

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion Ad-hoc Committee Year-End Report 2023-2024

The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Standing Committee is charged with reviewing DEI issues in the areas of Academic Senate's jurisdiction. During the 2023-2024 academic year, the newly established official committee took time to understand some partners also involved with DEI issues around campus. Here is a summary of this year's activity:

- Donyale Padgett, Interim Director of Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ODEI) and Chief Diversity Officer, met with the group and led discussion about her role and the work currently being undertaken by her office. We discussed the second campus-wide culture and climate survey, as well as hearing ways that our group could support their efforts across campus.
- Discussions about the Student Senate's Religious Holiday Accommodation Resolution within the committee with insight from the policy committee.
- Michael Polterala, Vice President of General Council, offered insights into the first amendment in the academic context, as well as providing information about case law that will help guide us in our work.
- Tommy Martin, Associate Director of the Office of Equal Opportunity, discussions on the Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO) and their process of investigating claims of discrimination, harassment, and retaliation.
- Discussions about working on a DEI statement that can be included within syllabi or course canvas sites.

Based on the discussion and work performed this academic year, the members of the DEI ad-hoc committee submit these suggestions for consideration by the policy committee:

- The committee agrees with the stance taken by the Policy committee concerning the Student Senate's Religious Holiday Accommodation Resolution. However, we would also suggest that the burden of finding a middle ground on this issue is not left for students to manage. The committee offers partnership in efforts that will improve general information and university systems so that students have clearer pathways as they make decisions balancing their academics and their religion.

- We appreciate our law colleagues joining an Academic Senate’s plenary session as well as joining our committee in discussions. The DEI committee calls for more First Amendment guidance to help faculty and staff navigate difficult political conversations both in and out the classroom, which only look to continue.
- DEI has an important place at the University, as proof of it being included within important administrative policies, such as the President’s Prosperity Agenda. However, DEI still has a long road to go with different groups in different places with their established efforts. While the Office of DEI has been spearheading initiatives geared to create more cohesion, there are many entities on campus still operating independently. We support ODEI’s efforts to create a road map of Diversity across the campus, and we offer support in its completion so that DEI efforts around campus can incorporate more collaboration. The committee calls for more opportunities to increase visibility and intentional partnerships that will help highlight the importance we place on DEI across the University. There is so much good work being done, it should be celebrated much more explicitly.
- We ask for more transparency in the strategic plans that were submitted to the Office of DEI by each school and college, as these plans might require academic policy to be developed for the completion of these initiatives. While it might be still too early to know what policies could be developed, the guidance that the Academic Senate could offer would be invaluable.
- In the near future, we hope to collaborate with fellow standing committees on possibly offering language that can be included on syllabi as an agreed upon diversity statement, that highlights our commitment to DEI in our classes just as much it is highlighted in administrative policies and goals.

Respectfully submitted by the members of the Academic Senate DEI Committee

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