

University Diversity Council
Minutes
April 17, 2020
10:00 -11:30 a.m.
WebEx

Attendance: Gifty Ako-Adounvo, Mary Grace Almandrez, Jacquie Britto, Marland Chang, Erin Earle, Maling Ebrahimpour, Corey Fernandez, Michelle Fontes, Trish Morokoff, Holly Nichols, Eileen Orabone Jen Riley, Martha Rojas, Mary Stanley, Annemarie Vaccaro

Guests: David Dooley, John Stringer

Absent: Brian Heikes, Lulu Alryati

I. Welcome

Marland Chang and Trish Morokoff were introduced as the newest members of the UDC.

II. Approval of Minutes

February 21 minutes were approved with no changes.

III. Charge from President Dooley

President Dooley joined the meeting to give the charge to the UDC. He explained how this Council is a new structure for the University that came out of the CED External Review. He indicated that the review team had suggested that a group should be assembled to act as the primary advisor to the Chief Diversity Officer and that through the CDO, be an important source of information and advocacy to the Senior Leadership Team. He also indicated that this Council would advise the CDO on all things related to community, diversity, and inclusion, and would evaluate the progress, challenges, and opportunities, and advise, whenever needed, the CED strategic plan. The UDC will be the caretakers of the strategic plan and would help revise and lead evaluation and assessment around University goals articulated in the strategic plan. President Dooley also indicated that Mary Grace would have the responsibility to coordinate with units that do not report to CED now, including student centers and college-based committees, and coordinate their work around community, equity, and diversity. She will need to make sure that the coordination of communication is consistent across these units and that the Senior Leadership Team is apprised of various initiatives and how they interface with one another across the University. This Council will serve as a conduit for advocacy, information, critique, and feedback from the community into the University's leadership. They will need to function as a group where the University community is comfortable talking to members of this Council and feel included in its work. Mary Grace will also need to make sure these meetings are inclusive and accessible to the campus community. The UDC can decide how they would like to include the community.

After the charge to the Council was made, Mary Grace commented on how CED will be publishing an Annual Report to highlight achievements across campus, and that she had spoken to the President about having another CED external review in the future.

The UDC engaged in a discussion with President Dooley about the difficulties that students are facing in the transition to remote education and on-line learning (e.g., distance learning on their smart phones, lack of amenities such as access to the web, additional responsibilities that impact their learning, sense of loss of community). Another issue that students are dealing with is the new grading policy. A concern was raised about needing to find a way to communicate these policies more effectively. It was stated that many of the TD students were having a hard time understanding what the policy is stating. Communication could be more student-centric and accessible.

A suggestion was made to possibly add a few extra people on the UDC temporarily, such as a student affairs representative and someone from University College. The President stated that he empowers the UDC to reach out to other people to help with all of these issues and to also reach out to the students to directly engage them in this effort. Another question that was brought up was whether or not the Graduate School Dean search would be going forward in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. It was shared that the search is currently being worked on and is in a very active phase. Provost DeHayes knows how important this search is and wants to ensure that the Graduate School has strong leadership. The President indicated the importance of this search as well, because URI is thinking about rolling out more graduate programs and certificate programs online, and graduate students will be looking for ways to enhance their resumes after they graduate.

IV. Presentation on Student Retention by Dr. John Stringer, Director of Institutional Research

John Stringer presented on equity in student retention and graduation. Data was disaggregated by sex, Pell and non-Pell, underrepresented minorities (including Asian), and Talent Development. John offered to answer additional questions after his presentation and to present this information to other groups on campus. Mary Grace said that John would be presenting to the UDC on an annual basis.

V. UDC Co-Chair

There was a discussion about desired characteristics for the UDC co-chair. Suggestions included: helping the CDO move the UDC agenda forward and get things done on the Council, strong background in assessment and evaluation, represent a different constituency, and define diversity broadly. One nomination was made during the meeting. Others may nominate at the next meeting. Mary Grace will draft a co-chair description by the next meeting. The UDC will also need to decide what role, if any, the co-chair would have after their term has ended (e.g., ex-officio).

VI. UDC Meeting Structure

This item will be discussed at the summer retreat. The UDC needs to think about what the structure of these meetings should be. The UDC decided that they would like to meet in the summer. The next meeting is scheduled for May 15, 2020 from 10:00-11:30 a.m.