Launched on July 1, 2020, the College of Social Work & Criminal Justice is fast approaching its one-year anniversary, and we have already accomplished a great deal. The college comprises two schools – the Phyllis & Harvey Sandler School of Social Work (SSW) and the School of Criminology & Criminal Justice (SCCJ). Our mission is to inspire and prepare criminal justice and social work leaders, scholars, practitioners, clinicians, and policymakers to enact positive change.

Our distinguished faculty integrate theory with community-centered, evidence-based practice. In doing so, they help develop ethical, culturally competent, and innovative professionals who analyze, implement, and evaluate criminal justice and social welfare policies, practices, and technologies; address discriminatory systems and processes; provide direct services to vulnerable and marginalized populations; and promote justice and equitable outcomes for individuals, families, and communities throughout South Florida and well beyond.
KEY CHARACTERISTICS

OUR ACADEMIC PROGRAMS
The Sandler School of Social Work is a U.S. News & World Report Top 100 school and comprises Florida’s largest BSW program with approx. 600 students enrolled annually. It also ranks among the top three BSW programs in the state based on monthly earnings within one year post-graduation and is the 7th largest major at the University. The MSW program is ranked third in the nation based on student evaluations. It is also one of FAU’s largest graduate programs, with approximately 300 students, and boasts an impressive 97% job placement rate. The Sandler School also comprises Florida’s first DSW program, which trains scholarly clinicians for leadership positions in the field.

The School of Criminology & Criminal Justice comprises a BA in Criminal Justice program – FAU’s 3rd largest major and a 75% job placement rate – and an MS in Criminology & Criminal Justice program with an 88% job placement rate within one year post-graduation. The combined degree program enables outstanding students to graduate with their BA in Criminal Justice and their MS in Criminology & Criminal Justice in as little as five years.

ACCOMMODATING THE GROWING DEMAND FOR OUR GRADUATES
The need for social workers and criminal justice professionals is projected to grow at a much faster rate than other occupations. In fact, based on 2018 data, a higher percentage of BACJ graduates are currently employed (61.9%) than other FAU graduates (54.8%). Moreover, in a 2020 SSW alumni survey, 39 respondents reported an 86% post-graduation employment rate at six months post-graduation for both the BSW and MSW programs. The disparate effects of the global pandemic across communities further highlight the need for empathetic, conscientious, highly skilled and culturally diverse professionals in social work and justice-related occupations. The College of Social Work & Criminal Justice is actively addressing these needs.

STRONGER TOGETHER
The interdisciplinary research and areas of expertise of our faculty will lead to stronger research funding and additional community outreach programming. The college is poised to achieve national prominence in community-engaged research and practice through its centers and certificate programs, which support and enhance the the university’s strategic plan and commitment to community engagement.

The college leadership is developing a plan to enhance existing centers to integrate the complementary research and curriculum areas of Criminal Justice and campus partners.

The college has also shown steady improvements in graduation rates, graduate degrees awarded and in a range of other important areas, and was recently ranked as the best-performing college at FAU based on key performance indicators implemented by the Florida Board of Governors.

BUILDING ON A FIRM FOUNDATION
These stellar achievements provide important context as we cultivate and sustain a work and learning environment that is diverse, equitable and inclusive. We are among the top-performing colleges with the highest number of bachelor’s degrees awarded to minorities and are committed to ensuring that minority voices are heard, acknowledged and represented in our programs, research, scholarship, community outreach, and in the composition of our faculty and staff.

We are enthusiastically engaged in a process of strategic planning to ensure that efforts related to justice, equity, diversity and inclusion are solidified as a central focus in our college mission and objectives.
OUR STEADFAST COMMITMENT

TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION

Our college leadership team understands the importance of creating opportunities for our colleagues and students to meet and discuss issues pertaining to diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) – even though such conversations may be difficult – and we have created a safe space to do so. Such efforts are crucial toward cultivating inclusivity and racial and cultural diversity, which will strengthen our local and campus communities.

