

Udall Alumni Association and Udall Foundation Listening Session on Race, Inclusion, and Justice **November 18, 2020**

Discussion Summary

On November 18, 2020, the Udall Alumni Association (UAA) and the Udall Foundation (UF) hosted the second of two listening sessions for UAA members on race, inclusion, and justice. Dana Goodson, a Senior Program Manager from the UF's National Center for Environmental Conflict Resolution, facilitated the session.

Nora Cata, President of the UAA Board, and Alicia Harris, Director of the UF Education Programs, delivered opening remarks. Nora thanked participants for joining and emphasized the Board's commitment to fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion in the Udall community. She shared the UAA Board's goal of enhancing the access and presence of members who identify as black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) in Udall programs and noted that the UAA is uniquely positioned to make an impact related to race, inclusion, and justice given the diverse geographies and fields that alumni represent.

Alicia introduced herself as the UF's new Director of Education Programs, sharing her background in student aid administration and work with minority-serving institutions. Alicia thanked those who participated in the first listening session for returning and welcomed new members to the meeting.

Next, Dana facilitated a round of introductions, giving each participant the chance to introduce themselves by name, affiliation with the Udall community, and racial/ethnic identity. Approximately ten participants joined the listening session, representing Udall Scholars, Honorable Mentions, Fellows, and Interns from 2011-2020. Alumni participants identified themselves as either having a Tribal affiliation or as White, with some also mentioning their ethnic backgrounds.

Following the introductions, Dana reviewed the session objectives and agenda (see [Appendix A](#)), which were developed by a planning team of UF and UAA leadership. She also shared listening guidelines used in the first listening session to help participants create a safe and welcoming space (see [Appendix B](#)). Finally, Dana reviewed key takeaways from Listening Session #1 to orient new participants and remind returning participants of the previous conversation (see [Appendix C](#)).

Review and Discussion of UAA Programs

Nora voiced the UAA board's interest in evaluating and tailoring its programs to ensure that they are helping create an inclusive and engaging space for alumni. Noting that the UAA's goal is to help connect Udall alumni post-graduation, internship, or fellowship, Nora briefly reviewed several key UAA programs and initiatives, including:

- Regional networks – UAA maintains [regional network email lists](#) to help alumni in different states and countries connect with other alumni in their area.

- Webinars – UAA hosts periodic [webinars](#) to build connections and share knowledge across the alumni community. The board is currently planning a webinar on Diversity and Outdoor Recreation for December 2020.
- Newsletter – The UAA board compiles a quarterly newsletter to share updates on the [Alumni Resource Guide](#) (available with password: udallalumni1992), [mentorship program](#), and [current board members](#).
- Social media – UAA maintains a [LinkedIn](#) page and the [UAA website](#), which contain professional and networking resources for alumni.

Dana asked participants to consider their own experiences participating in UAA programs and to share suggestions for how UAA could adapt or transform its programming to increase engagement across diverse alumni groups. Key themes and suggestions included:

1. Current UAA programs are successfully fostering connectivity between alumni.

Several participants shared their experiences with UAA programs, noting that the Alumni Resource Guide and regional networks are especially valuable in connecting members of the Udall community. One participant shared that the Resource Guide has been helpful in connecting with other alums in graduate programs or organizations of interest. Others commented that by participating in regional network meetups, they developed valuable professional and social relationships with fellow alumni.

2. There is a strong desire to break down silos between environmental scholars and Native scholars and create a more cohesive, unified alumni community.

Participants commented on the lack of interaction between environmental and Native scholars at UAA events, remarking that although scholars spend their orientation together as one scholar community, they often end up on different listservs at the end of their scholarship. Although certain topics or discussions may be of specific interest to only one group, participants noted that there is significant overlap between the two policy areas. By separating the two communities, alumni may be missing opportunities to make new connections, find help to address challenges they are facing, or learn new ideas and concepts. Several participants suggested that the UF, which maintains the alumni listservs, consider combining the two listservs into one.

3. The UAA could help its members better leverage fellow Udallers' expertise, experiences, and networks to address problems that underserved communities are facing.

