

University Senate Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee

Annual Report April 2023

Committee Charge: This committee shall review University policies, practices, and conditions relevant to supporting and promoting justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion among students, faculty, and staff.

Diversity Committee Members 2022-2023:

***Diandra J. Prescod, Chair**, Neag

*Becky Bacher, CLAS Advising

*Inge Marie Eigsti, CLAS, Psychological Sciences

*Caitlin Elsaesser, School of Social Work (sabbatical sp23)

*Kristen Govoni, CAHNR

*Micah Heumann, ISS, ACES

*Greg Reilly, Business, Management

*Jennifer Pascal, Engineering, Chemical & Molecular

*Margaret Rubega, CLAS, Ecology and Evolutionary Biology

*Sarah Willen, CLAS, Human Rights Institute

*Cindy Zhang, CLAS, Geography

Cinnamon Adams, The Graduate School

Taaseen Khan, Undergraduate Student Government

Mona Lucas, Enrollment Planning & Management

Makenzie Robinson, Undergraduate Student Government

Stephany Santos, School of Engineering, Biomedical Engineering

Audrey Silva, Center for Students with Disabilities

Frank Tuitt, Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion & Chief Diversity Officer

***Senate member (2022-2023).**

Dates of JEDI Committee Meetings during the 2022-2023 academic year:

October 3, November 7, December 5, February 6, March 6, April 3, May 1.

In the 2022/2023 Academic year, the JEDI Committee focused on information gathering and providing input to various programs and projects of importance to the committee. Diandra Prescod will be rotating out as committee chair, in accordance with Senate Bylaws; she will be replaced in 2023-2024 by TBD.

Major topics for the academic year:

1. Advisement and Contribution to Other Programs and Projects.

The committee's role is realized to a large degree in working with other university entities to provide perspective and to ensure DEI perspectives and impact are accounted

for; committee members also took time to gather information from other university entities to discuss where the committee can assist, and contributed feedback to the ABR Course Ad-Hoc Committee. The Committee Chair (Prescod) participated in the search process for the new Dean of Nursing, though was not a member of the search committee. Prescod also participated as a member of the ABR Course Ad-Hoc Committee.

The committee invited Angela Rola, Founding Director of the Asian American Cultural Center, and Kathleen Holgerson, Director of the Women's Center, to discuss the role of cultural centers and programs. Areas of concern shared with the group were as follows:

- incidents of anti-Asian, Black, and brown racism,
- antisemitism and islamophobia
- bias reports
- the increase of academic probation for students of color
- uneven progress in faculty diversity
- faculty of color experience
- declining retention and graduation rates for students of color
- challenging campus climate
- professional development and mentorship opportunities for staff of color.

The committee and presenters discussed how the committee can support cultural centers and programs.

Jeffrey Hines, Chief Diversity Officer, UConn Health, Mona Lucas, Assistant Vice President for Enrollment Policies and Strategic Initiatives and Maureen Johnson, Assistant Clinical Professor, UConn School of Law, made a presentation to the group entitled, "Reaffirming UConn's Commitment to Diversity in Admissions: UConn's Response to the US Supreme Court Cases (SFFA v. Harvard & UCN). Presenters and the committee discussed how this decision could potentially impact UConn.

The committee had questions about campus climate and invited Kent Holsinger, Board of Trustees Distinguished Professor, Vice Provost for Graduate Education, and Dean of The Graduate School to discuss the Graduate Student Experience in the Research University Survey (SERU). The SERU allows students to share their experiences, engagement, and overall satisfaction with UConn. The committee reviewed the survey, gained more insight into how the university uses the SERU, and offered feedback.

2. Engagement and interaction with Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer Frank Tuitt, and the Office of Diversity and Inclusion.

Frank Tuitt joins every JEDI committee meeting and shares a review of recent events, actions, and initiatives in ODI. Some notable highlights at ODI this year include the formation of the UConn DEIJ Champions team, honoring the impact of Title IX (50th

anniversary), and the institution being selected as a Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation (TRHT) Campus Center in the Fall of 2022.

3. Structural Racism at UConn.

Conversations continued about requiring all students to take the 1 credit course on Anti-Black Racism that was developed in Fall 2020. An ABR Course Ad-Hoc Committee was formed in Fall 2022 and worked on a proposal to bring before the Senate. Co-chairs of the ad-hoc committee, Shawn Salvant, Associate Professor of English and Africana Studies, and Stephany Santos, Assistant Professor in Residence, Department of Biomedical Engineering, shared updates with the group. The committee discussed and reviewed a copy of the proposal and provided feedback. The ad-hoc committee presented their proposal at the April senate meeting and discussions continue.

Data from 2017-2021 show that much higher percentages of Black, Latino and Hispanic students than white students end up on academic probation at the end of their first semester at UConn, and that these numbers worsened during the COVID pandemic. The committee would like to learn more about this important issue and Tarrayl Starke, Associate Vice Provost for Student Success, is scheduled to speak to the group during the May 1 meeting.