

Objective 5: Build on existing initiatives to ensure a supportive and inclusive environment for Chairholders.

Systemic barriers - Please provide a high-level description of the systemic barriers (e.g. summarize what the barriers are and how they were identified):

The university currently lacks any formalized mentoring programs for faculty members.

Corresponding actions undertaken to address the barriers and

Data gathered and Indicator(s) - can be both qualitative and quantitative:

Actions	Indicators and Metrics	Responsibility	Timeframe
5.1 Implement annual individual in-person meeting with chairholders and Associate Vice-President, Research.	# of meetings Feedback nature of discussions	AVP, Research	2020
5.2 Establish a formal mentoring program to support new or junior chairholders.	# of Chairs participating Feedback on usefulness	AVP, Research	2021
5.3 Conduct regular review of chairholder supports provided to ensure equitable and ensure members of designated groups not disadvantaged.	Findings of review inequities	AVP, Research EDI Advisor	2020
5.4 Create networking opportunities for chairholders to meet colleagues.	# of opportunities and participants	AVP, Research VPAR	2021
5.5 Establish a process to notify and support chairholders in advance of their renewal deadline to ensure a flawless process.		AVP, Research	2020
5.6 Conduct exit interview with all chairholders leaving SMU to follow-up on any equity issues identified.	# exit interviews conducted extent of equity issues	AVP Research HR-EDI Advisor	2019

Progress and/or Outcomes and Impacts made during the reporting period:

5.1 (on-going) With the development of this Action Plan, the scheduling of these annual meetings started in Winter 2021. Individual meetings were arranged with all Chairs, and discussions related to general progress, EDI aspects within their research, level/kind of support from SMU, and any other items of concern. These will continue on a regular schedule.

5.2 (In-progress) Development of this mentoring program has been delayed from its planned start because of ongoing interruptions of regular operations due to COVID-19 restrictions; the restrictions, and the resulting management associated with changed and/or cancelled academic and research activity has meant finding time to develop the mentoring program with all needed parties (AVPR, VPAR and Deans) has been challenging. However, we are committed to developing this program and initiating it before the end of calendar 2021.

5.3 (on-going) At the time of every Renewal or New Chair nomination, this review and comparative analysis of Chairholder supports will be done to ensure equitable supports provided for the nominated Chair. During the renewal nominations of 3 Chairs between Summer 2020 and May 2021, these supports were reviewed and adjusted/increased as needed based on the comparative analysis.

5.4 (in-progress) As part of what will be reflected in the renewed/updated SRP, there will be direction for at-least-annual symposia or workshops which will be targeted for each of the identified priority Research Theme areas. Through these, each CRC will see direct engagement with one or more of these annual events, which will be designed to bring SMU researchers within each priority Theme area together. Delays in finalizing the SRP renewal have meant that these symposia have yet to be launched as of May 2021 – the SRP renewal is (finally) in final stages of approval, having been now communicated in a few methods to the SMU community over the last 3 months inviting comments; final version expected in June 2021, allowing first launch of these symposia prior to end of calendar 2021.

5.5 (on-going) AVPR and the Research Grants Officer have ensured they provide an appropriate timeline for informing and working with Chairholders coming up to renewal. The two renewals which have occurred since this Action was identified have followed this timeline successfully.

5.6 (on-going) First exit interview was held with the only Chairholder that has finished their full two-terms since this Action was identified – Chair ended on Dec. 31, 2020; exit interview conducted in 2021. These will continue as Chairs complete terms.

Challenges encountered during the reporting period:

Restrictions associated with COVID-19 have impacted certain initiatives and delayed implementation – for example, finalizing the SRP renewal, and developing a formal mentoring program for junior Chairs.

The small number of CRC Chairholders, and infrequent Chair turnover, create a challenging environment to obtain robust feedback.

Next Steps (indicate specific dates/timelines)

To provide additional support for all SMU faculty – including CRC Chairholders – the University has recently joined the National Center for Faculty Development & Diversity (NCFDD). This platform provides professional development, training, and a mentoring community, including faculty, postdocs, and graduate students. The University will now ramp up promotion of these newly-available resources, including: Weekly Monday Motivators; Monthly Core Curriculum Webinars; guest speakers; a private Discussion Forum for peer-mentoring & problem-solving; and, finally, access to the Member Library which includes past webinar materials, referrals, and readings.
