

Equity and Inclusion Advisory Committee
Minutes
May 16, 2019

Present – Filipe De Oliveira Fiuza, Ann Eargle, Adrianna Guram, Keith Johnson, Laura Terry, and Phyllis Thompson.

Not Present – Mary Jordan, Antonio Rusinol, and Joe Sherlin.

Guest – Dr. Johnson invited Ms. Ashley Leonard, University Counsel, Office of Compliance, to attend the meeting due to shared interests among departments and potential future collaboration relating to equity and inclusion as the plan moves forward. Ms. Leonard shared that the Office of Compliance is a new office and she and others are striving to raise awareness regarding services offered. Ms. Leonard currently serves as the compliance counsel for the university and oversees the compliance officer, as well as two assistant compliance officers and special investigators. The newly formed department is charged with oversight of civil rights matters, as they relate to prevention and enforcement. In addition, the department reviews complaints and investigations from faculty, staff and students; policy development and review for legal compliance; outreach in education, training, workshops, and seminars for employees and/or students for civil rights matters; and serves as the response team on behalf of the university in working with federal and state agencies. External discrimination complaints are handled through the office as well as annual compliance applications, i.e., security reports, affirmative action plan report, etc.

Overview – Dr. Johnson forwarded an article to committee members titled *Active Inclusion* distributed by Association for Talent Development. Of particular interest is that many of the initiatives shared in the article solidified that the pathway of the Equity and Inclusion Plan is proceeding in the right direction. In addition, Dr. Johnson shared the importance of an effective website, formulation of subcommittees, and review of plan objectives, including timelines, and ideas and suggestions were welcomed. Participation in the 2019 National Conference on Race and Ethnicity (NCORE), a leading national forum on issues of race and ethnicity in American higher education, was discussed.

- I. **Equity & Inclusion Website and Social Networking** – Dr. Johnson shared that the current Equity & Diversity website is quite slim offering a very meagerly explanation of the vision and mission. The committee discussed many options for strengthening the website. Ms. Guram suggested highlighting some current events as well as recent past successful milestones and possibly past awarded grants relating to inclusion. Allowing some cross sharing with other departments to prevent recreating information already provided through other sites was discussed. Also discussed was the possibility of sharing general information regarding college/unit diversity plans, events and programs administered by the Multicultural Center, social gatherings sponsored by the Language and Culture Resource Center, receptions/meet and greets, celebration photographs, as well as inclusion activities conducted by human resources, compliance, housing, etc. Taken into consideration, and of great importance, will be effective categorization of interests for ease of locating information due to the varying audiences visiting the website. It is hoped that the site will lend opportunity for sharing information via links to departments/units. Dr. Fiuza commented that “catch phrases” are essential and used by HEED institutions to brand themselves as inclusive and diverse. One of the suggested “catch phrases” is “*ETSU Includes You.*” In addition, the inclusion of our institution’s diversity statement, photographs of the office staff, and information for reporting an issue are other pivotal keys to a fundamental website. Dr. Thompson suggested the creation of a symbol that can be easily recognized on the Equity and Inclusion website as well as other sites across the institution. Websites and formats of HEED institutions will be reviewed for ideas. A format that best fits our institution, while remaining within the marketing and branding strategy, will be utilized. One of the challenges faced will be compliance with the current strategic direction for website formatting. Website ideas should be forwarded to Dr. Johnson and Dr. Fiuza for consideration.

Dr. Thompson shared that students are more likely to search Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram for the latest “in the know” information in lieu of visiting a website. As important as receiving expedited, thoughtful, and intentional information provided via social networking is, the social networks should alert the reader that additional detailed information is available via our website.

II. Plan Subcommittees – Dr. Johnson shared that the plan has been developed and at this time, subcommittees will be required to lead and culminate efforts in the areas of committee members' passions. Dr. Fiuza shared his desire and commitment to join efforts on number 9 of the Equity and Inclusion Plan which is the task of developing a marketing campaign to promote equity and inclusion as it relates to web presence as well as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, etc. Ms. Guram expressed interest in numbers 13 and 15 of the plan, which are the tasks of establishing diversity infused courses that will become part of the general education core requirements and student success efforts, respectively. Dr. Johnson shared that he is interested in tapping into the knowledge of Dr. Onks in relation to exploring the development of a student retention center, which is number 15.d (i-v) of the plan. Dr. Thompson shared that she would like to explore number 16 of the plan that researches how diversity effects teaching, research, and service and how the impactation of each can be regarded as an accolade in lieu of perceived as a penalty. Dr. Johnson assured the committee members that they would not be working alone, but others would be commissioned to assist in further developing the efforts across the board. Dr. Johnson reiterated that the plan for equity and inclusion is not a one-office event, but one that will involve many and strategically woven into the fabric of the university if we have an expectation of success.