As a foundation for our approach to DEI, it is important that we first define these terms that comprise the acronym:

**DIVERSITY:** We are committed to increasing diversity, which can be expressed in many forms, including race and ethnicity, gender and gender identity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, language, culture, national origin, religious commitments, age, (dis)ability status and political perspective.

**EQUITY:** We are committed to actively challenging and responding to bias, harassment, and discrimination. We aim to offer equal opportunity to all persons and not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, disability, religion, height, weight, or veteran status.

**INCLUSION:** We are committed to being a place where differences are welcomed, where alternate perspectives are respectfully heard and where every individual feels a sense of belonging and inclusion. By building a critical mass of diverse groups on campus and creating a vibrant climate of inclusiveness we can more effectively leverage the resources of diversity to advance our collective capabilities.
FINE-TUNING OUR FOCUS

OUR ACTION PLAN IS GUIDED BY THESE TWO GOALS:

1. CULTIVATE INCLUSIVITY & ELEVATE UNDERREPRESENTED VOICES
   Create a more inclusive and supportive environment for all community members, with an intentional focus on the needs of those who belong to underrepresented racial and ethnic groups. Furthermore, given that inclusion is key to our college’s organizational structure and mission, DEI must be reflected in all aspects including, but not limited to, our course development, teaching and mentorship strategies, college-wide policies, internal administrative practices, and our search/hiring processes.

2. EVALUATE OUTCOMES FOR MEASURABLE SUCCESS
   Hold ourselves accountable with systematic evaluation procedures and measurement tools for assessing the college climate as well as the progress and effectiveness of our ongoing DEI initiatives.
DEI INITIATIVES

ALREADY UNDERWAY

"EDUCATION IS THE PREMISE OF PROGRESS, IN EVERY SOCIETY, IN EVERY FAMILY." - KOFI ANNAN
MEETING WITH BLACK FACULTY & STAFF

In Summer 2020, Dr. Naelys Luna, founding dean, and Dr. Vaughn Crichlow, associate dean, invited all Black faculty and staff within the college to come together and initiated meaningful conversations on issues related to diversity, inclusion and racial justice. The aim was to create a safe space for faculty and staff to share their thoughts and experiences, and elicit feedback regarding the climate within the university and within the college. The discussion was well-attended and covered a range of issues including:

- the importance of being “seen” and acknowledged on campus
- the value of feeling supported in their respective programs
- the diversity of the student population and the importance of such diversity being reflected in the racial and ethnic composition of faculty and staff
- strategies for addressing the issues that were discussed
- the need for follow-up conversations that sustain open channels for discussion

AUDITING OUR WEBSITES

Upon receiving feedback from Black faculty and staff about the importance of equal representation, we conducted a comprehensive audit of the college and school websites to ensure that all written and visual communications were consistent with our DEI values. This review was initiated and completed during Summer 2020 and involved a wide collection of input from college administrators, faculty, staff and academic advisors. Select language and imagery used to describe and promote our schools, programs and the college were replaced with more racially and culturally diverse depictions that accurately reflect who we are.
PROACTIVELY CREATING A COLLEGE DEI COMMITTEE

The Faculty Assembly developed and voted on College By-laws in Fall 2020. It was a widely held understanding among our faculty that the college would benefit greatly from establishing an advisory committee to assist with DEI initiatives. The college DEI committee, in accordance with the By-laws, will act as a consultative body and advise the Dean on DEI issues as they relate to faculty, staff and students:

The committee will meet as needed to: (1) propose activities and practices that enhance diversity and cohesion with the College’s community of faculty, staff and students with said proposals given strong consideration by the Dean; (2) assist in training of faculty and staff search committees on strategies to attract, recruit and retain a more diverse pool of applicants; (3) and act on any and all DEI-related issues as they arise.

This college-wide policy has a direct impact on organization and administrative procedures that guide our college. Here is the timeline of our progress thus far.

