

Academic Senate DEI Committee | October 20, 2023

Present: Marisa Henderson (Chair), Suresh Balasubramanian, Cathryn Bock, Sean Hickey, Chris Kliethermes, Feng Lin, Cynthia Merritt, Tamme Quinn-Grzebyk, Erika Robinson, Nicole Wheeler, Amber Harrison (AAUP-AFT Liaison), Zaynah Jadallah (Student Senate Liaison), Christopher Kelly (Graduate Council Liaison), Pramod Khosla (Policy Committee Liaison)

Absent with Notice: Erica Edwards, Shelly Jo Kraft, Ali Salamey, Mark Wenzel (PTF Union Liaison)

Guest: Dr. Donyale Padgett, Interim Associate Provost for Diversity and Inclusion/Chief Diversity Officer.

Meeting called to order: 1:02 pm

The chair welcomes everyone to the first meeting of the committee for the 2023-2024 academic year and discusses the commitment to ensure everyone's opinion is considered. Meetings will be recorded to make sure every member of the group will have the opportunity to participate in the discussions, and that opinions are protected within the group.

The committee was joined by Dr. Donyale Padgett, Interim Associate Provost of Diversity and Inclusion, and the Chief Diversity Officer. She discussed her background at the University and provided an overview of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) actions and initiatives happening on campus.

Dr. Padgett provided the committee with more information about the upcoming climate survey that will be released to the campus community in November. A goal for the second survey will be to increase the number of participants by focusing on improving inclusionary practices, such as addressing accessibility needs. It will take individuals around 15 minutes to complete the survey and will include identity-based questions. The committee is encouraged to assist her Office in motivating the campus community to participate.

Dr. Padgett's Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion is working on creating more visibility for the DEI work happening in their office and around campus, as well as assisting other groups in their DEI work. While the Office of DEI is not an investigative body, there is a push to create better reporting systems for DEI issues that arise. The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Council (DEIC) is a campus wide group dedicated to progressing the University's commitment to DEI and offering advice to the Chief Diversity Officer. The Council was legitimized by President Wilson through Presidential Policy earlier this year. The DEIC has been working with schools

and colleges on developing their own DEI strategic plans, while plans for university divisions and units will be happening soon.

Dr. Padgett informs the group that the Climate Survey will be presented and promoted at an upcoming Academic Senate Plenary session as they prepare for the survey's launch. She also asks that the Senate, and this group, to think about ways to get faculty more involved in DEI issues around campus. Committee members were concerned about issues that students encounter when dealing with faculty members, and hope that there will be pathways developed so students can voice their concerns. Committee members also brought up working on DEI issues with HR, retraining practices, and systemic issues surrounding addressing DEI issues in the workplace. Dr. Padgett informs the group that there are things many things happening at the University that are trying to address many different issues the campus community encounters, and that trying to a culture is difficult.

Zaynah Jadallah, the committee's Student Senate Representative, then led the group in discussions concerning the Student Senate Religious Holiday Resolution that encourages the University to official recognize eight religious holidays, listed in the shared document to the committee. The Resolution encourages the University to accommodate students more explicitly and improve resources educating the community so that our diverse student body would not have to choose between their religious holidays and their coursework. The Student Senate would like the Academic Senate to have a role in reeducating faculty about what religious holidays mean to students and what kind of accommodations will help them as they celebrate.

Committee members are concerned that the University might be unable to move forward with the resolution since the State does not recognize these particular holidays, which could change with future legislation. Some of the implementation work for this resolution could occur through the DEI Council, or working on specific language that could be shared for course syllabi. Other members brought up the need for improved religious spaces on campus, and more support for student groups who directly support students during religious holidays. A member expresses the challenges faculty members have with rescheduling for students, like labs, and expresses the need for early academic calendars. The committee agrees there is a need for better collaboration between administration and students.

The committee will discuss more about the resolution at the November meeting and include everyone's concerns before sending our recommendations to the Policy Committee.

Next meeting will be November 17th at 1 pm.

Meeting adjourned at 2:33 pm.