



Recruiting and Retaining Diverse Faculty: The Role of the Faculty Diversity Network

Cesar Rebellon, Jaime Lester, Chrystal George Mwangi, Xiaomei Cai, Jacelyn Tyson

College of Humanities and Social Sciences | George Mason University

Background

Although U.S. News and World Report currently ranks GMU among the nation's top-10 most diverse and innovative universities, faculty diversity at GMU has not kept pace with student diversity. Partly in response to this reality, the College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHSS) has identified faculty diversity as a critical component of its Inclusive Excellence (IE) plan, and has developed its Faculty Diversity Network (FDN) as one mechanism through which to improve the recruitment and retention of diverse faculty. The FDN was launched in the 2021-2022 Academic Year, with its first cohort including nine new faculty members from throughout the College.

Goals

The FDN seeks to help new faculty members:

- (a) Navigate such issues as teaching, research/writing, tenure/promotion, service/engagement, and life in their department/program
- (b) Accelerate their professional development in ways that help them to achieve career milestones more efficiently
- (c) Build community, make friends, meet potential collaborators and mentors outside their department, and improve their overall experience at GMU

Content Delivery

Content is delivered via biweekly meetings in hybrid format, allowing participants to attend in person or via Zoom. Meetings are facilitated by members of the CHSS DEI Leadership Team.

"IE work is foundational. It is really fundamental to this next chapter in our history as an institution, and some of that work involves changing practices and processes and structures." -- Dean Ann Ardis

Content Topics

Faculty participants had the opportunity to suggest meeting topics relevant to their professional development. Their input was used by the CHSS DEI Leadership Team to create sessions in a semi-structured format, balancing the presentation of topic-relevant content with time for faculty to ask questions and engage in open-ended discussion. In its inaugural year, the FDN's meetings included the following content areas:

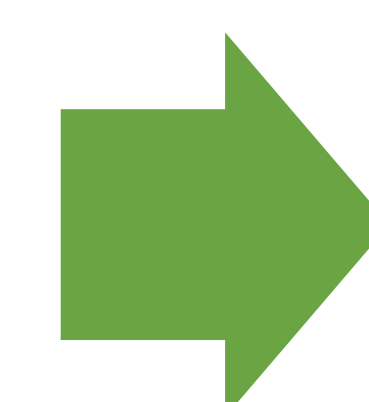
Diversity Network Lunch and Welcome	Celebrating the End of the Semester
Transitioning to Mason: Balancing All the Work	Every Semester Needs A Plan
Research and Teaching Resources, Collaborations, and Networking	Teaching "Divisive/Controversial" Topics
All Things Renewal, Promotion, and Tenure	Your Scholarly Public Persona
Identifying and Addressing Bias (or Worse!)	Negotiating Time, Authorship, and Promotion & Tenure

Participant Departments/Programs

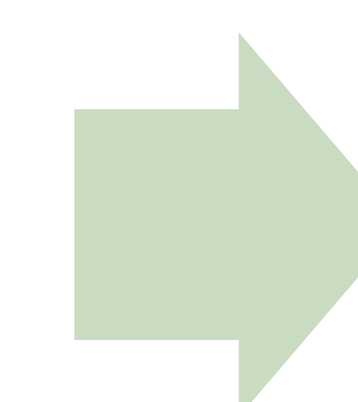
Participation is voluntary, but is open to all new faculty members within the college throughout the academic year. The nine participants came from the following departments and programs:

- Philosophy
- Modern/Classical Languages
- Women and Gender Studies
- Global Affairs Program
- Higher Education
- Criminology, Law, and Society
- History
- Communication (2)

