

**Equity and Diversity Committee**  
**College of Agricultural and Life Sciences**  
April 9, 2025, 11:30am-12:45pm  
240 Steenbock Library

**Attendees:** Brad Bolling, Kerri Coon, Jelena Lee, Veronica Law, Laurie Sand, Amanda Gevens, Al Kovaleski, Bre Sinotte Wang, Christelle Guedot, Glenda Gillaspay, Ivan Rayment

**Not present:**, Victor Cabrera, Majd Allawi, Erin Wall, Rosie Gittens, Mandi Moy, Tom Browne, Burcu Aleptkin, Louis Macias, Amy Trowbridge,

**Guests:** Patrick Sheehan, Michaela Hoffelmeyer, Paul Castaneda Dower, Sedona Chin, Julie Garvin, Klay Liu, Laura Hernandez, Natalia de Leon, Caitlin Collies

**Minutes by:** Tara Darga

**Attending as public meeting:** None

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MINUTES

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

**Welcome/review agenda**

There were no changes or additions to the agenda.

**Approval of March 12, 2025, meeting minutes**

Without any revisions, March 12, 2025 minutes were approved by quorum. There was one abstention.

Guest Speaker: Patrick Sheehan, Associate Vice Chancellor and Chief Human Resource Officer

Patrick began by introducing himself. He's been in a variety of roles at UW Madsion for the last 15 years, primarily in HR and has been the Chief Resource Officer for the last 3 years. He acknowledges the sensitive nature around DEI conversations. His office has been working with DDEEA. The shift in state and federal level are impacting all on campus but we continue to hold true to our values. One caveat is that he is speaking from a campus perspective and through an HR lens.

**Question:** Can you describe the current landscape of DEI?

**Answer:** The university acknowledges that diversity is a source of strength, and we value the contribution of each person. The goal is to create a welcome and inclusive community.

The Office of Human Resources (OHR) is actively engaged in supporting DEI initiatives. They are aligning efforts, so the work of the Division of Diversity, Equity and Education Achievement (DDEEA) is imbedded in OHR. Identify that we have a team in HR undergoing a name change to Equity, Inclusion and Employee Well-Being (EIEW). This better aligns with the university's mission of inclusion excellence.

**Question:** Will the renamed office keep the same goals?

**Answer:** We are asking the team this as well. It's a both/and. They are looking at campus climates surveys and asking themselves if they are really serving all populations on campus. Are there things we can do to support neurodivergent, aged and veteran employees?

**Question:** At the college level you mentioned that you were assisting with the administrative negotiations with legislators. Can you explain that?

**Answer:** We looked at DEI positions and how they related to the administrative cap. We are aimed at reallocating resources to student success. Going back to 2023, the state budget was approved. The pay plan was held back by our legislature. There was an agreement between the university and legislature to ensure pay raises were happening, the building of the engineering building was moving forward, restore a number of budget cuts (building projects that included demolitions), receive our fair share of the tuition reciprocity bill and move forward with the Wisconsin Guarantee. The position cap indicated that we would not grow above the administrative positions we had as of January 1, 2024. There were many exclusions to this, and it meant a lot of analysis was needed.

As of January 21, 2024, the university agreed not to grow above the current number of DEI positions. We had to reimagine 33% of our positions and make them more student facing. Patrick reached out to deans and directors to share campus vision and engage in conversation. Deans and directors were asked to comply with the spirit and intent and that it would require changes.

**Question:** Is there any oversight from UW that goes back to the state?

**Answer:** Yes, everything we just talked about will be shared with the state.

**Question:** We (EDC) want to support people, but we are not experts. We also don't think HR has expertise in community building and how each department works with each other every day. That takes the work of people that have expertise. Is it allowable to continue having experts in our college to do the work?

**Answer:** We are acutely focused on being an exceptional place to work. Belonging and inclusivity are key components. What it looks like and what are the resources need to be thought through. Staff and support from OHR exists.