JAN. '21 COMMITTEE IS ESTABLISHED

JAN. 7, 2021 FIRST DEI COMMITTEE MEETING

Administrators were invited to attend this initial conversation to discuss the committee’s role and begin developing short- and long-term goals. The Dean, Associate Dean, Dean’s Fellow and School Directors were in attendance. It was decided that the committee would meet monthly and that the responsibility to facilitate meetings would be rotated among committee members. The following items were also discussed:

- What values, principles and intentions should guide the work of the committee?
- What should the committee’s work look like and where should it begin? Overall goals? First steps? Strategic action planning?
- Who should be included in these conversations? CoSWCJ faculty? Admin? Staff? Advisors? Students?
- Other relevant FAU initiatives such as the Center for IDEAS, PJHR, others?
- Language matters. Is DEI the correct term and what does it look like to you? Another widely used term is JEDI – Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. Are these sufficient?
FEB. 17, 2021 SECOND DEI COMMITTEE MEETING

The committee had a deeper discussion of DEI and considered the input of administrators from the prior meeting. More specifically, the committee discussed the role and structure of the DEI committee in the coming year and decided to develop a brief survey as a means of gathering faculty feedback on the structure and purpose of the committee.

MAR. 26, 2021 FACULTY ASSEMBLY MEETING

The committee facilitated a discussion on DEI at the Faculty Assembly meeting and distributed a survey to faculty with the aim of receiving feedback for the committee’s future work. As a result of these meetings and the anonymous faculty feedback, the committee is now creating a “hub” of faculty and staff resources related to DEI in a Canvas course. Committee members met with Javaris Hammond from the College of Nursing’s DEI task force to learn more about approaches used in their college. They also discussed partnering with the College of Nursing on several DEI-related events in the coming year.

APR. 14, 2021 FORTHCOMING DEI COMMITTEE MEETING

The committee is planning to invite students for an open dialogue about their experiences in the college. They will garner feedback on the committee’s role along with the potential for recruiting student representatives from each school to partner with the committee. There are also plans to conduct a college climate survey in the Fall. Javaris shared a sample survey that the College of Nursing plans to use next year.

INTRODUCING IFP DEI COURSES

The SCCJ is developing its first IFP course that will be offered to students as part of the Race and Racial Inequalities thematic cluster. The course is designed to provide students with a multi-disciplinary approach to issues of race and racial inequality. SCCJ also plans to offer a second IFP course on Law, Crime, and the Criminal Justice System (CCJ 2002) to lower-level undergraduate students, which can be a potential recruitment tool for the bachelor’s program.

Adding to an existing IFP course on Global Perspective which contains significant content on diversity and justice matters, the SSW will also develop a new IFP course to engage freshmen and sophomores in collective learning around issues of marginalization and oppression related to justice, equity and inclusion.
LAUNCHING DEI INITIATIVES IN SOCIAL WORK

The SSW has reinstated its “Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Action Committee” to select and implement a school-wide assessment in the areas of equity and inclusion from the perspectives of students, faculty and staff.

- The SSW will offer a new macro certificate that will evolve into a specialization for students passionate about engaging with faculty and the community in research and practices related to DEI (i.e. social justice and anti-oppressive practices).

- A new “diversity dialogues” discussion series was launched in Spring 2020. This series provides a platform for all interested students and university community members to develop a true group/learning community to address issues of equity and inclusion.

- The current BSW upper division elective course will be restructured to focus on evidence-based diversity practice. The DEI action committee is utilizing a team-teaching approach to develop a more comprehensive, inclusive curriculum to students in this course.

