

University Senate Diversity Committee

Annual Report April 2016

Committee Charge: The Senate Diversity Committee shall review University policies, practices and conditions relevant to supporting and promoting diversity among students, faculty and staff.

Diversity Committee members 2015-2016: *Manisha Desai, Chair, Sociology, *Casey Cobb, Education, *Dipak Dey, CLAS (Faculty Standards Committee Rep), *Maria-Luz Fernandez, CAHNR, *Katrina Higgins, CLAS (Scholastic Standards Representative), *Patricia Jepson, CAHNR (Student Welfare Committee Representative), *Diane Lillo-Martin, Linguistics, *Cathleen Love, Dept. of Extension, *John Zack, Education, Haddiyah Ali, Undergraduate Student Senate, Elizabeth Conklin, Office of Diversity & Equity (Ex-Officio Member), Alice Fairfield, UConn Libraries, Matthew Hughey, Sociology Mackenzie Morrison, USG Maria Ana O'donoghue, Admission (Curricula & Courses Committee Representative), Willena Price, African American Cultural Center, Eugene Salorio, Business, Pamela Schipani, Residential Life, Chriss Sneed, Graduate Student Senate, Robert Stephens, Fine Arts, Susana Ulloa, ISS Academic Program Center

*Senate Member 2015/2016

The Senate Diversity Committee met September 22, October 13, October 27, November 3, February 2, and April 7.

In this academic year the Diversity Committee met with the Taskforce on Diversity and Provost Choi to discuss the implementation of the recommendations of the Taskforce, participated in the Search for the CDO, and introduced a diversity clause to the University Bylaw Preamble.

At the first meeting in September the Committee discussed the Taskforce on Diversity's report and agreed to: (1) invite Provost Choi to discuss his plans of action based on the recommendations of the Taskforce; (2) respond in writing to the Taskforce Report; and (3) introduce a diversity statement in the University By-laws preamble, and to spell out all the protected groups in Article XV of the University Bylaws and in Rules and Regulations, A. Admissions section of the Senate Bylaws.

At the October meeting, the committee agreed to make the following response to the Taskforce report. (1) The size and efficacy of the Diversity Council, too large, too many actors with little authority to make changes; (2) the Chief Diversity Officer qualifications, reportage, provost/president, resources, authority, accountability (e.g., need for annual reports to the board of trustees); (3) need to have proactive not just reactive actions and spaces for students, staff, faculty, and visitors such as an Office of Access (being considered by a group discussing issues related to disability); (4) enhance visibility of

cultural centers, including spatial, and highlighting their focus not just for undergrads but also the entire community; (5) need to differentiate diversity, which is often fuzzy and expanded to mean everything, from issues of underrepresented U.S. minorities to international students, and ensure that the purview of the office includes issues of equity and retention of students, staff, and faculty of color as well as issues of curricular integration not only via the Institutes but also for cognitive/epistemic justice throughout the university.

Provost Choi, Vice Provost Weiner, and Assistant Vice-Provost Wilder met with the Diversity Committee on October 27, 2015. Provost Choi told us that the Taskforce was now charged with helping to implement its recommendations and hence would not be disbanded. Among the issues that the taskforce is now working on is the hiring of the CDO as well as the other recommendations including the structure of the diversity council.

Among the issues discussed:

(1) Diversity Office and Search for the CDO.

Committee members asked various questions regarding the structure of the Office of Diversity, the resources that would be provided, the job description for the CDO, and the composition of the search committee. Provost Choi indicated that he was not aware of the budget and resources allocated for the office though he knew that the hire would take place despite the anticipated cuts from the state. He also suggested that there might be some realignment that would ensure that we begin to address the recommendations even in the absence of new resources.

We sought and after some hesitation were granted representation on the search committee for the CDO. We also asked that the candidates' schedules include time with the Diversity Committee. Members also suggested that the search committee should reflect the diversity we seek.