**Question:** What was the communication with the deans and directors that led to our office losing two people and changing was it was?

**Answer:** Dean Gillaspay was invited to this meeting and can inform us about that.

**Question:** Are there specific guidelines that the college has been given on hiring to maintain DEI positions?

**Answer:** We continue to highlight the Chancellor's commitment. The university is still dedicated to this.

There are three things Patrick provided about the vision.

1. Inclusive excellence, every student feels a sense of belonging
2. Creating holistic systems that support our unique student body
3. Everyone has access to the resources they need to thrive

## **Q&A with Dean Gillaspy**

**Question:** Brad mentioned that the committee has not yet heard from Dean Gillaspy on what the college changes are to the ODEI specifically and asked for an overview of those changes and the vision for the path forward.

**Answer:** Dean Gillaspy explained that the university was tasked with reimagining DEI and the way it filtered down to the college. They have been thinking about this since 2023. The college would have to shift a group of people into student-focused roles. They discussed various ways to achieve this, looked at the roles of current staff, and noted that they were not very undergraduate and graduate student-focused except for what Tom Browne was doing. One of the highlights was the practical professional training Rosie was focusing on, which aligned with the work HR was doing. Mandi was working on the data, aligning with the research division.

Dean Gillaspy stated that the college compared itself to other colleges/schools in the university and peer colleges and noted that it had more staff than most other colleges. Some work was being duplicated within the university, and it was noted that the university's work had not been communicated well.

**Question:** Brad asked about the vision for the reimagined office, the college's goals, and how they are operationalized.

**Answer:** Dean Gillaspy stated that everything in the DEI space is the work of everyone. She knew EDC was conceived as a conduit to provide the dean with advice. Per the past minutes, there were a lot of doers. This group needs to lead in this space and become more active. They were pioneers in the university with the Lunch & Learns. She expressed a desire for the committee to be engaged in the change they would like to create.

Dean Gillaspy mentioned bystander training and asked for the group to think about this topic. She also discussed possibilities in adding to the hiring process, emphasizing neutral representation on search committees and in interviews, and empowering staff rights in department processes. This was discussed at previous CASI meetings, where staff having a voice was valued higher than voting rights.

**Question:** EDC members noted that Lunch & Learns were led by Tom, with the goal of providing multiple options for DEI professional development. They requested the formation of the ODEI office, asking for people with expertise to do this work. They felt that EDC doing this work was almost a liability, as they were not HR experts. The committee used to meet with Carol Hillmer (CALS HR) to review and approve material before it was shared college-wide. The committee thought they were always on the verge of creating problems with the best intentions. They emphasized that everything they wanted to do required resources, which they lacked.

**Answer:** Dean Gillaspy responded that the college still has Louis and Tom as resources, even if they are 75% student-facing. There is 50% of an FTE that can do this work. She compared the college to the College of L&S, which has two people and is 3-4 times the size of CALS.

**Question:** An EDC member pointed out that L&S has two people but different committees to distribute the work of DEI. They expressed concern that it might be harder to access resources now that two of the ODEI are in HR and Research.

**Answer:** Dean Gillaspy reassured the committee that Rosie and Mandi are still a resource and Rosie will maintain the learning hub while working in HR.

Dean Gillaspy asked if EDC leadership had shared information about their new roles and how they would maintain functionality, to which an EDC member replied that they had not. EDC members provided examples of how the ODEI office has been helpful, such as facilitating retreats that improved department climate and positively impacting department mergers.

**Question:** Brad emphasized the importance of maintaining an open line of communication and supporting each other despite the increasing difficulty of the work. He mentioned that he would share additional questions with Dean Gillaspy via email.

**Answer:** Dean Gillaspy thanked the committee for their work, expressing confidence that we would get through this because we are a strong college. She highlighted UW Madison's reputation for strong individuals and the power of the individual, emphasizing the importance of pulling together as an organization.

The meeting was closed at 1:04pm.