OPERATIONALIZING THE COLLEGE DEI PROCESS

In order to garner enough resources and energy to operationalize a process through which we can ensure all students, faculty and staff – including those with marginalized identities – can grow, contribute and develop to their greatest potential, faculty within our college are advocating for the development of an Office of Organizational Diversity, Equity and Inclusion within the SSW or an Associate Dean of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at the college level.
"DIVERSITY IS BEING INVITED TO THE PARTY; INCLUSION IS BEING ASKED TO DANCE." - Verna Myers
'MOVING FROM DIVERSITY TO JUSTICE'

WHEN: JUNE 26 & JULY 10, 2020 | ATTENDEES: 75

The SSW’s Office of Professional Development hosted this two-part series of professional workshops with community partners. Dr. Vaughn Crichlow, associate dean, was a guest speaker at this event. The workshops were designed to create a safe space to learn about our personal biases, sit in the uncomfortable feelings that arise and then go forward with changing the way we offer services.

Participants had the opportunity to look at how their world views were constructed and how our social location impacts the thoughts and attitudes we have regarding racial justice. The workshop was not intended to evoke feelings of guilt or shame. Rather, it was the beginning of the journey towards systemic change that comes from adopting a new mindset.

Learning objectives included: understanding and identifying priming, defining implicit bias, recognizing the impact of implicit bias and being able to counter it, understanding how to create justice and identifying a call to action. Attendees included mental health professionals, students and the general public.

About the Presenters:

Crystal Morris, MS, is Founder and CEO of One Caring Adult and Director of Indian River Services for Tykes & Teens, Inc in Vero Beach Florida. She uses her trauma informed approaches to educate agencies on the lifelong impact of unconscious bias and the intergenerational transmission of trauma. Jeffrey Shearer, ACSW, MCAP, LCSW, is the former CEO and co-founder of Tykes & Teens, Inc. In January 2014, Mr. Shearer became an FAU adjunct faculty member in our MSW program.

Testimonials from Attendees:

I have taken so many courses and trainings with Jeffrey Shearer, so I know many of the examples he likes to use, but to see them under this context as it relates to trauma, implicit bias, and the current racial climate was very interesting. Also, the deeper understanding that bias can be an advantage if we acknowledge and accept it but it is our own responsibility to use that knowledge to help shift our world view and promote personal growth to advocate for change.

I took this course for research on the topic and felt it hit the mark showing the macro view of the issue as well as the micro view. The biggest takeaway, it is vital to continue to educate in the area of diversity and justice for our communities and ourselves. Not forgetting to examine the footprint we leave when interacting with others on all levels. The course highlighted the commonalties in the human race, while addressing the differences that can lead to misunderstanding, confusion and social disparity when looking through the lens of a personal worldview.
'TRAUMA TO RESILIENCY'

WHEN: JUNE 23, 2020 | ATTENDEES: 35

The SSW Office of Professional Development hosted this safe-space dialogue examining the impact of secondary trauma featuring Suzanne Spencer, Ed.D., CEO of Living Skills in the Schools. FAU Social Work & Criminal Justice students, faculty and staff were invited to attend. This event allowed for individual and group reflection on diversity issues and the impact of secondary trauma on our personal and professional thoughts, assumptions, attitudes, and motivations.

About the Presenters:

Dr. Suzanne Spencer, Ed.D., brings a wealth of experience and expertise in nonprofit leadership and for-profit organizations to her career in community organizing and has been recognized for innovations in the field of mental health and addiction. She has pioneered innovative practices within the health and wellness terrain by mobilizing organizations, community partners, and diverse stakeholders to inform and transform the workplace, workforce, and community.

UNSTRUCTURED CONVERSATIONS WITH SSW STUDENTS

WHEN: BI-WEEKLY | ATTENDEES: 75

The SSW hosts bi-weekly, unstructured conversations with students, hosted by Dr. Precious Skinner-Osei, SSW bachelor's degree program coordinator, and Dr. Joy McClellan, SSW master's degree program coordinator.

These meetings are designed to give students an opportunity to share their experiences in the program and discuss sensitive issues they may not feel comfortable expressing in other forums.
'COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS'

The college launched this new discussion series to educate the campus, local and national communities about social work and criminal justice and where the two professions intersect. The series maintains DEI issues as central points for discussing different view and perspectives on controversial topics. The college intends to host these events twice per semester, with the goal of stimulating conversations and learning opportunities about how our two professions partner to address pressing issues affecting our society.