III. ADiverseETSU, Post Doctorates, and SREB Scholars Program – Dr. Johnson shared information relative to the ADiverseETSU program developed and managed by him originally and funded for approximately eight years via a TBR grant. The program included 100-125 interviews in a span of three days and of those, 20-25 were recruited as potential matches for ETSU. Through the program, ETSU hosted a campus visit of several days' duration with activities including, among other things, an opportunity to meet with faculty members with the same academic and program interests, meeting with the president, church dinners, and an opportunity to attend a sport activity or other activity of interest. However, after the initial visit, there appears to be a breakdown and, many times, individuals are not embraced thereafter. Nevertheless, the program has been proven to work long term and ultimately serves to plant seeds of opportunity, but the extension of inclusion is a major key to success. Two candidates who originally met Dr. Johnson through the ADiverseETSU program several years ago reached out to him just recently. One candidate has a scheduled interview on campus next week and the other candidate connected with Dr. Johnson to inform him of her submission of application. Dr. Johnson shared recent data from the American Council on Education (ACE) illustrating changing trends in the population. The university has a great opportunity to conform and adapt to the change and embrace diversity.

Concerning Southern Regional Educating Board (SREB) Scholars Program, even though the State has discontinued support, Dr. Johnson shared that Dr. Noland is in full support of continuation and funding of the program. SREB is a favorable place to invest time and capital. Dr. Johnson met with Dean McGee, School of Graduate Studies, who is committed to providing travel funding for SREB scholars. Dr. Johnson also shared that there is potential for additional grant funding for post-docs that could provide increased opportunities. In October, Dr. Johnson will be penetrating colleges/units in an effort to identify folks who are willing to accompany him to Atlanta for the Institute for Teaching and Mentoring Conference for recruitment purposes.

IV. National Conference on Race and Ethnicity (NCORE) – Dr. Johnson shared that the NCORE conference is scheduled for May 28 – June 1, 2019. Due to the large number of faculty/staff attending the conference, he feels it wise to strategically structure travelers with conference offerings to receive a larger return on investment. Dr. Johnson shared that for future conferences it is his hope that departments be willing to collaborate with Equity and Inclusion to allow more folks who have an interest in inclusion to attend NCORE conferences and the like. For folks attending the conference, Ms. Guram suggested that they offer a short written synopsis of their “take-aways” of their NCORE experience for posting on the new Equity and Inclusion website.

V. Diversity/Inclusion Conference Planning – The Equity and Inclusion Conference Planning Committee members were unable to meet as planned. However, the planned dates of the conference remain set for September 26 and 27, 2019. Dr. McGee mentioned the possibility of contracting with Theater Delta for a capstone event to the conference. Theatre Delta uses interactive theater, scripted and improvisational audience participatory theater to foster dialogue and implement solutions that result in palpable change in communities around the globe. Theater Delta operates on a pedagogy that recognizes that when participants engage characters and conflict, and subsequently take part in a dialogue where they process the issues, they are more likely to change personal attitudes and behaviors. Further exploration into Theater Delta will be conducted to determine prospective benefits for the institution, cost, availability, etc.

VI. Diversity Champions – Diversity Champions as they relate to position was discussed. The original thought of associate deans serving as diversity champions may not be a likely probability at this point. Dictating the responsibility of serving as a diversity champion to an associate/assistant dean, when they may not consider themselves champions of the cause, could present a concern. With the current centralized budget model, colleges are authorized to initiate their own budgetary decisions. It would be ideal to have a campus wide effort to charge colleges with assigning/appointing an associate/assistant dean for Equity and Inclusion. However, at this time, budgets are a substantial concern for many colleges and as a result, this initiative is better earmarked as a long-term goal.

Conclusion – The subcommittees will continue working through the Equity and Inclusion Plan.

Next Meeting Date – June 7, 2019, 2-3:30pm, President's Conference Room.

Respectfully submitted by: J. Ann Eargle