

UNIVERSITY SENATE DIVERSITY COMMITTEE

ANNUAL REPORT APRIL 2019

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: 2017-2018: *Amy Howell (Chair), *Dorothea Anagnostopoulos, * Edith Barrett *Sandy Bushmich, *Clarissa Ceglie, *Casey Cobb, *Pam Heath-Johnston, *Brendan Kane, *Micki McElya, *Lisa Pane, *Margaret Rubega, Stephanie Andrade (undergraduate student), Jenasia Shuler (undergraduate student), Stephany Santos (graduate student), Alice Fairfield, Maria-Luz Fernandez, Ana O'Donoghue, Willena Price, Christina Rivera, Anastasios Tzingounis, Susana Ulloa, Dana Wilder (Assistant Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion, Ex Officio member).

*Senate member (2018-2019).

Dates of Diversity Committee meetings during 2018-2019 academic year: September 13, October 11, November 8, December 13, February 14, March 14, April 11, May 9.

Main topics for the academic year:

There were two major areas that the Committee chose to focus on as long-term commitments:

1. *Improving the campus culture for gender diverse students, staff and faculty with a particular focus on transgender individuals.* A subset of the committee has met every 1-2 months to identify both short and long term strategies to address issues encountered by gender diverse faculty, staff and students. The new Director of the Rainbow Center, Kelsey O'Neal came to our November meeting. They shared resources and training available at the Rainbow Center, described their work with various groups on campus and at the Health Center and discussed possible strategies for increasing awareness around pronouns and gender. The sub-committee worked with the Rainbow Center to develop a poster campaign on pronoun usage that will roll out at the end of this semester and the beginning of the Fall semester. The sub-committee is also following through with constructive feedback on a recently re-released Guide for creating an inclusive and affirming workplace for transgender employees. One of the members of this subcommittee also is serving on a transgender task force in the Office of Diversity and Inclusion.
2. *Improving data gathering related to recruitment and retention of under-represented faculty and staff.* A second subcommittee has been strategizing on what data would be best to collect to understand the reason that the percentage of under-represented faculty and staff is largely stagnant, in spite of decades of attempts by the University to change this. In particular, the sub-committee would like to see the University improve the exit interview process and develop better retention strategies for under-represented groups. The sub-committee will be meeting with Elizabeth Conklin and Lloyd Blanchard before the end of the academic year and will also partner next academic year with the Faculty Standards Committee on this issue.

Two other issues the Diversity Committee has been following are related to indigenous peoples:

1. *Land Acknowledgement Statement.* Representatives of the University and of the Connecticut Tribal Nations developed an Indigenous Land Acknowledgment statement as a formal statement that recognizes and respects Indigenous Peoples as stewards of this land and the enduring relationship that exists between Indigenous Peoples and their

traditional territories. Also, since colonialism is a current ongoing process, we need to build our mindfulness of our present participation. Over the course of the past year this statement was vetted by a variety of individuals and groups, and the Diversity Committee followed its progress. President Herbst has recently officially released the Acknowledgement as a University statement and has encouraged its usage in appropriate forums. For the April 29th meeting the Diversity Committee will put forward a motion that the University Senate should recite this Acknowledgement at the first Senate meeting of each academic year and that the Statement should be readily accessible on the Senate website.

2. *Indigenous Peoples' Day*. The Undergraduate Student Government approached the Senate asking their support for a USG resolution urging the University to recognize Columbus Day as Indigenous Peoples' Day. The resolution, its potential implications and possible approaches to broadening the impact of the resolution were discussed with the USG's Executive Advocacy Consultant. The Diversity Committee agreed in principle to support USG but also resolved to check into potential legal implications. It was noted that Virginia Tech had adopted a similar registration. Recently, President Herbst asked ODI to form a committee to explore establishing Indigenous Peoples Day at the University. The Diversity Committee has provided a faculty representative to this committee.

There are several other issues that the Diversity Committee is participating in or tracking. These include:

1. *Provost's Initiative for Gender Diversity in Academic Leadership*. Diversity Committee member, Micki McElya, is head of the Provost's Initiative for Gender Diversity in Academic Leadership. Some goals for this academic year include identifying approaches for supporting gender diverse faculty and leaders and changing deep structures that produce inequalities and inequities. Micki noted that mentoring has already come up a number of times. She will be meeting with a variety of groups throughout the year.
2. *President's Committee on Civil Discourse and Dialogue*. Brendan Kane, Diversity Committee member and chair of the President's Committee briefed the Diversity Committee on the Final Report of Civil Discourse and Dialogue Committee. Recommendations focused on weaving dialogic skill and practice into university life. There were proposals related to PTR and Merit and to strengthening community and building leadership.
3. *Provost search committee*. The committee proposed to send a request to the President's Office reminding them of the importance of diversity in the make-up of the search committee for the next Provost. This has been done.
4. *UConn racial microaggressions survey*. The committee met with Micah Heumann, a co-investigator in the team looking at racial microaggressions at UConn. The team is still trying to gather participants and the Diversity Committee agreed to use their contacts to encourage students of color to participate and suggested other avenues for encouraging participation. The study team will meet with the Committee in the Fall to share their results and discuss ways forward from the findings.