Division of Academic Affairs  
Diversity Task Force  
Wednesday, February 10, 2021  
3-4:30 PM  
Via Webex

Minutes

Present: Don DeHayes, Mary Grace Almandrez, 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, John Cruz and Michelle Fontes.

Announcements:

Climate Survey – Mary Grace: Survey opens on 3/2/21 for four weeks and we need assistance in encouraging students to take the survey. The survey takes about 20-30 minutes and has to be completed in one sitting. Colleges will receive disaggregated data in order to prioritize resources. Our goal is to receive a 30% response for college/department participation. We will use this as a baseline to move forward; part of a longitudinal study and will help inform the next strategic plan for the University.

Other - URI is joining National Center for Faculty Development. NCFDD. All faculty, post docs and graduate students are eligible for a free membership.

First Year Dean’s Diversity Fellowship – 12 nominations were received from 7 programs and 5 offers have been made. One has already accepted and will join URI in the fall. We await the responses of others by 4/15.

Approval of the Minutes of the December 15th meeting
Motion to approve by Peter Larsen, and seconded by David Fastovsky. All in favor, and the minutes are approved.

Continuing Business

Agenda for Change – moving toward meaningful outcomes

Academic Summit reflections, additions to the agenda
Organic discussion regarding need to change the culture at URI. Weave this into the agenda for change. Effective anti-black racism agenda is needed to change the culture at the University.

Students were grateful to have the opportunity to address the faculty on this issue.

Credit for DE&I work - Idea to include diversity work in annual review and P&T came from a breakout group in CELS and was discussed again during the Summit. We need to incorporate this into the P&T process.

P&T is outlined in the collective bargaining agreement. We can work to negotiate and move this forward. Suggested language was proposed 10 years ago and needs updating. Document prior to the meeting. This is part of developing an anti-black racism
agenda. How do we see this working or not working? The obstacles will help navigate language.

*Diversity statements in searches* - fewer than 1/3 of current positions ask for a diversity statement and they are inconsistent. We need a rubric for how to write a diversity statement. Need to be clear on how we write the descriptions and what we are looking for.

Need to offer guidance regarding what we are asking of candidates and how to review diversity statements for faculty searches. Should there be a common rubric for diversity statements? AADTF could provide some language and a rubric for use by search committees if they wish. Candidates need to talk about things they have actually done, not just overarching philosophy. This group could draft language suggested, for what we are looking for. We could develop rubric. It is of value if the candidate talks about what they’ve done rather than general statements regarding their philosophy.

We need to look at what it is that we hope to get out of the applicants. Encourage us to be outcome driven. We don’t want a *diversity statement requirement* to be proforma.

The starting place is a statement but it’s also about accountability, training and retention. We can have a statement and process but whomever is chairing the *search* committee is key. How do we hold ourselves accountable when we try to make these changes? We need staff who can focus on these initiatives. How do we support and retain new faculty once they are here?

Need to tie the diversity statement to the required/preferred requirements, so that candidates can be rated on those qualifications.

The diversity statement offers the opportunity, when we interview, to ask follow up questions.

Despite a requirement *a diversity statement*, candidates do not *always* adequately answer the statement (*1/3 in a recent search*).

A subgroup of this committee will draft best practices for a diversity statement and rubric for a search process. Volunteering: Peter, Trish, Katie, Ashley, Alycia. We will pick up on this at our next meeting. Trish will convene the group.

*Recent Chronicle article on diversity statements:* https://www.chronicle-com.uri.idm.oclc.org/article/5-donts-in-writing-your-dei-statement

**Shifting Campus Culture and the Call for Mandatory Training**

Preview 5-min video by Sean Rogers – https://drive.google.com/file/d/1EsXniRmN4vPkM3koMiDIOKGN7Dz72bdx/view?usp=sharing

Long term, ongoing, training is more effective than one-shot training. Once a year training isn’t very effective and research shows that mandatory training can create adverse consequences. There can be positive effects if training opportunities are rolled out as part of a larger diversity initiative. The training can’t be the solution, it needs to be
one part of the overall effort. Having a point person has a big effect on driving outcomes of this type of initiative, especially when that person has decision-mailing authority and a seat at the table with leadership.

In COB, they don’t require a diversity statement for faculty searches. When used, they need a framework to work well. COB relies on the diversity requirement in the job description. Need to have someone on each search committee who holds the committee accountable during the process, provides support with identifying potential candidates (LinkedIn, grad program directors, etc) and holds them accountable as they evaluate the applicants, making sure that they don’t discount applicants based on pedigree and other biased evaluation approaches that screen out diverse candidates.

Training needs to be objective oriented - like the search process. Needs to be related to the goals that we are trying to achieve.

**Discussion**
We have some training that is making a difference – Grad Badge program, Annemarie Vaccaro Inclusive workshops, CED micro-credential and Engaged Departments. Those are successful and moving the dial.

We need to live our values. In order to be a diverse community that is anti-racist, there are things that we must do. One of these things is awareness building, which might include a workshop or other ways one can actively engage in a slate of opportunities. That ensures that there is something for everyone. We tie that to accountability because everyone should engage in this work.

The COB model relies on having a faculty diversity “coordinator”, which isn’t the model that all colleges are going with. Could a diversity coordinator handle all the searches in a college? Person wouldn’t have capacity for the intensive effort used by COB in a large college.

At some schools Affirmative Action trains a cadre of qualified diversity ambassadors who support searches across campus. They are trained and bring an outsider perspective into the search. These individuals need to be empowered to make comments and push the committee in order to be effective. They also need to be able to handle the push-back that may come from faculty on the search committee.

Need search training at the beginning of all faculty.

Need to have executive level support for the diversity point person approach. There were a lot of questions about Sean Roger’s his role in COB and what he will be doing.

When searches happen in CELS, some searches are asking candidates to meet with Michelle Fontes to hear about their perspectives on diversity, and then could share her feedback with the committee chair. Also part of meeting for new faculty, to ensure that they know about the role and the resources available to them.

In Kendi’s book, he distinguished between feelings and outcomes advocacy. At URI we sometimes get involved in feelings advocacy, it is well-intentioned, but doesn’t really advance our goals as effectively as possible.
A key thing to happen on searches is to review the people who apply to see if you have a diverse applicant pool. This doesn't guarantee a diverse hire, but in the absence of a diverse pool, no progress will be made. Someone should be monitoring that to ensure that recruitment continues until a diverse pool exists. AA does review applicant pool demographics and push for a diverse interviewee, but only if the pool is diverse. They do not alert the committee if the search hasn't drawn a diverse applicant pool.

Rooney rule from the NFL – every head coach position must interview a black candidate, is now being applied in some corporate settings. Some corporations require a diverse person in the group of finalists. Another approach is to over sample, beat the bushes to get people to apply, which will increase the likelihood of a diverse hire.

We know that there’s a selection process and search committees have their own biases that need to be changed. Need to have more communities of learning that are active like Voices in CELS, they have changed hearts and minds. We need to examine the culture at URI and support the communities that are active. They are active, but working without support. These learning communities build knowledge and capacity across the university.

The new Graduate School Diversity fellowship forced early identification of BIPOC applicants and drove an early and through review of those candidates. This will likely impact the number of BIPOC students they admit, beyond those offered a fellowship.

Meeting adjourned at 4:35pm