CRUCIAL CONVERSATIONS
PEABODY STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES WITH RACE

September 22, 2014

SCHOOL YEAR 2014-15 GOAL PRIORITIES

Coupled with our broader narrative, this document outlines the more specific actions and organization of this initiative as intended by its members at this point in time.

Initiative organization

Below is the current leadership structure of the *Crucial Conversations* team.
- Main coordinator: Richard Blissett
- External (outside of Vanderbilt) coordinator: Ashley Dixon
- Internal coordinator (plus Ferguson contact): Tremonisha West
- Technical coordinator: Benjamin Skinner
- PJA liaison: Alex Simson
- PCBG liaison: Rhiana Anthony
- PGSA liaison: Sara Green
- Common Ground liaison: Payton Richardson
- Curriculum and Teaching coordinator: [pending, currently Ashley Dixon]
- Administrative Structures coordinator: Shateara Hall
- Recruitment and Retention coordinator: Dominique Baker
- Mentorship and Orientation coordinator: Samantha Adler
- CC Event coordinator: [pending, currently Richard Blissett]
- CFT/OIA liaison: Ting-han Chang

We are currently in conversation with the Peabody Queeries about their possible particiation.

Goal #1: Integrate issues of diversity, power, equity, and inclusion into curricula and classroom experiences across departments and disciplines

Current objective(s): Gather information on each department and program, first starting with lists of required and elective courses per program.

Rationale: To understand what changes need to be made, we must understand what programs currently look like. This process will likely follow in several stages, each punctuated by a periods holistic evaluation of and reflection on whether the information we learn is consistent with our goals. First, we want to understand, across the College, where opportunities to discuss issues of race might already exist, and where there are holes. Next steps may include looking at syllabi of "successful" (in quotes as this still needs to be defined) courses to learn best practices, researching successful diversity course practices, etc.

Goal #2: Establish a sustainable system of formalized administrative support to facilitate diversity initiatives and keep all stakeholders accountable

Current objective(s): Gather departmental and College-wide missions and credos to determine whether the goals of *Crucial Conversations* are threaded throughout who we are as Peabody, and conduct a rigorous survey of campus culture

Rationale: First, we want to establish how the goals and spirit of the *Crucial Conversations* initiative align with what we state, formally, as the culture of our institution. If they do not, then we must work to change those formal missions to encompass this spirit. Second, we understand that there were some previous struggles with interpreting preliminary polls and surveys of students' attitudes towards the racial climate here at Peabody. We wish to conduct another survey to establish this baseline more formally and gain a broader understanding of the issues that students face, *plus* the struggles of faculty and members of administration.

Goal #3: Increase the racial diversity of faculty and students on Peabody's campus now and demonstrate consistent commitment to doing so in the future

Current objective(s): Obtain and analyze data on College admissions, and determine what is already being done to recruit students of color

Rationale: Our task force views the enrolling of students as a pipeline: students must first apply to attend Peabody, then be admitted, and then choose to enroll. Until we better understand the students who apply to Vanderbilt, are admitted by departments, and choose to matriculate, it becomes difficult to understand where the so-called "leaks" in the pipeline are that create the disproportionately low number of underrepresented minority (URM) students attending Peabody College. For these reasons, we wish to have the number of applicants, admits, and matriculants to Peabody broken down by racial group and program area. This would allow us to better understand the current state of enrollment at Peabody as well as create targeted suggestions for improvement. For example, if there are a large number of URM students who apply and are admitted but a small number of matriculants, this becomes a different problem than if there are a large number of applicants but a small number of admits. It is essential to understand where we as an institution are losing URMs before anyone can make tangible suggestions for improvement. Additionally, it would be useful to know the type of information collected from prospective students. As we are not sure how the admissions office follows students before they become an applicant in the system, we leave it up to the department of admissions to share with us how they define a prospective student. This is another place where there are areas we could potentially improve if URMs are disproportionately not signing up as prospective students. It becomes difficult to increase applications from this student group if they are not already in the prospective student pipeline. These data lead to the final request for additional information: What are the admissions office and individual departments already doing in order to recruit URMs? Knowing what is already being done is critical for being able to sculpt feasible change.

Goal #4: Create extracurricular structures to support ongoing dialogue about diversity and student experiences

Current objective(s): Establish and pilot a student mentorship program in order to institutionalize conversations about race, diversity, and other important topics.

Rationale: The peer mentorship would take place in groups of 10-15 students and would be composed of students from different programs. The facilitators of these sessions would be advanced Masters or Ph.D. students. The groups would first meet at first year orientation and then meet approximately once a month for one to two hours during the academic year. While these groups can serve a general orientation and socializing purpose for graduate students, a primary goal of the groups is to facilitate conversations among graduate students from diverse backgrounds and different academic departments and programs. This kind of interdisciplinary dialogue is motivated by the trans-institutional goal of the Vanderbilt strategic plan which encourages programming that includes dialogue across schools and departments.