WHEN: SEP 24, 2020 | ATTENDEES: 78

The kick-off event focused on the racial and socioeconomic inequities within the criminal justice system and how the fields of social work and criminal justice are partnering to improve access to justice. Panelists included the Palm Beach County Public Defender, an on-staff social worker at the PD’s Office and a social work alumnus.

WHEN: DEC 3, 2020 | ATTENDEES: 56

Focusing on the role of social work & criminal justice in domestic violence work, this conversation was led by the education and prevention manager and the teen dating violence specialist at Women in Distress, a safe shelter for survivors, as well as the State Attorney’s Office victim witness counselor.

WHEN: FEB 18, 2021 | ATTENDEES: 132

This conversation featured a trainer and consultant from the National Hispanic and Latino Mental Health Technology Transfer Center (NHL-MHTTC) and Dr. Gabriel T Cesar, assistant professor and youth development researcher in the FAU School of Criminology and Criminal Justice. The panelists covered the risk factors of youth gang involvement and discussed successful re-entry, prevention and intervention techniques, as well as specific youth gang involvement and reduction strategies.

WHEN: APRIL 8, 2021 | ATTENDEES: 43

Three child protective investigators from the Broward Sheriff’s Office discussed the pilot program they launched in Broward County to combat the disproportionate number of African-American, Caribbean-American and Caribbean immigrant families impacted by the child welfare system and how anti-racist practices are engaging and strengthening families.
10TH ANNUAL TRANSGENDER MEDICAL CONFERENCE

WHEN: SEPT 18-19, 2020 | ATTENDEES: 170

Co-sponsored by the SSW and the South Florida Transgender Medical Consortium, this two-day conference provided education to medical, mental health professionals, students, allied health providers and frontline staff in the field of transgender health care. The target population was medical and mental health professionals interested in working with transgender clients. In addition to the school’s co-sponsorship and providing CEUs, part-time SSW instructor Dr. David Landsman-Wohlsifer, LCSW, presented “Transgender Teens on the Autism Spectrum.”

Testimonials from Attendees:

The presenter absolutely created a brave but respectful space. Thank you for the insight and information. This will definitely help me navigate the topics of gender identity with my neuro-atypical patients and their parents in the future.

This presentation provided information that I was familiar with but challenged me to interrupt these concepts of ASD and TGNC in a converging way which I have never contemplated before - and it makes so much sense! I loved the concept of ownership to have difficult conversations regarding safety and harm reduction that may come from not conforming to social norms. I also loved acting as a student of the client’s life as they present in front of you and understanding that they are the only expression of themselves and the “gender that is me” that truly matters. Wonderful information overall.
DEI-CENTERED FORUMS IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE WIDER UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY

'REAL TALK' SERIES
This series brings together students, faculty and staff, and was hosted by the FAU Center for Inclusion, Diversity Education, and Advocacy (IDEAS). The following Real Talk events involved presentations by SW-CJ faculty and they were also well-attended by our faculty:

- "No Easy Answers: Examining the Current Climate in America" featuring Dr. Crichlow as a panelist
- "Working Toward Transparency, Equity and Accountability in Policing" featuring Dr. Crichlow as a panelist
- "From Allies to Activists" featuring Dr. Heather Thompson, SSW director, and Dr. Mara Schiff, SCCJ associate professor

'ROSES IN CONCRETE' FIRESIDE CHAT
This event was hosted by the Department of Curriculum, Culture and Educational Inquiry in the College of Education and featured Dr. Vaughn Crichlow, associate dean, as a guest speaker. The dialogue focused on the educational leadership, and the criminal justice response to the injustices against Black people. There were 30 attendees consisting of faculty, FAU students, and community members.

