Faculty diversity and the judicial system are among the focus areas for the new HSI fellows

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Eight faculty and staff members will have the opportunity to build greater capacity to support Hispanic undergraduate and graduate students as recently selected HSI fellows. Through the program, a cohort of faculty and staff members each year take part in project-based leadership training, mentoring and a series of workshops.

The fellows program, sponsored by the Office of the Provost and participating colleges and departments, is a key component of the University's role as a Hispanic-Serving Institution. The University is one of 569 institutions that have the designation, which requires an undergraduate student enrollment that is at least 25% Hispanic.

"It's incredible to think that we are launching our fourth cohort," said Marla Franco, assistant vice provost for HSI initiatives. "The program has had a ripple effect, as past cohorts have been inspired to strengthen our institutional efforts as an HSI. The program was even featured during the 2020 annual conference of the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities."

The fellows, who were recommended by a review committee that evaluated a record pool of 33 applications, will attend eight sessions led by HSI scholars, community partners, student leaders and University administrators. In addition to having individual focus areas, fellows will work in small groups toward shared interests that support the priorities of the Hispanic-Serving Institution Initiatives office.

Marcelo Rodriguez, who joined the University in February when he accepted the position of foreign, comparative and international law librarian at the James E. Rogers College of Law, hopes to build a program based on one he led while in a previous job. While working as a librarian at a federal courthouse in Brooklyn, New York, he built a program called "Justice For All" that brought students from throughout New York to the courthouse to give them a firsthand look on how the judicial system works.

"When I applied for this fellowship, I thought it would be such a great opportunity to replicate that kind of program here and bring the courts, the law school and the Hispanic community together to have new conversations and inspire Hispanic students to go to law school and be part of the judicial system," Rodriguez said.

He hopes to use the fellowship to create the community connections he'll need to build and launch the effort.

Jocelyn Fisher, faculty affairs coordinator for the College of Applied Science and Technology, says the fellowship aligns with her professional passion, diversifying faculty, which she believes will lead to a more diversified student base.

Her own research has shown that one of the reasons that students – especially minority students – withdraw from universities is a lack of minority representation among faculty and staff, she said.

"I've seen firsthand as a student and as an administrator what that lack of representation means to student recruitment and retention," she said.

Fisher, who has been with the University since December 2019, hopes to help lead an effort to create more physical spaces where minority students can feel a sense of belonging and community.

The cohort will begin its work with a kickoff dinner in September. The new HSI fellows are:

- Karla Cruze-Silva, Senior Manager, Student Success, Thrive Center
- Jocelyn Fisher, Faculty Affairs Coordinator, College of Applied Science and Technology
- Octavio Fuentes, Assistant Dean, Finance and Administration, University Libraries
- Michelle Menninger, Director, Enrollment Management and Student Success, Online and Distance Education
- Erin Paradis, Lecturer, Business Communication, Eller College of Management
- Marcelo Rodriguez, Foreign, Comparative and International Law Librarian, James E. Rogers College of Law
- Ann Shivers-McNair, Assistant Professor and Director, Professional and Technical Writing, Department of English
- Gabriela Valdez, Director, Global Education; Assistant Professor of Practice, Mel & Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health

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