

**Equity and Diversity Committee
College of Agricultural and Life Sciences**

April 10, 2024, 11:30am-12:45pm
240 Steenbock Library

Attendees: Brad Bolling, Thomas Browne, Victor Cabrera, Kerri Coon, Amanda Gevens, Rosalia Gittens, Anam Khan, Al Kovaleski, Veronica Law, Jelena Lee, Mandi Moy, Ivan Rayment, Amy Trowbridge, Erin Wall, Breanna Sinotte Wang.

Guest: Kyle Charters, McBurney Center (via Zoom).

Not present: Burcu Alptekin, Dominique Brossard, Louis Macias, Karie Cherwin.

Minutes by: Muhamed Sadiku (with notes from Mandi Moy)

Attending as public meeting: None

MINUTES

The meeting was called to order by Brad Bolling at 11:30 am.

Welcome/review agenda

Agenda adjusted with addition to Parental Leavy Policy Discussion

Approval of March 6, 2024 meeting minutes

Without any revisions, the March 6, 2024 meeting minutes were approved.

Parental Leavy Policy Discussion

Veronica Law, CALS HR Director, shared the following:

- Parental Leave policy effective on July 1, 2024.
- The policy applies to post-doctoral students and graduate students, in addition to faculty and staff.

Question: Do people have to apply for parental leave 30 days in advance per the current policy, as delivery dates and such are not always predicable?

Answer: HR expects amendments to policy to allow flexibility in delivery dates.

A brief discussion about inconsistencies in how supervisors and departments will handle instances before 7/1.

Outstanding EDC Items

- Committee discussed/reviewed the history of Parental Leave policy.
- A discussion of Peer interview program for search and screen committees.
 - Feedback has been reviewed and moving through the process to be reviewed and implemented.
- A conversation about non-discrimination statement about gender/sexuality. UW-Madison only has a statement regarding race.

ODEI Updates

- Professional Development requirement change is moving forward.

- Faculty, academic and university staff, post-docs, graduate students are to participate. Undergraduates may participate, depending on the department/unit.
- More communication from the ODEI to follow in late May/early June.
- Climate response
 - ODEI has received inquiries and emails this year. Issues that have come up include:
 - Faculty teaching load inequities.
 - Student/faculty interactions.
 - Accommodation.
 - For issues, students do not typically go to their instructors first despite the grievance policy's recommendation that students could go to instructors first. They are going to other people in fear of retaliation and are often advised to wait until after the semester ends.

Discussion:

- Students need other options (people) to go to first. ODEI and HR are working together to help navigate this for faculty, staff, post-docs, and grad students. From a student's perspective, there may be a conflict of interest in having a student go to the instructor first. Students are often just trying to get through their current situations. Sometimes, they are not hoping to solve and rectify the situation in real time - might want to do so after the situation, to help students that come after them.
- Culture
 - There is a need to establish a culture of feedback and discussion.
 - There needs to be transparency around things being done that are indicators of change and reform.
 - There's a lack of trust and confidence in change being made.

Conversation was paused to cover Agenda Item #7.

Access and Accommodations

Kyle Charters, Associate Director at McBurney Center, was introduced and began answering inquiries from EDC members.

Question: What accommodations are available for graduate and undergraduate students? Where are the major barriers for students?

Answer: Students can submit a McBurney application and upload supporting documentation if applicable. There is an initial meeting with an access consultant where they discuss diagnosis, impact, history, etc. The access consultant will determine if they qualify as an individual with a disability per ADA definition. The student is then to submit the accommodations letter to instructors. One consultant is assigned to a student and will continuously work with them. Note that they are consultants, not advocates, they determine what is reasonable.

Question: Graduate students are scared to ask for accommodation, as there is often an associated financial cost. Who is responsible for making accommodations for employees and students in labs?

Answer: If students are enrolled in research credits, then it's part of their student needs. If students are working in a lab, then it's employment/HR, and they should work through HR/EDR. There can be intermingling between the two areas (employee/student).

Comment: In older buildings, handicap accessible bathrooms are on the 3rd floor, but there is space to renovate the 1st floor bathroom. It has been deemed a department decision and responsibility - ADA is being met technically.

Follow-up: Kyle will consult with his counterpart and bring back information on Fall 2024.

Question: How long does it take to go through the McBurney process?

Answer: It can be as quick as 1.5 weeks but takes longer during busier periods of the year (August - October). Also takes longer for those applying for the first time. McBurney has requested additional positions to help shorten the processing times.

Question/Comment: There are access barriers to requesting accommodation, one being the cost. For example, a student who has undiagnosed ADHD did not go through the McBurney process for accommodations because of the associated costs - \$600 to diagnose ADHD.

Answer: A history of diagnosis and documentation is required. McBurney makes referrals to on-campus opportunities that are more cost effective, but there are often wait times. McBurney is working with UHS to provide more resources and direction to undiagnosed students. Perhaps working with UHS care management to utilize off-campus resources.

Question: Is McBurney affected by the hiring freeze?

Answer: McBurney is not impacted because of the ADA law.

Zoom call with Kyle Charters ended.

Kristin Carroll is the CALS Human Resources Divisional Disability Representative (HR DDR). HR Managers are trained to be DDRs and serve as back-ups. Note that Kristin may not have access to a list of people who have documented accommodation and disabilities to do proactive outreach.

Action: Invite DDR to EDC to explain the role as a DDR and the resources. If parental leave will be part of the conversation, we should wait for Fall 2024.

Question: How do we help people navigate the bureaucracy to get the help, resources, accommodations, etc. that they need?

ODEI Updates – continued

- Revisit discussion about climate and culture. There is a need for change.
 - How do we initiate changes, i.e., requirements for tenure to include things like mentorship?

This discussion was not concluded and will continue.

Meeting adjourned at 12:45pm.