'DIALOGUES FOR CHANGE'
This installment in the ongoing "Dialogues for Change" series focused on the topic of Defunding Police: Phenomenon and Consequences presented by Dr. Seth Fallik, assistant professor in SCCJ. The event was hosted by the FAU Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, Ft. Lauderdale.

'RESEARCH IN ACTION'
This installment in the ongoing "Research in Action" series hosted by the FAU Division of Research focused on the topic of The Impossible Mandate: Police-Community Relations in America presented by Dr. Vaughn Crichlow, associate dean and associate professor in SCCJ. Approximately 90 faculty, staff, students and community members attended the event.
DEI-CENTERED OFFERINGS

THROUGH EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS

"I ALONE CANNOT CHANGE THE WORLD, BUT I CAN CAST A STONE ACROSS THE WATERS AND CREATE MANY RIPPLES." - MOTHER TERESA
CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR ADDRESSING MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES IN HISPANIC AND LATINO CHILDREN AND YOUTH

WHEN: APRIL 9, 2021 | ATTENDEES: 100+

This workshop was hosted by the SSW and presented in partnership with the National Hispanic & Latino Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network. Latino youths are at significant risk for mental health problems, including anxiety, depression, and suicide attempts. They are also less likely to access culturally responsive mental health services and continue to be undiagnosed or untreated.

These realities can lead to negative outcomes such as negative interactions at school and with authorities, increased disconnection from family and society and exposure to the criminal justice system. This course also discussed factors that affect Hispanic and Latino youth mental health and academic performance, culturally centered interventions in school mental health, and how to engage effectively Hispanic and Latino youth and families in school mental health treatment.

Learning Objectives: Identify trends in mental health disorders, including suicidal thoughts and behaviors; discuss culture-specific risk and protective factors associated with mental health, and discuss cultural elements that inform mental health assessment and treatment interventions with Hispanic and Latino children and youths.

About the Presenter: J Rocky Romero, PhD, LMSW, has been a trainer and consultant for the NHL-MHTTC for the last 10 years. He is focused on the intersections of racism, discrimination, and the impact of racialized legal discourse on people of color.

BEST PRACTICES FOR HISPANIC AND LATINO CHILDREN AND YOUTH: ACCULTURATION, TRAUMA, AND MENTAL HEALTH

WHEN: APRIL 9, 2021 | ATTENDEES: 100+

Experiencing or witnessing traumatic events can affect children’s and adolescents’ mental and emotional well-being. Hispanic and Latino children are particularly vulnerable to suffering or witnessing traumatic events and suffer from migration trauma. This workshop will define the various dynamics related to acculturative stress. The webinar will also review related stressors including trauma and gaps that impact youth and families.

Learning Objectives: Learn basic terminology that is related to acculturative stress and trauma; discuss related stressors and gaps that impact youth and families; and discuss tools to help students and families succeed in the school setting.

About the Presenter: Danita Gallegos, LCSW, works with the UT Health Texas Child Health Access Through Telemedicine (TCHATT) Program in providing school crisis response and school-based therapy.
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH NHL-MHTTC

The SSW Office of Professional Development is offering a menu of workshops to various community field agencies. There will be 40-50 participants in each 90-minute workshop. SSW will also partner with Boston University School of Social Work and other top ranked institutions to offer national programming and training on DEI matters – we are working on that as we speak and will solidify over the summer.

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IN CONCLUSION

While we are proud of our accomplishments within our first year as a college, this report represents only the beginning of our efforts. Thus far, our approach to DEI has centered on race, largely in response to racial injustices across our country – most infamously the murder of Mr. George Floyd in 2020, which sparked international outrage and social justice protests. Sadly, there will inevitably be more hate crimes, violence and acts of bias that require us to broaden our approach to DEI.

The College of Social Work & Criminal Justice is committed to taking a proactive, rather than a reactive, approach to our DEI initiatives and to ensure we establish policies and procedures that respond and can adapt to our ever-changing world.

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