

**Equity and Inclusion Advisory Council**  
Minutes  
November 19, 2020

**Present** – Calvin Claggett, Chassidy Cooper, Felipe Fiuza, Adrianna Guram, Keith Johnson, Mary Jordan, Kim Maturo, Joe Sherlin, Laura Terry, Phyllis Thompson., and Jessica Wang.

**Guests:** Brian Noland, Adam Green, and Bethany Novotny

**Not Present** – Antonio Rusinol

- I. **President's Update** - ETSU President, Dr. Brian Noland addressed the council. He started by thanking members of the council for their leadership that supports the students, faculty, and staff of the University, especially through this extraordinary time. His comments covered topics such as the mental health issues faced by students, faculty, and staff due to COVID-19; classrooms being vacated and filled with zoom meetings; ribbon cutting at the Patricia Robertson Pride Center; activity in the Jordan Center; budget concerns; navigating the political environment; and availability of COVID-19 testing. Dr. Noland asked the council member's their perspective on a motion from the SGA regarding Milligan University. The SGA motions may have the potential to impact academic freedoms, impact the ability of the faculty to conduct research, and impact engagement in community service. He did commend the students for their willingness to step forward and lead.

Comments and perspectives from council members and guests included:

- Agreement that the students are to be congratulated for their work.
- Concerns about current and future collaborative research with faculty at other institutions with opposing views.
- The possibility that students will not be able to receive grant funds generated by partnerships with institutions with opposing views.
- Respond by focusing on the value of the things ETSU is doing such as the Pride Center, the Multicultural Center, and the Language and Culture Resource Center; ETSU is becoming more accessible and inclusive.
- Affirm that ETSU is a safe place to harbor students, faculty, and staff;
- Continue the work of making the region of East Tennessee more equitable and inclusive and support for anyone targeted by discrimination.
- Creation of a body that would weigh the strength and weaknesses of any contract/partnership to determine if those organizations values fall into conflict with ETSU's mission and values.
- The importance of difference, the importance of embracing difference, and the importance of coalition over simple consensus;
- Leading by example, willingness to be brave/courageous, learning how to listen across differences.

- The potential inability to compete against athletic teams, belong to the southern conference, or engage in partnership with certain 3<sup>rd</sup> party marketing rights holders for sports and entertainment.
- The potential inability to perform community service work with faith-based organizations.
- Support for the spirit of the SGA motions which potentially negates engagement with a variety of people with different perspectives who can come to an understanding which would allow numerous opportunities for students and faculty;
- SGA motions could reverse much of the equity and inclusion work that has been done.
- What others value does not always align with our values, but a goal is to have a bigger influence on others; and withdrawing does not allow expressing our mission and values with others.

II. **Call Meeting to Order** - Chassidy Cooper called the meeting to order.

III. **Approval of Minutes** – A motion was made by Felipe Fiuza, and seconded, stating, “I move that the minutes of the October 22, 2020 meeting be approved as distributed.” The motion carried. In keeping with open lines of communication, the approved minutes will be uploaded to the Office of Equity and Inclusion website.

IV. **Old Business**

None at this time.

V. **New Business**

A. **Welcome/Onboarding of New Advisory Council Members** - Chassidy Cooper and all the members of the council welcomed new members, Calvin Claggett and Jessica Wang. Chassidy Cooper noted that she had shared the council bylaws and previous meeting minutes with both new members.

B. **Evaluation of Lunch and Learn Session** - The fall 2020 lunch and learn series have concluded with a successful turnout and presentation by Cerrone Foster titled *The Biology of Skin Color*. A full spring 2021 series starts at the end of January 2021 with *Making Your Classroom Inclusive* by Taine Duncan, from the University of Central Arkansas.

C. **Other Items Discussed** -

Chassidy Cooper thanked Adrianna Guram for taking the lead in submitting a nomination for the ACPA Voices of Inclusion Award. Support letters for the award were received by President Noland, Perry Stuckey (Eastman Chemical), Bethany Novotny, and Carshonda Martin.

Kim Maturo shared that the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Equity and Inclusion Conference Planning Steering Committee had their first meeting. Bethany Novotny and Adrianna Guram

will be co-chairs of the Programming/Content subcommittee; Phyllis Thompson will chair the Logistics subcommittee, Mary Jordan and Carshonda Martin will co-chair the Student Track subcommittee, and Kim Maturo will chair the Communications subcommittee. Council members were encouraged to reach out to subcommittee chairs to offer assistance.

Mary Jordan commented that embracing our values and not finding ourselves limited in terms of how we feel about people/value people is the direction to continued growth. It can be a thin line in some of the negotiations and compromises that get made, but it's important to value and respect people.

Joe Sherlin remarked that Bethany Novotny's leadership as Director of the Pride Center has been exciting. He shared that he is currently working out some logistics, an operating budget, and aligning the Pride Center with the Multicultural Center.

Bethany Novotny shared that she is in the process of developing strategic goals for the Pride Center. While researching other pride centers across the country, she discovered that East Tennessee/Appalachia is a unique culture with unique needs. Just being established has already opened doors. She feels the Pride Center is possibly reaching people we may never know or even set foot on the ETSU campus. Needs will be accessed ongoing. Currently, Bethany Novotny is working with financial aid to be able to staff the Pride Center with student workers. She added that aligning with the Jordan Multicultural Center has let students know that they are made up of layers of identities. Calvin Claggett will be reaching out to Bethany Novotny to collaborate/brainstorm within athletics and Felipe Fiuza will also reach out regarding a virtual Latino festival being planned for the spring.

Phyllis Thompson noted that the Women's Resource Center is an integral part of the equity, inclusion, and diversity work done on campus. The graduate assistant, Alison Dyer, for the WRC has been reaching out to students as well as the community. She recommended that she be invited to attend a future meeting to share what has been happening in the WRC.

Felipe Fiuza and Calvin Claggett spoke about creating an annual award based on efforts for equity and inclusion. Mary Jordan shared that there have been diversity awards given in the past such as the Patricia Robertson Diversity Award which was given annually to faculty/staff and a student. The Women's Resource Center also gave out an annual staff women of the year award. These awards can be recreated and/or expanded. Chassidy Cooper added possibly creating the Angela Claxton Freeman Service Award and giving out these awards at the annual equity and inclusion conference.

**VI. Next Meeting Date** –December 17, 2020, 2:30-3:30 pm, via zoom.

Meeting adjourned at 3:30 pm.

**Respectfully submitted by: Kim Maturo**