

Equity and Inclusion Advisory Committee
Minutes
August 14, 2019

Present – Filipe De Oliveira Fiuza, Ann Eargle, Adrianna Guram, Keith Johnson, Mary Jordan, Antonio Rusinol, Joe Sherlin, Laura Terry, and Phyllis Thompson.

Not Present – Sarah Houck.

- I. **Approval of Minutes, July 25, 2019 Meeting** – The minutes of the July 25, 2019 meeting were approved as distributed. In keeping with open lines of communication, the approved minutes will be uploaded to the Office of Equity and Inclusion website.
- II. **Group Photo** – The committee met for a group photograph as well as individual photos on the front steps of Burgin Dossett. Photographs along with committee member bios will be uploaded to the Equity and Inclusion website. Members feel that this step is an opportunity for visual identification, which is beneficial in providing awareness of presence to the campus community as well as committee members' commitment to inclusivity.
- III. **Awards and Recognition Process and Review of Documentation** – Dr. Johnson thanked Ms. Guram and Dr. Thompson for working so diligently on preparing the draft policy, procedure, and nomination forms for the Mary V. Jordan Inclusive Excellence Award. The policy, as submitted by the adhoc committee, was approved. These documents serve as the foundation of the award, and Dr. Johnson shared that, it should be understood that later revisions could be realized since the award is in its inaugural stage.
- IV. **Advisory Committee Bylaws** – Dr. Johnson shared the importance of generating bylaws for the advisory committee. He shared his vision for how the bylaws could operate effectually to serve the greater vision of the university. Among other elements, Dr. Johnson noted some foundational essentials of the bylaws as chair or co-chair, terms of service, and possible student representation. These elements are paramount to the continual success and inclusivity of the committee. Currently, the advisory committee serves as a support group to Dr. Johnson. Dr. Johnson shared that putting a structure in place, which includes terms for rotating members, is of utmost importance in order to keep the committee fresh. The name of the group is also important and of utmost importance is to assemble a group of folks who have a heart for inclusivity, which has developed into a passion to see inclusion become prevalent campus wide. Historically, students have been driven in the area of diversity and carry out many diverse functions across campus, inasmuch as, a suggestion was made to include students – possibly freshman, sophomore, junior, senior, and potentially graduate student representation. A suggestion was offered to establish a separate equity and inclusion student advisory committee, which could feed the population of the current advisory group as well as become a feeder for other committees across campus. Dr. Johnson will distribute a primitive draft of bylaws for the committee's peruse and for an offer of feedback.
- V. **Equity and Inclusion Plans for Open House** – Dr. Johnson shared that since the beginning of the year, many changes have taken place concerning the structure, location and vision of The Office of Equity and Inclusion. He announced that in an effort to help spread the word to our campus community, an open house is being of planned. The plan is to distribute printed information, trinkets, beverages and freshly popped corn. The location is planned for Burgin Dossett, 2nd floor lobby area. Dr. Sherlin shared that there is a possibility that he could provide funds for t-shirts distributed to the first 500 visitors to the event. He also suggested placing a sign on the first floor directing faculty, staff, and students to the location of the open house. The Diversity and Inclusion Conference Planning Committee is in the process of working with the Office of University Relations in regards to a logo, which will be used for all printed material for the conference. There is a possibility that the same logo can be used for the t-shirt giveaway. As soon as a firm date for the open house has been identified, the date will be communicated campus wide.

VI. STUDENT ISSUES – Dr. Fiuza shared two incidents of dissatisfied students: one left the university to enroll in a school that, as the student noted, was much more diverse than ETSU; and an honor student who felt that she was not treated with the same respect and professionalism as other students and, was thoughtfully, considering leaving the university. Dr. Fiuza met with folks from the Office of Admissions to discuss recruiting efforts of more Hispanic students. The meeting presented an opportunity for Dr. Fiuza to share the student experiences and his belief that in order to obtain more Latino/Hispanic students, the first step is to take good care of the students who are currently enrolled. Also shared was the significance of how pivotal it is for departments to work together to meet the needs of students. Dr. Sherlin commented that over the past few months, restructuring of Student Life and Enrollment has brought awareness that more connectivity and integration is the goal for the division, and making accountability key.

CHANGED VISION OF EQUITY AND INCLUSION – Dr. Johnson shared that the vision of Equity and Inclusion has been elevated to a different level over the last several months. One of the overriding elements of the vision is inclusion and serves as one justification for affecting curriculum, evaluations, conferences, etc. It is hoped that the impact will assist faculty, staff and students in realizing that inclusion is the new “norm” without losing tradition and remaining true to university heritage, and at the same time affecting a changeover in culture from exclusivity to inclusivity. The realization that there remains so much more that the institution can do, provides empowerment for getting the message across. In effecting inclusivity, the message is essentially required from the top and not exclusively from the Office of Equity and Inclusion. Our campus is in the position of guiding folks to greatness because that is who we are as an institution and we have the potential to be the university for which we desire to work. Dr. Johnson commented that committee members are catalysts for change and urged them not to become discouraged in endeavors, but instead become partners for culture change. It is hoped that an announcement will be made concerning the name change from the Office of Equity and Diversity to the Office of Equity and Inclusion in the very near future. More importantly, however, is the change in direction and vision of the office, which should be communicated.

VII. Welcoming New and Returning Students – Welcoming new and returning students to campus is an opportunity to address students from a new and different perspective. When Dr. Johnson met recently with Dr. Adam Green, the institution’s new Chief of Staff, Dr. Johnson conveyed his preference for a welcome message that assures a campus environment, which is inclusive for all students, faculty and staff. It is apparent that some students continue to struggle with the fall 2016 incident. The committee members agreed that along with the welcome message, there should be reiteration of resources for faculty, staff and students still struggling with the past incident – resources such as the Counseling Center, Multicultural Center, and Equity and Inclusion, among others, who are available to lead to folks to helpful resources. The message should convey strong support of the wellbeing of faculty, staff, and students with a clear institutional statement of being wholly intolerant to incidents such as the fall 2016 incident and all other incidents of exclusivity across campuses. Dr. Johnson shared that a message of this magnitude should be shared from the Office of the President. Dr. Sherlin commented that there were a variety of focus groups, which convened after the 2016 incident, the outcomes and sanctions of which he will share with the committee. Dr. Sherlin shared, in relation to completion, that equity gaps remain and in some cases are widening.

VIII. Southern Regional Educational Board (SREB) Scholars Program – Dr. Johnson noted that a new SREB scholar has been accepted and will begin fall 2019.

Next Meeting Date – September 13, 2019, 2:00-3:30pm, Burgin Dossett, Room 201F.

Respectfully submitted by: J. Ann Eargle