

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

July 20, 2020, 2:00pm-3:00pm

Via Webex

**Attendees:** Erika Anna, Brian Asen, Brad Bolling, Thomas Browne (joined at 2:18pm and departed at 2:53pm), Erin Ebbesmeyer, Natalia de Leon (departed at 2:44pm), Laura Hernandez, Carol Hillmer, Becky Larson, Bret Payseur, Mark Rickenbach, Doug Rouse

**Not present:** Bill Barker, Dominique Brossard, Christelle Guedot, Mickenzee Okon, Bre Sinotte Wang

**Minutes by:** Julie Scharm

**Attending as public meeting:** None

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MINUTES

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The meeting was called to order by Mark Rickenbach at 2:03pm.

**Welcome and introductions**

Brad Bolling, Erin Ebbesmeyer, and Mickenzee Okon (not present) were welcomed to the committee.

**Review agenda**

No changes were made to the agenda.

**Approval of June 30, 2020 meeting minutes (attachment)**

Laura Hernandez made a motion to approve the June 30, 2020 meeting minutes. Bret Payseur seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

**Committee bylaws and consideration of adding postdoc appointment (attachment)**

The current committee membership is comprised of faculty, academic staff, university staff, undergraduate students, and graduate students. There is a postdoctoral trainee joining the university from North Carolina State who is interested in joining the committee; however, we do not have a postdoctoral trainee appointment in our membership charge/function.

Bret Payseur made a motion to add one postdoctoral trainee position to the membership in the committee's charge and function, with a one-year term (three maximum). Laura Hernandez seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Comments and questions:

- Adding a postdoctoral trainee to the membership is a good idea and it would be helpful to have a postdoc involved.
- How would we find an appointee in the future?
  - We could use several avenues such as the postdoc association, a search on titles, or advertisement in eCALS or other means.

- How many postdoc appointments should we have?
  - One

### **Document on eliminating the GRE requirement in the college (Box)**

Abbey Thompson requested updates from programs on GRE requirements (in a table at the end of the document). 16 out of 22 graduate programs do not require the GRE.

Programs that don't require the GRE requirement still consider it within the holistic process. This could introduce bias between applicants who provide and don't provide a GRE score. The committee will recommend that programs eliminate the GRE component entirely. The letter will be directed to graduate program directors and not the department diversity representatives.

Erika Anna will update the document and bring it back for a committee vote.

Comments and questions:

- The letter looks good, with the updates outlined below.
- We need to eliminate the GRE requirement entirely. When people see it listed, they assume it is required. And if it is not considered, it should not be part of the application.
- Some scholarships include the GRE for eligibility, so we need to address that as well.
- In disciplines such as math, there can be a heavy expectation on prerequisites and some want to retain the GRE because of the math emphasis.
  - Transcripts should show they are capable.
  - The GRE doesn't test a lot of the needed skills.
  - One department removed the math prerequisite because they are looking for other skills, and if something is missing in the skill/learning set, they can direct the student to take certain courses once in graduate school.
  - There are a lot of things undergraduates need to learn that are not included in the GRE.
- We have resources to refer to if we counteract any pushback.
- The GRE requirement cannot be removed from the software the Graduate School uses; it has to be fixed manually. This could be a deterrent if we cannot get this fixed.
  - Erika Anna will ask Nutritional Sciences how they navigated this and include that in the letter.

### **Departmental five-year plan review**

Teams were created for reviewing sets of goal 4 of the departmental five-year plans. Natalia de Leon emailed the assignments and the rubric for the goal 4 reviews. Julie Scharm gave everyone with an assignment access to the corresponding Box folder. This input is important to the Dean's Office and used in their annual meetings with departments so everyone's efforts in this area are appreciated.

### **Subcommittee structure for 2020-21**

Subcommittees in 2019-20 were 1) department diversity representative planning (including hiring practices), 2) graduate student training and resources, and 3) lunch and learn planning. The committee needs to decide on what to focus on this year and if the subcommittee structure is

helpful. We usually have about four subcommittees and people can indicate which subcommittee(s) they prefer to serve on. Everyone is asked to join at least one subcommittee.

The committee will continue the lunch and learn subcommittee. Members should forward other ideas to Tom Browne, Natalia de Leon, and Julie Scharm.

Comments and questions:

- The subcommittees are helpful.
- Further work on hiring best practices for staff and students will be needed.
- Would like to explore equity and diversity efforts in tenure and post-tenure reviews, departmental awards, etc. and how metrics can be integrated into existing systems.
- It might be helpful to have a subcommittee on communications.

### **Book group update**

Erika Anna organized a book group on *White Fragility* with staff and students and it is going well. (The faculty group is meeting separately.) Facilitators rotate. Everyone is engaged and learning. Whenever resources are discussed, Abbey Thompson and other members have been very intentional to send those out. Some other departments have reached out to Erika Anna and Abbey Thompson about how they've structured this for advice. The group will wrap up next week. The staff/student and faculty groups might come together for a discussion of the final chapters.

In the faculty group, most discussions have been focused on personal realizations about how we each contribute to systemic racism and how institutions develop problems. The group has also talked about the faculty role and how to contribute to making things better.

People are asking how they can engage and we hope to find a way to post more resources. If people don't know where to start, they can start with learning more.

### **College updates and questions from the committee**

A meeting was held on July 1, 2020 with department chairs and department diversity representatives to debrief on systemic racism and inclusive climates. The group discussed several items, including the letters received by graduate students and efforts in the college and ways to expand upon those. The group provided feedback on topics and future efforts. One suggested item was to explore how we work with HBCUs and how we can work more collectively on efforts. Some people volunteered to help with items, so that the CALS EDC does not need to be the only one working on tasks. The Dean's Office will send out the meeting notes to the committee.

The committee sent five action letters to the Dean's Office. The Dean's Office reviewed all of the letters, appreciated seeing them, and is looking at how to move forward with implementation. The hiring practices document is awaiting final review by the assistant dean for human resources.

The CALS climate survey will be rolled out to the college later this fall. The college doesn't want to further delay this, even though pandemic continues.

**Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at approximately 2:59pm.