1) Present: Gifty Ako-Adounvo, Michelle Fontes, Don DeHayes, Sean Rogers, Mary Grace Almandrez, Lynne Derbyshire, Anne Veeger, Brian Heikes, Ashley Buchanan, Jaunetta Hill, Alisa Baron, Kathleen McIntyre, Diane Kern, John Cruz, Mary Cloud, Nelle Couret, Molly Greaney, Dan Persaud, and Martha Rojas

2) Provost DeHayes provides an overview for new members. The task force was formed approximately ten years ago for academic affairs, regarding various ways to enhance inclusion and diversity campus-wide, but with a focus on academics. This is particularly important as it’s part of the institution’s core mission. When a university has done a good job, it’s reflected in the curriculum. The learning outcomes for the diversity and inclusion general education outcome were drafted in this group and then represented at the Faculty Senate. There is still much work to be done.

3) Approval of the Minutes of the October 15 meeting: The meeting minutes are approved; Lynne Derbyshire motions to approve and Sean Rogers seconds.

4) Updates:

**Director, Diverse Faculty Recruitment & Retention (DDFRR)**

Mary Grace Almandrez – The search is ongoing director of Director, Diverse Faculty Recruitment & Retention (DDFRR), the second candidate is on campus now and third next week. Search committee members include Matt Bodah, Karen Jennings, and Tony Chen (graduate student). The expectations are for a new person to come in and work with search committees but one person alone can’t attend all search committee meetings, but perhaps can train search chairs or committee members. This individual will work in collaboration with Affirmative Action and Human Resources with a tentative start date of January, 2020.

**Discussion**

Focus on training search committees; teaching people best search practices.

Need to recalibrate the director position to include developing pipelines. Not waiting until there’s an open line to talk to search committees. Need to market effectively to diverse circles. Need accountability of search committee in recruitment and reviewing credentials of applicants, best accomplished with training and support to create a lasting change in culture.

**All Gender Bathrooms**

Mary Grace Almandrez provides an update on the protest regarding all gender bathrooms that took place two weeks ago. Initiative actually started formally in 2013 and the Gender and Sexuality Center took the initiative and worked with the President’s LGBTQ Commission. The students wanted to call attention to it because they didn’t have any information or updates. Facilities operations, Office of Small Projects is working on it in three phases:

- Phase 1 - is complete
- Phase 2 – in process
- Phase 3 – completed next year; ADA compliant and can they be converted.

Signage has been approved - Erin Earle is working on Interactive maps and lists with information available campus-wide.
**ADVANCE Program materials Update**

Helen Mederer provided a copy of the ADVANCE Faculty Recruitment Handbook. ADVANCDE web page has been archived, we’ve reached out to Barb Silver to get a PDF version.

ADVANCE was an NSF initiative (2003) funded and designed to hire diverse faculty; and women in STEM. It highlights mentoring, faculty recruitment, retention, and dual careers. They developed and provided a lot of resources. HR should make this part of the of fabric for hiring practices. Perhaps there’s a role for this committee to move forward with initiatives.

5) **Critical Standpoint Article Discussion**

Our task force has an annual budget of $20K and some has been spent on Annemarie Vaccaro’s diversity training. There’s $7K left this year to fund initiatives. On July 1, we will have another $20K. We can also use these funds to re-invigorate the individual college diversity committees.


Since URI is creating its own board, we need diversity reflected in the composition of that board. Initially, board members are picked by the Governor. The Provost has drafted some desirable qualities for the board’s composition (diversity, legal, etc.).

Some boards also have a subcommittee for diversity, to integrate into the university; this may be an option.

The concern is how to influence behavior. Diversifying the pool isn’t necessarily the issue, but the selection process is (bias). We value things that are similar to us and we hire our friends; we come in with our biases. It’s homosocial reproduction and we hire people who we are comfortable with, leaving other people who are outside our comfort zone.

People aren’t conscious of what they are doing.

We should start with people on the committee who are sensitive to these dynamics. Once you make that recognition, how do you change that behavior. People feel threatened, they cast aside objective information. We need to empower people on committees and hold committees accountable.

Recent number of new faculty hires provides a new generation of people who bring a fresh set of eyes to the process.

Importance of having empowered voices at the table, and to have the support of the Diversity Committee (when you’re the only diverse faculty in the room).

Faculty live by promotion and tenure guidelines and important committee work must be reflected in the contract and valued for P&T if we are going to ask junior faculty to take on that role.

Department search structures can get in the way. Faculty hire to replicate the programs that they have. It is important to get people outside of the department on your search committee – some but not all departments already do this.

We need to make search committee work more transparent and make sure decisions are justified.

We’re not doing the hard work of educating the faculty and we need to change the culture. The Multicultural Faculty Fellow search structure is a good process. That was part of the training. What kind of portfolio does a person from a diverse background have, etc. (answer why they may have fewer publications). It would be great to have a document, normed guidelines of what’s
expected, behavior model to guide each search. The new DDFRR would not be there for each search, but it would be helpful to have guidelines for the chair (charge).

We have exit interviews as to why people leave, but we should also ask why they come.

6) College Diversity Committees:  
CELS Diversity Committee – Michelle Fontes:  
In CELS, she is assistant dean of diversity, recruitment and retention. Because there’s a dedicated person to do the work, it’s been successful. People on the diversity committee have been thoughtful but didn’t have the time (or incentive) to do the work. Now we have a chair who is a faculty member, and is committed to doing the work. You need someone who is passionate about diversity and more action oriented. This is part of their College’s mission statement, and she advises the dean, as part of the strategic plan. The dean is committed but it’s not easy to do with people who are already overcommitted.

In CELS, the committee assists diverse students applying to grad school. Departmental efforts are listed. They conducted a climate survey of the college: Voices of inclusion; a grass roots effort. This included faculty, graduate and undergraduate students. It asked what issues are important to people in CELS. What are the topics to guide our work? Committee reads provoking papers for discussion which can be somewhat controversial to spark discussion with grad students taking the lead.

Discussion  
This really is a cultural change, not just doing an activity. CELS started this seven years ago, so it takes time to cultivate.

In A&S the committee has shifted for more good conversation re: outward facing other faculty in A&S. They wanted web presence for the committee. The college was approved to have a diversity page to announce events. They hold faculty lunch conversations, with topics such as microaggressions; who are URI students today; minoritized faculty in A & S; Annemarie Vaccaro’s workshops, inclusive pedagogy; and inclusive language. They have focused on underrepresented undergrad scholars. They are developing land recognition statement to use on a regular basis and inviting students who identify as indigenous for input.

In Nursing, they changed their structure. They had diverse representation and wonderful conversations, but nothing happened. They have a pathway to the Narragansett tribe and have done outreach to the tribe. Talking about book club and soliciting suggesting for books. Annemarie Vaccaro is doing faculty workshop.

7) Action items / prospective goals:  
a) We will capture some of the ideas and structure from the Multicultural Faculty Fellow search which is creative and follows a post-doc model.  
b) Communicate with the deans as various (successful) diversity committees had the support of the college dean.  
c) What are some deeper cultural issues we can capture in writing?  
d) Draft guidelines for search chairs training.  
e) Invite Helen Mederer to an upcoming meeting.  
f) It takes time to build culture in the colleges and dedicated staff (position).  
g) Think about a way to utilize the remaining $7K in our budget for initiatives.  
h) Review questions and results from Nelle’s survey, apply similar method to every college.