



University Diversity Council (UDC) Minutes

January 8, 2021

Zoom

Attendees: Gifty Ako-Adounvo, Mary Grace Almandrez, Marland Chang, Erin Earle, Maling Ebrahimpour, Michelle Fontes, Nisa Ghonem, Brian Heikes, Trish Morokoff, Eileen Orabone, Kristina Perrelli, Jen Riley, Jacqui Tisdale, Annemarie Vaccaro

Absent: Lulu Alyrati, Jacquie Britto, Corey Fernandez, Holly Nichols, Martha Rojas, Mary Stanley

Guests: Lynne Derbyshire and Molly Greaney

I. Welcome and Updates

Jen started the meeting by giving some brief updates. She let the council know that the campus climate survey has been sent to the IRB and is being finalized with Rankin and Associates and with John Stringer. She also let everyone know that the survey website is up, and Mary Grace said it was on the CED website and will be on the main page, as well. The President's letter went out as well, and we will be launching the survey March 2 now instead of February 16. There was some concern about all of the content at the beginning of the survey, that it is too much, and people will not want to go through and read this and then take the survey. It was reiterated that whatever was sent to the IRB already is what will be approved. Any changes made would delay the process. There was also discussion about how to advertise this information, and how we can get the message out to the community about how important this survey is for the campus. Jen and Mary Grace indicated that we would most likely be talking about this at our next climate survey working group meeting.

II. Approval of Minutes

The September 25 and October 30 were approved with no changes.

III. College of Arts & Sciences Diversity Committee Proposal re: URI Indigenous Land Acknowledgement Statement and Indigenous Welcome Reception at Yearly Commencement (Enc.)

The Council then reviewed and discussed the Indigenous Land Acknowledgement Statement that the College of Arts and Sciences Diversity Committee had recommended to the UDC for its consideration. Mary Grace also let the council know that the Native American Advisory Council had also reviewed this statement and had provided some feedback and edits for consideration. The UDC came up with some recommendations for the President to consider in support of the statement, ranging from scholarships for indigenous students, creating a recruitment action plan for drawing indigenous students to URI, and developing curricular offerings such as creating a Native American Studies minor. After discussion, the council agreed that this statement should be sent to the President with our strong recommendation for University adoption.

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IV. Subcommittee Reports for February 5 Meeting

There was a discussion about the subcommittee reports that council members are working on. Jen reminded everyone that they are just looking for a simple document with bullet points about what's happening in diversity, what are the best practices, what are the challenges that we are seeing, and what are the recommendations for your particular area that you are working on. It was decided that we would have each subcommittee do a 5-10-minute presentation at the next UDC meeting scheduled for February 5th. These documents need to be put in the shared drive by February 2nd, so that council members have time to review them before the meeting. At the meeting on February 5th, the council will give feedback and as a group come to a consensus about the recommendation for each area that we would then put forward in a memo to the President.

V. Conversation with Faculty Senate Committee on Service and Community Life

Lynne Derbyshire and Molly Greaney, from the Faculty Senate Committee on Service and Community Life, joined the meeting to have a conversation with the UDC. Lynne stated that this committee has been charged with looking at issues of race and racism on campus, so they have been asked to make recommendations about what we need to do on campus to make it a more inclusive and anti-racist community. So, discussion ensued about what initiatives are already happening on campus and what do we think needs to happen going forward in terms of anti-racism and inclusion especially relating to faculty, but in general. Some examples of initiatives happening were the land acknowledgement statement, the campus climate survey, the UDC subcommittee report recommendations, the Provost's request to deans of their goals regarding diversity as a yearly process, hiring a full-time person in ATL office to do inclusion workshops, and having the University get a membership to the National Council for Faculty Development and Diversity. The discussion continued with other examples and a great discussion.