

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES  
DIVERSITY POSTDOCTORAL FACULTY PROGRAM

2019-2020 Final Report

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Summary:

We are happy to report that the program now is fully funded through an on-going budget commitment to support three postdoctoral faculty for two-year positions. The committee will go through a recruitment process every other year and will next recruit for faculty to begin in Fall 2021. This major accomplishment demonstrates USD's commitment to the program and the College's ability to successfully recruit and mentor faculty through the program.

During the 2019-2020 academic year the program supported four postdoc faculty, two continuing their appointment, and two faculty who started at USD in Fall 2019. The two faculty who completed the program were Dr. Janel Ortiz who accepted a position as an Assistant Professor at California State Polytechnic University-Pomona, Center for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching and Department of Biology and Prof. Aaryn Jones who will complete her architecture license to become a practicing architect in Los Angeles.

New Cohort:

In Fall 2019, we welcomed Tezeru Teshome and Wilnelia Recart Gonzalez to the College. Both faculty members exceeded expectations of the program by going above and beyond teaching and scholarship – they joined the community and made a significant impact on students.

In addition to teaching three classes, Tezeru Teshome directed the Theatre's department fall performance of *Silent Sky* by Laura Gunderson. She attended Black Student Union meetings and became more present around the Black Student Resource Center. As a result, Tezeru was able to recruit a cast to produce *Strange Fruit* by Alanna Bledman, a Black student's play about Black undergraduate students being haunted by institutionalization of slavery on their college campus. She also engaged in community engagement through the Impact Linda Vista Initiative with Dr. Odesma Dalrymple (SMSE) and Dr. Perla Myers (CAS-Math) who created the S.T.E.A.M. class for Mark Twain students.

In addition to teaching three classes, Wilnelia Recart Gonzalez has been an active research mentor working with twelve students in collaboration with Dr. Arietta Felming-Davies and successfully managing the transition to remote learning. She is a featured speaker for the Office of Undergraduate Research's virtual summer programming. She is also contributing to an article for Sister STEM on the way the COVID19 pandemic is impacting on minority scientists and writing and working with an artist on a children's book about the pollination of passion fruit in Spanish for a Puerto Rican audience.

Recommendations from 2018-2019 report and outcomes:

1. “In Fall 2019, committee members will hold a discussion with department chairs and mentors who have participated in the program to identify successes and opportunities for growth. We also want to encourage departments to reflect on the ways the postdoc faculty member has helped the department engage with new professional networks that can improve the recruitment and retention of faculty of color.”

**On-going-**Although our meetings were scheduled with the appropriate academic departments for the spring semester, we had to cancel due to the quarantine that began in March. The only department the postdoc committee was able to meet was Ethnic Studies, which included our former diversity postdoc Josen Diaz. We will reschedule the meetings with the other departments for the next academic year.

2. “Prior to the arrival of the new postdoc faculty, the committee co-chairs will meet with the chairs and mentors of postdoc faculty to discuss expectations.”

**Completed-** The co-chairs met with Sue Lowrey and Scott Ripley regarding expectations for new postdocs.

3. “We are working to align diversity postdoc faculty contracts with other non-tenure track faculty in the College to ensure consistency across departments. We are using the full-time, non-tenure-track faculty contract as a template.”

**Completed-** Tezeru Teshome and Wilnelia Recart Gonzalez received a full-time, non-tenure track faculty contract for the 2019-20 year.

4. “The committee recommends continuing the diversity postdoc program as a strategy to diversify the faculty ranks as well as providing opportunities for early career faculty to gain experience that can be a catalyst for their own advancement. We believe that a cohort model is the best way to support faculty in their first two years of full-time teaching, especially at predominantly white institutions.”

**On-going-**Funding from the Provost's office was solidified for three new hires every other year. We support expanding the program to other units on campus. On March 18, 2020 the co-chairs met with Dr. Susan Lord and Dr. Odesma Darlymple to discuss the possibility of having a diversity postdoc in the School of Engineering.

The commitment to a cohort model also became an important priority when deciding how to proceed for a Fall 2020 hire. The program could only support one additional postdoc faculty member and the committee did not feel that it would be productive to on-board one person. We are committed to ensuring that new faculty have a community of support and we can help to build community by bringing a group of three faculty at one time. The committee decided to suspend recruitment for this year so that three new faculty can begin in Fall 2021.

#### Other activities:

On January 8, 2020 the co-chairs had a telephone call with Shara Fisler from Ocean Discovery institute to share information about the idea of incorporating a model for the ODI that would model after USD's Diversity Postdoctoral program.

On April 23, 2020 we had a Zoom check-in discussion with various postdocs: The College teaching postdocs included: Wilnelia Recart-Gonzales, Aaryn Jones, Janel Ortiz, Tezeru Teshome, and Hannah Holtzman as well as Laura Gelles from Engineering. We discussed the challenges of remote teaching and research as it related to the COVID-19 pandemic. We discussed how to prepare for future goals and shared news about those transitioning out of the postdoc program.

#### Program Impact:

The Diversity Postdoctoral Faculty Program has made a significant impact on the diversity of faculty. Since 2014, the College has recruited 17 faculty. Of the 15 faculty that have completed the program, 5 of them are now tenure-track faculty members in the College. In other words, ~30% of faculty have converted from postdoc status to full-time tenure track. In that same time frame, the College as a whole has increased the total percentage of faculty of color who are tenured or tenure track from 23% in 2014 to 28.5% in 2019. The total number of tenured/tenure track faculty has increased from 198 to 210. The actual number of faculty who are identified from minority groups jumped from 46 to 60 between 2014 and 2019. This is significant in that the total number of hires in the past four years is relatively small in comparison to the total number of faculty. At the assistant professor level, the percentage of faculty of color moved from 28% in 2014 to 40% in 2019 and others have moved through the ranks. Specifically related to Black faculty, we have gone from 3 faculty in 2014 to 12 Black faculty who are tenured or on the tenure track; an increase of 300%.

The committee's work over the course of the next year will be to discuss action items related to the following recommendations:

1. Advocate to increase funding for cohort recruitment every year in the College of Arts and Sciences and in response to the Black faculty requirements for USD to fulfill its mission we will advocate to expand the Diversity Postdoctoral Fellowship to School of Engineering and SOLES.
2. Increase the faculty development funding from \$1500 to \$1850 to expand opportunities for postdoctoral faculty.
3. Include postdoctoral faculty on research panels or discussions that showcase their expertise, including programming at the Humanities Center, within their department, or other relevant programs.
4. In response to the Black faculty recommendations, we will advocate for funding to bring Black scholars to campus for events, seminars, or lectures.
5. In response to the Black faculty recommendations, advocate that USD institute a mandatory anti-Black racism course or module that is required for all students, staff and

faculty. For faculty and staff, we recommend that completing this module be part of the annual review process.

6. Consider whether a future (or the current) call should replicate the 2015 postdoctoral advertisement to focus efforts exclusively on Black faculty recruitment.
7. Work with departments in the College to develop a faculty recruitment resource (toolkit) that would enhance recruitment and retention of BIPOC.
8. Consider renaming the position. One suggestion includes renaming it to the “CAS Decanal Postdoctoral Fellowship.”