Noting the challenge of finding partners with relevant experience to help address private-sector finance issues in indigenous communities, one participant identified an opportunity for the UAA to help alumni better draw on each other's resources to address real-world challenges. Other participants agreed and suggested several strategies for building new connections in the community. For instance, one participant suggested that alumni team up in coalitions to brainstorm solutions to a challenge, similar to a hackathon. Another participant suggested that the UAA host a webinar on how Udallers can use LinkedIn to connect with other alumni and find ways to help each other address relevant issues. Additionally, a UAA board member offered that the board could consider critically reviewing the Alumni Resource Guide to determine if it has been missing the opportunity to connect people in relevant specialties and focus areas due to bias.

Review and Discussion of UF Education Programs

Jason Curley, Program Manager of UF Education Programs, shared preliminary information about the UF's intent to overhaul the undergraduate scholarship application. In the first listening session, participants identified opportunities to make the application process more inclusive and accessible to BIPOC students, sparking the Education team's interest in scoping out changes to the process. Given the UF Education Programs' application and review cycles and timelines ([Appendix D](#)), Jason shared that the UF is targeting the 2022 undergraduate scholarship cycle for a revamped application. He noted that the UF intends to host a webinar for alumni in the coming months to share information about the application process and gauge their interest in participating in the revisions.

To inform the Education team's thinking and planning, Dana asked participants to reflect on their own experiences applying for UF Education Programs and similar academic merit awards and to share any suggestions they have for improvements. Participants shared the following reflections and suggestions:

1. The UF should consider allowing applicants to submit responses to questions in unique formats to encourage creative thought and reflect individuality.

A UAA board member noted that several alumni suggested the UF allow applicants to submit video or multimedia responses to application questions in their responses to the listening session invite. These alumni felt that this could encourage applicants to show more of their personality and creative thinking to the review panel and perhaps make the application more appealing to a wider audience. Additionally, alumni suggested adding a question to the application to enable applicants to elaborate on any unique life experiences or challenges that could explain gaps in their application.

2. Participants emphasized the importance of recruiting diverse undergraduate scholarship review panels and developing clear instructions for how reviewers should consider diversity in their evaluations.

In addition to revising the application itself, several participants suggested that there may be an opportunity to improve the diversity of the application review panel and the review guidelines themselves. One participant expressed interest in learning more about the diversity of past review committees, noting that the UF should consider ways to increase the diversity of its reviewers. Recalling their past experience reviewing undergraduate scholarship essays, one participant reflected that there were no clear metrics or guidelines to determine how reviewers should consider and weigh applications from students from underrepresented backgrounds. They noted that by instructing reviewers to give greater weight to applicants who have overcome significant challenges, reviewers would likely end up selecting a more diverse pool of scholars.

3. The UF should consider ways to restructure the application to lower the barrier to entry for students from underrepresented backgrounds.

Although participants recalled the undergraduate scholarship application as being a valuable thought exercise, participants agreed that the application was arduous and complicated. Several participants noted that students attending large, well-resourced universities have a clear leg up in developing competitive applications since these universities often employ dedicated scholarship and fellowship offices and support staff. In contrast, students from underserved communities or nontraditional backgrounds may have less time, fewer resources, and no faculty support, which can be detrimental in

developing their applications. Additionally, one participant noted that indigenous students applying for the scholarship program often struggle with advocating for themselves in applications, as this goes against many indigenous communities' cultural norms. Participants suggested that the UF consider ways to lower the barrier to entry to the application process and make it more accessible to diverse communities, such as by implementing a staggered, multi-step application process.

Closing

Catie Ferrara Iannitto, UAA Board Member, and Bret Muter, Deputy Director of UF Education Programs, thanked participants for their thoughtful feedback and discussed their organizations' next steps. Catie shared several upcoming UAA events and encouraged participants to continue to stay plugged into the Udall community (see [Appendix E](#)). Bret shared that the UF Education team will reach out via the alumni listserv in early 2021 to discuss next steps for the 2022 undergraduate scholarship application overhaul and engage interested alumni. As the UF ramps up its recruitment for the 2021 Education Programs, he encouraged alumni to refer students who may be a good fit for the programs to the Udall Foundation website and to get in touch with their [faculty representative](#) from their alma maters. The deadline for the 2021 [Udall Scholarship](#) is March 2, 2021. The deadline for the [2021 Native American Congressional Internship](#) is February 5, 2021.