(2) Diversity Council

Provost Choi agreed that the size of the diversity council could potentially be unwieldy and so they were hoping to have an executive of fewer members. This is where our input would be especially helpful. Various suggestions were made regarding ensuring that appropriate entities with the appropriate authorities were included and held accountable for various aspects of the diversity mandate such as recruiting and retaining students, faculty, and staff of color, curricular diversity, campus climate etc. Mentoring was noted as a key mechanism that needed to be addressed structurally and included in the council.

(3) Increasing awareness of and leveraging existing diversity structures and initiatives

There was a great deal of discussion about the role of the Cultural Centers in addressing diversity issues and mentoring students of color and how they are also meant to serve graduate students as well as faculty and staff. Yet, the majority perception is that they primarily serve the undergrad population. They have been very successful in doing so and we need to think of ways to translate their success with the undergrad student population to other parts of the community. Note was also made of the Associations of Latino, Asian American, and African American faculty and staff and how their visibility needed to be increased and how they could be used more effectively. Some of these associations are more active than others but all could be better supported to meet their goals.

Many of us noted that the cultural centers budgets had been cut drastically over a number of years so that the events that they held to promote networking and mentoring among staff and faculty of color are no longer being planned.

We all agreed that while there had been real and perceptible progress made in recruiting under grad students of color, much needed to be done for grad students, faculty, and staff, particularly for African American faculty and staff. Elizabeth Conklin noted that her data indicate that over the past 5 yrs., of the 94 African American faculty and staff who had been hired 92 had left. She was quick to point out that these two groups are not the same individuals and her office is doing more fine grained analysis to look at who the groups were, the reasons they left, how that could be prevented, etc. She hopes to have a report on this by the end of the year.

At the November meeting, we discussed the language to explicitly name the protected groups in Article XV of the University By-Laws on General Policies and Practices and in Senate By-Laws Rules and Regulations, A. Admissions. We also discussed adding a diversity clause to the University By-Law preamble to indicate our commitment to diversity. In consultation with the ODE we formulated and circulated the proposed language to the committee on Nov. 16th, 2015.

At the February meeting we discussed the Diversity Taskforce Report in light of our conversation with Provost Choi, Vice Provost Weiner, and Assistant Vice Provost Wilder on Oct. 26, 2015. We agreed to provide a written response to the taskforce.

Based on our request, President Herbst invited Manisha Desai to serve on the search committee for the Chief Diversity Officer. She was unable to serve and so Diane Lillo-Martin served in her stead. We requested and were put on the schedule of each of the finalist during their campus visit.

At this meeting we also formulated three questions to ask each of the candidates for the CDO position. We also designated a students, staff, and faculty representative to ask the following three questions.

(1) The first question would ask the candidate their impression of UConn's diversity based on their visit, give them a sense of the place of our committee in the governance structure, and ask them how they see themselves interacting with our committee to meet the diversity goals and their experience in working with a similar structure/constituencies (faculty questioner).

(2) Based on their experience of leading diversity and inclusion efforts at their institutions how would they assess UConn's efforts and what would they bring (staff questioner)?

(3) How do they understand issues of domestic and international diversity and what experience do they have in addressing such issues (student questioner)?

We urged our members to attend the town hall meetings and those specifically scheduled with our committee. We agreed to meet immediately following our meeting with the last candidate so that we can promptly provide our feedback to the search committee.

At its March meeting, the University Senate passed our motion to add a diversity clause to the preamble of the By-Laws. The changes to Article XV of the University By-laws and to the Rules and Regulations of the Senate By-Laws were rendered unnecessary as a result of the changes made by the Scholastic Standards Committee.

At the April meeting we reviewed our work to prepare this report and also determined that our main goal for next year would be to work with the CDO and the Diversity Council. In preparation we agreed to schedule a meeting the CDO. We were invited to send a representative to the Diversity Council and we agreed that the incoming Chair of the Committee, Maria Luz Fernandez, would serve as our representative to the Diversity Council.