

## Meeting Minutes – Diversity Committee

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**Location:** University Senate Conference Room  
**Date:** 10/10/19  
**Time:** 12:34pm-2pm

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### Attendance

#### **Present**

|                 |                    |                 |
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| Stephany Santos | Diane Lillo-Martin | Alice Fairfiled |
| Aida Silva      | Susana Ulloa       | Amy Howell      |
| Cindy Tian      | Margaret Rubega    | Dana Wilder     |
| Edith Barrett   | Christina Rivera   |                 |

#### **Support Staff**

Emily Pulzello

#### **Agenda Items**

1. Brief introductions
2. Updates and Discussion of the search for VP of Diversity and Inclusion and Chief Diversity Officer.
3. Approval of Minutes from previous meeting.
4. Discussion of how to proceed with committee work and special considerations that need to be considered by this committee.

### Notes

- 1) Introductions
- 2) A. Howell (Chair) announced the resignation of Brendan Kane
  - a) Update from the previous meeting presented by D. Wilder
  - b) Land acknowledgement statement that is being looked over by President Katsouleas for any additional final touches.
  - c) Rainbow Center is working to create their own institute for training and educational experience. Most likely rolled out in the Spring 2020. D. Wilder expressed that they [Rainbow Center] do not currently have the bandwidth to visit every FYE class to provide information.
  - d) Next week is Indigenous Peoples Week (Oct 14<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup>).
  - e) Search committee is being put into place by President Katsouleas to find a Chief Diversity Officer. Initial plan to begin search during October, the search has not been opened by optimistically will before November. The committee would like to the opportunity to speak with and meet the candidates during the vetting process.
  - f) President Katsouleas has reached out to a wide breath of students and faculty through the means of meetings to discuss the future of the university and trying to bring all of the university together.
- 3) Vote to approve minutes passed.
- 4) Special considerations for this committee.
  - a) What do they need to do to promote the retention of university professors and faculty in the future?

- b) An overview was provided of this committee's meeting with President Katsouleas. The President has been meeting with a great number of stakeholders asking a variety of questions regarding the qualities a Chief Diversity Officer should have. Almost all stakeholders regarded that the Chief should report directly to the President. This person is to be someone that can communicate with the Provost and other parties. Additionally, a Chief Diversity Officer is someone that the President and the University would like to have actual proof of making a difference and actual impact.
- c) It was discussed that a member of this committee is involved and included in the search process. A committee has not been formed yet, and the decision of how many students will be included is not final either. There was discussion that there is a good point to not hiring someone from industry, furthermore there is not the strongest track record for this position in staying a long time.
  - i) It was noted that nationwide Chief Diversity officers tend to have a higher turnover, due to getting bogged down by Title IV work.
- d) The question was raised of what the president is currently prioritizing in his search for a new officer. The response was that some of the search has been centered around the lack of retention and diversity of underrepresented faculty and staff across the university. During a recent meeting with the President there wasn't as much discussion regarding diversity of the students, however that can be attributed to the audience of the room.
  - i) It was explained that CLAS and other colleges are in the process of focusing in on faculty, it may be a benefit for the new Chief Diversity Officer to focus slightly less on faculty and more on the student, if other parties in each college are assuming this role.
- e) There is a miscommunication in factual differences between persons of color and underrepresented minorities and how statistics from the university are presented.
  - i) There must be more of a sound terminology. What are admissions offices across the nation defining and are they using this terminology to make numbers appear larger? Admissions statistics are perceived larger if persons of color are not appropriately defined to exclude underrepresented minorities.
  - ii) There has been a switch between the terminology and the statistical inclusion that miscommunicates that persons of color are also underrepresented minorities. There needs to be more streamlined definitions, concepts, and talking about inclusion and diversity. The university should not be afraid to accept undocumented students, which has been accepted and passed by legislation.
  - iii) The question was raised regarding the committee that would handle neurodiversity. CSD is moving away from a model that is solely focused on disability. The word disabled or disability can be used but needs to also be articulated that the medical usage can and often does imply that this person is to be changed into something else. A. Howell offered the idea of adding a member of CSD to this committee. Is there anywhere in our policies that neurodiversity is also included?
- f) It was asked if there was a clarification on the exact number or percentage of underrepresented students in the university population? There was a multipart answer to this question, part of this population has been a reliance of historical statistics, but there is also a reliance on what relative percentage these groups are in outside of the university as a comparative factor for the university population. The NSF has specific people groups that have been defined, but there is also a state definition that applies to the University. A potential topic for this committee to further discuss can be the neuro-disability discussion.
  - i) There was a discussion regarding CLAS efforts for cluster hires with openings specifically framed around Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. The Dean of CLAS specifically expressed the cluster of new hires whose scholarship is Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. The university

has a strong record of bringing people here, but not in retaining hire. In some cases, the university becomes a stepping stone. There is still a broader issue of retention and actively working to keep hires here and satisfied with the university.

- (1) Is there also a relation to retention of undergraduates? Are underrepresented students choosing to leave disproportionately to other groups? There are a wide variety of issues that cause students to leave, however this issue has not been a larger issue at hand. The 93% retention rate is inclusive of Storrs, this does not include regional campuses.
- (2) The concept of departments presenting an attitude that if faculty and staff do not like conditions they can simply find somewhere better. What is the attrition rate?
  - (a) This may provide if there is an actual problem of retention at the University and if the university is doing worse than other universities. There should be more of a continuous study of retention.