Appendix A: Listening Session Agenda

Listening Session on Race, Inclusion, and Justice (#2 of 2)

with the Udall Alumni Association and Udall Foundation

Wednesday, November 18, 2020

5:30 – 7:00 pm Pacific / 8:30 – 10:00 pm Eastern

Session #2 Agenda

Session #2 Objectives:

- Advance a conversation on how Udall alumni can support each other in promoting the increase in the presence, access, and involvement of participants who are Black, Indigenous, and people of color in Udall programs
- Consider specific actions the Udall Alumni Association (UAA) and Udall Foundation (UF) can take to transform our programs, including the 2022 Undergraduate Scholarship application process, to foster an inclusive and engaging space for stakeholders and alumni
- Gauge the Udall alumni community's interest in engaging with planned and future changes to Udall programs and identify how alumni would like to be involved moving forward

<i>Time</i>	<i>Lead(s)</i>	<i>Topic</i>
5:30 pm PDT	Dana G.	Welcome, Introductions, and Session Overview ● Welcome – <i>Nora Cata, UAA President and Alicia Harris, Director, Udall Foundation Education Programs</i> ● Round of introductions - <i>Dana Goodson, facilitator, National Center for Environmental Conflict Resolution, Udall Foundation</i> ● Listening Session #1 recap – <i>Dana</i> ● Session overview and guidelines – <i>Dana</i> <u>Materials:</u> <i>How to Use Zoom Features; Listening Session Guidelines; AnswerGarden link: https://answergarden.ch/1517939 (for use in session)</i>
5:50 pm	Dana G. & Nora C.	Review and Discussion of UAA Programs <u>Objective:</u> <i>Alumni have the opportunity to reflect on current UAA program offerings and brainstorm ideas that could make the alumni community more inclusive and engaging.</i> ● Overview of UAA's typical programming – <i>Nora</i> ● Questions for discussion include: ○ <i>Which UAA programs have you participated in? Which have you found valuable, and why? If not, why not?</i> ○ <i>Who is not "in the room" for this discussion and when you attend UAA programs?</i> ○ <i>How could UAA adapt or transform its programming to increase engagement across diverse alumni groups?</i>

		○ <i>What successes have you seen in other alumni groups or organizations?</i> <u>Materials:</u> UAA website: www.udallalumni.org; See Alumni Resources at www.udallalumni.org/alumni-resources/ (password: udallalumni1992)
6:20 pm	Dana G. & Jason C.	Overhaul of the 2022 Undergraduate Scholarship Application <u>Objective:</u> <i>Alumni have the opportunity to provide input that can inform programmatic changes to the Udall Foundation’s Education Programs.</i> • Overview of initial thinking on revisions to the Undergraduate Scholarship application and opportunities for involvement – Jason Curley, Program Manager, Udall Foundation Education Programs • Questions for discussion include: ○ <i>What would you hope to see in a revised Udall Scholarship application, including ways to make the application more inclusive, accessible, and diverse in the way we ask applicants to present themselves?</i> ○ <i>What aspects of other similar academic merit awards and applications do you think would work well for the Udall Scholarship?</i> ○ <i>What opportunities would you like to see for the alumni community to provide input on and/or be involved with the planning of significant programmatic changes (e.g., the development of a new Udall Scholarship application) within the Udall Foundation’s suite of Education Programs?</i> ○ <i>As the Udall Foundation moves forward with revamping the suite of Education programs, what actions could the Udall Foundation take to ensure the expectations of our shared goals of transparency and accountability are being met?</i>
6:55 pm	UAA & UF	Appreciation and Next Steps • Closing remarks – Catie Ferrara Iannitto, UAA Board member, and Bret Muter, Deputy Director, Udall Foundation Education Programs
7:00		Adjourn

Appendix B: Listening Guidelines

The following guidelines are intended to create space for participants to engage in productive conversation that leads to shared learning, improved understanding, and group creativity:

