal, it has not taken demonstrable action in recruitment (60%) or retention (73%) efforts.

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Regarding the overall departmental climate, less than half of the faculty perceived that PRTM is definitely (7%) or probably (40%) welcoming and supporting of URM doctoral students. Most doctoral students (55%) considered the PRTM environment for URM doctoral students poor and 40% disagreed that PRTM emphasizes the importance of demographic (racial, gender, religious, and ethnic) diversity. Although most faculty felt either confident (57%) or very confident (36%) in advising and mentoring doctoral students, levels of confidence decreased (60% confident; 13% very confident) for mentoring graduate students from cultural groups different from their own (i.e., race, ethnicity, religion). These results indicate an opportunity to strengthen faculty preparedness in cultural responsive mentoring. Study results from doctoral students also indicate areas of growth related to their living expenses (36% agreed having adequate funding for living expenses and 55% disagreed).

### **PRTM VISION AND GOALS:**

This diversity plan seeks to transform the PRTM culture by improving its climate, practices and policies to promote the recruitment of URM doctoral students and their successful degree completion and career progression to the profession or professoriate. Toward such a vision and building upon PRTM

identified obstacles, opportunities, and strengths, this plan includes three interconnected goals focused on the Recruitment, Retention, and Preparedness for Future Career of URM doctoral students: 1.

**Recruitment:** Increase effort to recruit URM doctoral students.

2. **Retention:** Enhance the cultural climate of PRTM to foster the wellbeing of URM doctoral students.

3. **Preparedness for Future Career:** Strengthen practices promoting the successful completion and career profession of URM doctoral students.

Considering that the attainment of these goals are progressive, this plan suggests monitoring progress through the metrics outlined below.

#### **GOALS METRICS (TO MONITOR CHANGE OVER TIME)**

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| 1. <b><u>Recruitment:</u></b> Increase effort to recruit URM doctoral students.   | listserves) to advertise doctoral students' recruitment.   |
| 2. <b><u>Retention:</u></b> Enhance the cultural climate of PRTM.   | - Count of URM students leaving PRTM (different from graduation).  |
| 3. <b><u>Preparedness for Future Career:</u></b> Strengthen practices promoting the successful completion and career profession of URM doctoral students. | Account for demographic composition to: - Track service commitment by effort involved, leadership, visibility, and opportunity for growth. - Count participation in research preparedness activities PRTM-supported. |
| - Count of URM applicants and proportion of URM applicants admitted into the program.   | - Track participation in teaching preparedness   |
| - Record diversity-focused channels (e.g.,  |  |

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activities PRTM-supported.

#### **ACTIONS TO PROMOTE THE SUCCESS OF URM DOCTORAL STUDENTS IN PRTM:**

The following actions are suggested to address this plan's goals. Some of these actions have been already implemented or are in progress, resulting from the combined effort of the Department Head, the Director of the Graduate Program, the Graduate Program Advisory Committee (GPAC), and the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice (DEIJ) committee. These actions are suggested to be implemented over time

#### **1. Recruitment:**

**Featured Actions (High Priority):**

- Removal of GRE for admission – This requirement was temporarily removed on 2020 with the onset of COVID-19 and voted for permanent removal later (Fall 2021). Its adoption as departmental admission procedure is in progress while the GPAC is working on substitution requirement (e.g., past research experience, heavier letter of recommendation, stronger research statement). - Establish clear guidelines to increase recruitment transparency. E.g.,

- o Procedure for students directly admitted to the doctoral program (in progress).
- o Procedures for regularly evaluating stipend adequacy (in progress).

- Increase the salary base for PRTM-funded doctoral students. The base stipend for Doctoral Students (12 month) was raised to \$21,000 (from \$17,000) on March 25, 2022.

#### Other Suggested Actions:

- Include “applicants from URM are encouraged to apply” phrase in all recruitment efforts. - Attend and present at conferences linked to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU),

Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI), and Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCU).

- Establish a dedicated teaching or research (TA/RA) position attached to an URM doctoral student. (In progress: DGP and DH are seeking a solution for its fruition).

- Increase the number of professional track faculty (with the greatest URM concentration) with graduate faculty status to be able to serve as advisor, co-advisor, or as a member of a committee.

## **2. Retention:**

#### Featured Actions (High Priority):

- Publicly recognize service involvement of doctoral students, especially when focused on DEIJ (adopted in 2021 by highlighting efforts in the PRTM newsletter).

- Review the graduate handbook to update guidelines (e.g., Supervised Teaching protocol; Advising and Mentoring guidelines) and streamline the narrative (in progress).

- Facilitate faculty roundtables to share successes and challenges and ways to grow upon them with doctoral students (in progress).

- Outline best practices and expectations for effective mentoring.

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#### Other Suggested Actions:

- Follow up current exit interviews of graduated students, preferably conducted by an ad-hoc committee (DGP & faculty external to students’ committee with URM doctoral students), at least 2 years after graduation for transparent feedback.

- Assign a peer mentor (at an advanced level) to incoming doctoral students. The peer mentor can provide informal support related to academic, research, departmental or graduate life acclimation. - Formally recognize faculty’s participation in development programs focused on DEIJ and mentoring in annual reviews.

- Increase involvement of faculty and doctoral students with diversity-based and URM-centered symposia at NC State, especially when focused on DEIJ.

- Increased involvement of faculty and doctoral students at diversity-based and URM-centered conferences and symposia at HBCUs, HSIs, and TCUs, especially when focused on DEIJ.

### **3. Preparedness for future career:**

#### **Featured Action (High Priority):**

- Establish a protocol (expectations, guidelines) for the 'Supervised Teaching' (PRT 885) required course to increase teaching preparedness across doctoral students (in progress).

#### **Other Suggested Actions:**

- Provide opportunities for mentoring a master's student and/or undergraduate student. - Encourage doctoral students to complete an Individual Development Plan to define and pursue their career goals based on their skills, values, and interests.
- Create mechanisms for URM doctoral students to design and instruct courses for PRTM, especially when focused on DEIJ.

### **SUSTAINABILITY PLAN:**

This diversity plan is conceived as foundational and dynamic. First, it should serve as a starting point to initiate additional initiatives that can foster palpable improvements related to the recruitment and success of URM doctoral students in PRTM. Secondly, it is recommended that the GPAC review this plan every three years and adjust it based on the metrics gathered.

While climate and culture are not the same thing, the climate survey findings and other avenues that gathered useful information begins to broach aspects of PRTM culture that need to be addressed to ultimately make the efforts articulated here successful and sustainable. A diverse representation in tenure-track faculty hires, successful and regular advancement of faculty in the tenure and professional tracks, greater engagement with nearby HBCUs, and the tackling of content and subject matter throughout the curriculum are some of the systemic ways that this diversity plan can be institutionalized.