Division of Academic Affairs
Diversity Task Force
Tuesday, March 16, 2021
3-4:30 PM
Via Webex

Minutes

Present: Don DeHayes, Mary Grace Almandrez, Julia Lovett, Anne Veeger, Brian Heikes, Jaunetta Hill, Kathleen McIntyre, Alycia Mosley Austin, Nelle Couret, Dan Persaud, Trish Morokoff, Lynne Derbyshire, Gifty Ako-Adounvo, Furong Xu, Peter Larsen, Sean Rogers, Alisa Baron, Ashley Buchanan, Martha Elena Rojas, David Fastovsky, Vinka Craver, Mary Cloud, Michelle Fontes and Molly Greaney.

Announcements:
Climate Survey – Response rate is at 11% (8.3% for students, faculty 27%, staff 26.4%). All, please encourage students and your departments to respond. There has been some confusion from students regarding the word ‘climate’ (global warming) but new messaging has alleviated this. Please clarify with students if it comes up.

Faculty Senate meeting this Thursday afternoon will include faculty forum on Agenda for Change. We are getting good dialogue on this; focus on curriculum and searches.

Deans budget hearings have been scheduled over the past week or so and this is the first year we’ve asked them to submit a college diversity accountability report. It’s showing colleges taking this seriously; giant step forward from where we were.

Approval of the February meeting minutes.
Trish Morokoff moves to approve and Mary Cloud seconds, all in favor, the minutes are approved, with correction to list of attendees.

Continuing Business

Agenda for Change – moving toward meaningful outcomes
Diversity Statements in Searches – review attached DEI statement and rubric drafted by subcommittee

DEI statement and rubric discussion facilitated by Trish Morokoff and Peter Larsen.

Peter shares the draft statement requesting language.

Each search committee would modify this to suit their needs. We could send this to Affirmative Action, noting that the AADTF wants to include this in all searches and have AA implement.

Rubric is very helpful. We do not necessarily need a separate diversity statement but perhaps have diversity questions woven into the research and teaching statement.

This document is meant as a guideline, offering a template, one single model is not for every department.
Diversity statement topic can also be discussed/addressed in University Diversity Council.

Suggested language -
 Forrest how about something like: Your DEI statement (2 pages maximum) should address your relevant accomplishments, experiences, education, and training and how you will contribute to the University’s DEI mission through teaching, research, and service.

…. ‘Consistent with the President’s vision and transformational goals and the academic strategic plan…. ‘

Trish - The document can be sent back to the subcommittee and worked on there a bit more. This is a starting point, and search committees can amend it relative to their discipline. i.e. Comfort in teaching diverse students, summer camps, etc.

Alycia : Rubric - the candidates knowledge of issues in their field needs to be evaluated.

There is no discipline exempt from this, most applicants are prepared for a diversity statement request. We are focused on educating those on the search committee.

Process needs to start with the Dean as a charge to the search committee, to give them this guideline (recommendation) rubric.

Depending on the experience not all categories are as weighted. Identity theory and awareness are different then teaching, research and service.

Discussion on identity section of proposed rubric.

Trish - The committee can continue to work on this also. Others are welcome to join the group (which is called) Diversity Statement Subcommittee.

The statement and rubric are a good start to help search committees; people would welcome this information and be relieved.

We will share as a google document for all to add suggestions.

What we can do between now and the next meeting? Search committees will need help using a rubric like this. Should we ask AA / HR to implement this?

Vinka suggests she can pilot this in COE using final rubric.

Alycia has sample statements she’s collected to use in the badge workshops and can use as a model.

Sean mentions that from a HR lens, this is just one method to assess. Open ended questions, didn’t elicit the wanted response; difference in disciplines. What is needed is more pointed, targeted questions: DEI theoretic frameworks you’ve used, etc. We need to guide the DEI statement – 3 prompts. This will inform your interview process.
There is evidence that having more clear prompts will help make a less bias decision; we need to promote this.

Add clear prompts to the teaching and research statement too; so that similar guidance is provided on all requested statements.

Trish will link in full committee on the google docs and revision on both documents.
Try drafting out a more detail version on the requesting statement.
What about research and teaching? Is this for our committee?

Providing general guidance in whatever statements a search committee is requesting would help level the playing field and help to avoid bias in assessment.

We could recommend to search committees that these sections of this rubric relating to teaching and research should be applied to the teaching and research statements respectively.

We need to move away from bias, and involving HR / AA so there is accountability in the process.

URI HR is conservative and very risk averse.
This can make progress and achievement of goals difficult.
There has to be institutional balance. Overall guidance on how to help candidates prepare statements and how to help committees remove bias.

The meeting adjourned at 4:35