

Faculty Equity Advocate Program AY2024-2025 Final Report

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Overview

Currently, there are 33 trained Faculty Equity Advocates (EAs). Twelve participated in our in-person Fall FEAP training, while five completed a refresher course through Canvas.

During the 2024–25 academic year, seven faculty search committees were formed. Seven EAs volunteered to serve on these Disciplinary Search Committees (DSCs), including three in Arts and Sciences (Nursing, Computer Science/Cybersecurity, and Math/Data Science), one in Business/Finance, and three in the School of Education (Bilingual Education, Early Childhood Studies, and School Counseling).

Following the conclusion of the hiring processes, we distributed a Qualtrics survey to all participating EAs to gather feedback on their experiences. On April 22, 2025, we held a FEAP debrief to share survey results and discuss their experiences. A summary of the findings was compiled and presented to the EAs in the [FEAP 2025 Debrief Presentation](#).

Survey feedback highlighted a strong interest in integrating more role-playing activities into EA trainings. During our focus group, we created breakout sessions enabling participants to share real scenarios they encountered, which could be adapted into future training modules. We also revisited the idea of forming a Faculty Equity Advocate Advisory Council, building on conversations that began last year. Below are findings from our FEAP focus group debrief meeting.

Focus Group Findings

Overall, the tone of this year's debrief was more positive than in previous years. EAs affirmed the survey results and expanded upon them in their discussion. While some challenges remain, resistance to the presence of EAs and to their input appeared less frequently in this year's search processes.

EAs highlighted the value of the program not only to themselves, but also to the committee search process and the university as a whole. They appreciated the opportunity to connect with colleagues across campus, engage in deeper conversations about equity, and develop confidence in their leadership skills. For instance, one participant shared that the experience helped them “take on a leadership role and feel more confident speaking out against inequities and advocating for others.”

We discussed the potential creation of a Faculty Equity Advocate Advisory Council. After thoughtful discussion, it was agreed that it wasn't practical due to concern for confidentiality and anonymity. The group agreed that more regular check-ins by FEAP Leads, especially with the newer EAs, is advisable. It was suggested that EAs meet more regularly for general support so as to offset burnout. FEAP Leads should continue to serve as a resource and sounding board for EAs facing challenges during the hiring process.

EAs also described ways they observed real-time changes during the hiring processes. One EA recounted how they intervened during a potentially inequitable situation: They approached the individual in a calm, non-judgmental way, acknowledging that the behavior stemmed from a lack of awareness rather than intentional bias. By providing context and fostering empathy, the EA helped shift the colleagues'

perspectives. The individuals involved responded positively and were open to changing their approach. This example highlights the importance of clear communication, transparency, and ongoing dialogue in promoting equity, and demonstrates how EAs can be empowered to create meaningful change.

Conclusions and Next Steps

In the focus group EAs provided valuable suggestions for improving our Faculty Equity Advocate Program. These are their key recommendations:

Continue implicit bias and equity awareness training: Training successfully raised awareness of implicit bias and provided tools for recognizing and addressing inequities.

Support more Chair training: Some participants felt more confident intervening in inequitable situations, especially with supportive committee chairs, suggesting that chairs should be required to attend EA training as well.

Clarify role expectations: A gap existed between role expectations and actual role demands—especially for new EAs. New EAs should be assigned to less demanding searches to avoid overwhelming them and improve retention.

Make training more hands-on: Faculty Equity Advocate training would be more effective with more in-person sessions and role-playing to simulate real scenarios.

Check-in with newer EAs throughout hiring cycle: While the advisory council idea was nixed due to confidentiality issues, EAs agreed that the Leads should reach out to newer EAs during the hiring cycle to see if they are struggling in any ways and to offer support.

Overall, the Faculty Equity Advocate Program has continued to improve since its inception in 2021-2022. We will continue to recruit new EAs and incorporate these suggestions into future trainings and refresher courses.

This academic year, we also surveyed committee members who participated in 16 different administrative searches and conducted two focus groups to examine the problems and challenges encountered during previous administrative hires. Participants expressed a shared commitment to fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion in administrative hiring as well. If funding allows, we aim to develop a similar program, modeled after the Faculty Equity Advocate Program, within the next year.