- **Black, Indigenous, and people of color will be invited to speak first.** Actively contribute to creating a safe space for Black, Indigenous, and people of color to participate.
- **Listen** carefully, whole-heartedly, and with respect. Listen to understand. Be present in this conversation.
- **One person talks at a time.** Everyone listens to the person talking, without interrupting. Make space for others to speak.
- **Know your intent, own your impact.** You may think your intent was harmless, but the impact of your words may be hurtful. Be open to hearing that impact from others.
- **No one knows everything, together we know a lot.** Enter this space with humility, and a belief that you can learn from everyone in the room, regardless of your own experience.
- **Assume nothing.** If you think you misunderstand, ask questions respectfully. Make room for the possibility you don't know the full picture.
- **Questions are encouraged, but participants have the right to not answer your questions.** Recognize the burden people with marginalized identities endure. Questions and curiosity are important, but recognize those with marginalized identities often, in addition to processing oppression, are forced to take on a teaching role, providing both explanation and context.

Appendix C: Listening Session #1 Takeaways

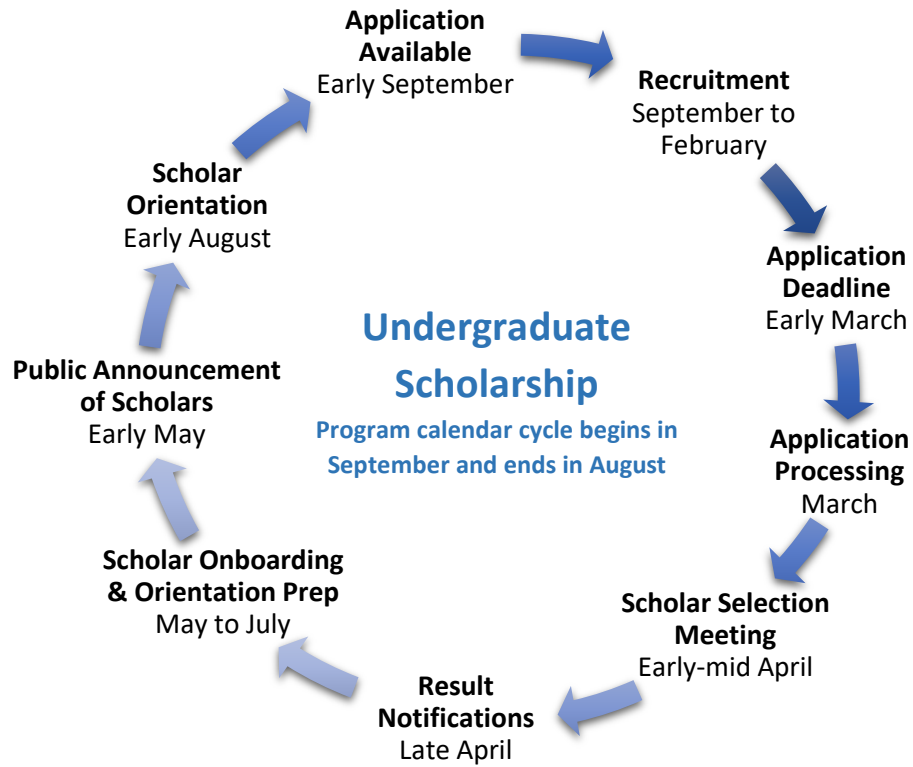
LISTENING SESSION #1

Themes and Key Takeaways

- Participants joined the listening session to listen, connect, understand, support, and learn.
- There is a strong desire to create a more inclusive alumni community and foster meaningful change for future generations of UF scholars, interns, and fellows.
- The UF and Udall community have been important allies to BIPOC alumni in some ways and have made improvements. However, further introspection, learning, and growth are needed.
- Authenticity, transparency, and accountability must be central components of the Udall community's strategy to address racial inequities.
- Participants would like to see a greater emphasis on learning, intellectual curiosity, and relationship-building within the Udall community.

Appendix D: Internship-Scholarship Program Cycle





Appendix E: UAA & UF Upcoming Events

Upcoming Events and Engagement Opportunities



Scholarship Application Update	UAA 2020 Annual Open Meeting
Recruitment for 2021 Congressional Interns Application Deadline February 5	Diversity in Outdoor Recreation Webinar Watch for invitation!
Recruitment for 2021 Udall Scholars Application Deadline March 2	Alumni Resource Guide Update
NativeNetwork and Enviro Listservs	UAA 2021 Board Applications