Community



Support



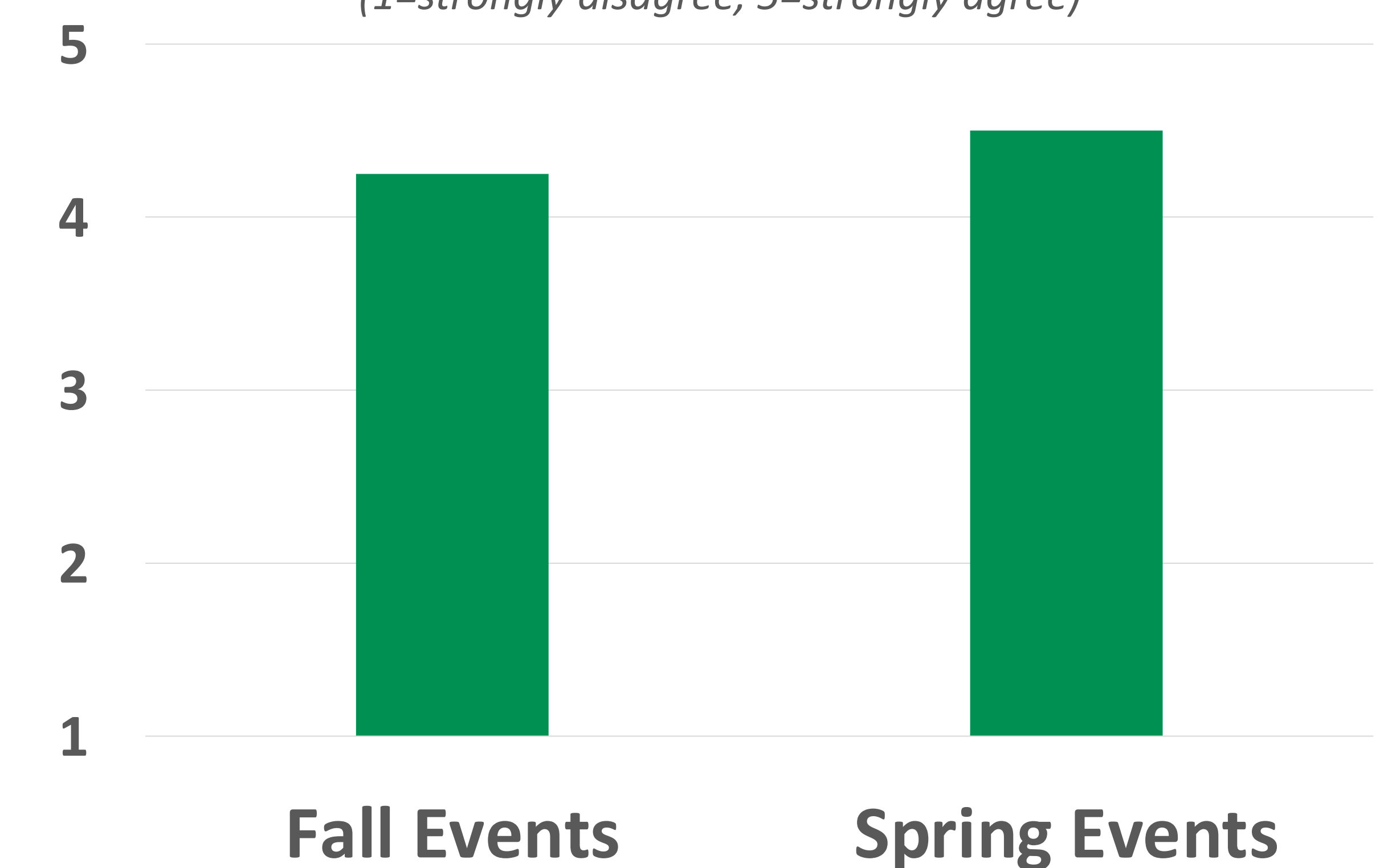
Success

Outcomes Assessment

To assess how well the FDN achieved its goals, the CHSS DEI Team used Qualtrics to construct and administer an anonymous online survey among the nine participants at the end of the 2021-2022 academic year. Questions included closed-ended, quantitative questions, as well as open-ended, qualitative questions.

Participant Feedback

Average Agreement that Events Should be Retained in Future Years
(1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree)



Apart from providing high ratings for most events included in the FDN, survey respondents provided feedback suggesting that:

- They enjoyed participating in the FDN and believed the amount of time required was neither too much nor too little
- Connecting with faculty from different departments and programs was among the most beneficial aspects of the FDN
- They believed the FDN could be further strengthened by including sessions about mentoring of students and by connecting prior cohorts with future cohorts