

Equity and Diversity Committee
College of Agricultural and Life Sciences
November 9, 2020, 2:00pm-3:00pm
Virtual meeting via Zoom

Attendees: Erika Anna, Brian Asen, Bill Barker, Christiana Binkley, Brad Bolling, Dominique Brossard, Thomas Browne, Becky Larson, Natalia de Leon, Erin Wall, Laura Hernandez, Mickenzee Okon, Bre Sinotte Wang, Hans Smith, Matthew Warren

Not present: Christelle Guedot, Carol Hillmer, Bret Payseur, Mark Rickenbach, Doug Rouse, Kase Wheatley

Minutes by: Julie Scharm

Attending as public meeting: None

MINUTES

The meeting was called to order by Tom Browne at 2:02pm.

Introductions

The committee members introduced themselves.

Review agenda

No changes were made to the agenda.

Approval of October 12, 2020 meeting minutes (attachment)

Natalia de Leon made a motion to approve the October 12, 2020 meeting minutes. Laura Hernandez seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Subcommittees and memberships for 2020-21

All committee members were asked to sign up for at least one subcommittee. Natalia de Leon and Tom Browne will reach out to each subcommittee to schedule a kickoff meeting. Someone will be asked to chair each subcommittee. At the end of the academic year, each subcommittee will be asked to submit a summary report of activities.

College updates and questions from the committee

The CALS climate survey is closed and around 924 responses were submitted. The project will now move into the analysis phase.

Comments and questions:

- When we can expect the survey results?
 - The data will be ready early in the spring semester.
 - The data may need to be aggregated based on size of unit, to help maintain the confidentiality of respondents.
- Why weren't undergraduates included?
 - Campus sends out a separate survey to undergraduate students.

- The CALS climate survey contained questions geared towards faculty/staff/graduate students regarding supervisors and departments/units.
- Will undergraduates be included in the future?
- Should we be expecting to write a plan based on the survey results?
 - Each unit identified people to help with post-survey plans and departments can incorporate goals/priorities into five-year plans.
- What was the overall response rate?
 - The response rate was in the mid-40% rate.
 - Reminders were sent out and the survey will be repeated every two years.
 - We may be able to fine tune future surveys, though we'll want similar scales to identify trends.

Critique of EDC trainings at higher ed institutions – discussion topic

The following article was shared with the committee for discussion:

<https://heterodoxacademy.org/blog/diversity-related-training-what-is-it-good-for/>. This article focuses on the effectiveness of diversity training, particularly at the levels of faculty/staff/graduate students.

For background, the “Heterodox Academy was founded in 2015 by Jonathan Haidt, Chris Martin, and Nicholas Rosenkranz, in reaction to their observations about the negative impact a lack of ideological diversity has had on the quality of research within their disciplines. What began as a website and a blog in September of 2015 — a venue for social researchers to talk about their work and the challenges facing their disciplines and institutions — soon grew into an international network of peers dedicated to advancing the values of constructive disagreement and viewpoint diversity as cornerstones of academic and intellectual life.” It now has around 4,000 members.

Discussion and feedback:

- Students are saying we need faculty and staff to empathize with what they are going through and be trained to reduce microaggressions, etc. On other hand, we have heard questions about whether training actually works.
- Mandatory versus voluntary training is always a constant question.
- In the past, there has been some significant pushback on training that has prevented some work going forward.
- What metrics were they using to say that training is ineffective?
 - We could ask someone to do a literature review on this.
- The four-year timescale doesn't seem long enough to see long-term change.
- Try to separate the necessity of this conversation and the efficacy of what we're currently doing. If what we're doing right now is not effective, we need to think about doing something else or doing things a different way.
- If someone is resistant to training and learning about these issues, then training is not going to help.
- It seems like training needs to be part of a suite of opportunities for people. Not any one thing will lead to the right result. We need to put all of the pieces together to make progress.
- Training brings attention to a subject and shows that the entire university cares about this topic.

- When people see there is a movement for a cause and society's view on something is shifting, they'll often go with it even if they don't believe it.
- If we don't talk about things, they can get swept under the rug and lost.
- Sometimes people show up to training and don't want to be there, but if we don't have activities in diversity, it makes it seem like an unimportant topic. We need to learn from our history. We can at least say what the community expects, even if it doesn't change someone's opinions.
- We could make training relevant within a field.
- Tiffany Green wrote an article, *The Problem with Implicit Bias Training*. We don't have evidence that training works, but it doesn't mean we stop trying to do it.
- Everyone is required to take a three-credit ethnic studies course – considering extending this to six credits.
- Think of trainings as an annual reminder and a history lesson, and not an excuse to not do all the other things we have been working on.
- Progress will be made when we can think about this training as a professional development activity. If you want to be a professional, you need to understand this.
- The more we say this is the way it has to be, the more people start thinking about how we go about it.
- Mandatory training is largely ineffective and forcing it creates a negative connotation. It can ruin things for other participants. We could instead have menu of opportunities to choose from.
- It feels like we're always reaching the same people. Could we require something and then offer voluntary components?
 - It becomes a problem as you move through the issues. The same group of people tend to be the ones who are always participating and advocating, when you want to do is broaden the group of people who find it important.
 - If we don't make training mandatory, the same people always attend.
- If we require something, it's something people check off the list and don't engage in.
- Maybe another way to get more voluntary participation is to include some type of bonus or small reward? There might be drawbacks to that as well.
- From WISELI: Research shows that if you require attendance at any diversity-related training or workshops, this can backfire because people are not attending willingly; their motivation to engage in the topic decreases, they become defensive, and they can even ruin the experience for people who want to be there.
- Something has to shake the system – there is such a lack of awareness and disconnect on many fronts.
- One department comes to a unified agreement that an annual training on a specific topic is what they wanted. Then the topics change but the idea is they participate together.
- Training that should be the starting point is often the end point. If we stop there, we waste our time. We need to push for things and push our leaders.
- The focus could be more on changing our community and bringing in more diverse employees and students because we can't always change the minds of people already here. That is a path towards real change. We should push for real things.
- A related idea is community investment as a way to improve exposure to diverse perspectives. For example, there is a large Black population in Milwaukee but not many of

those students end up at UW Madison. Why? If we invest in a more accessible and equitable community in Madison, it becomes culturally richer and will trickle into the university because Madison and UW are very intertwined.

- We should think about how we prioritize what we do as a community and what we can realistically do with our current resources. Training is more attainable than hiring more people right now. How do we trade off? How do we prioritize?
- The bottom line is that we want a healthy climate where we want people to thrive in their work. Instances of bad behavior make it hard for people to thrive in.
- We have a lot of programs and activities on campus but it's an a la carte experience – there is no consistent way for people to know something works and that it will make the climate better. Someone could experience a great culture in one class or department and have a completely different experience somewhere else on campus.
- Change takes continuous action and depending on a training to exact such changes will not leave a large footprint that is necessary to advance the environment for future personnel.
- HBR has an interesting article on why training fails, and it was a little simpler to digest. <https://hbr.org/2016/07/why-diversity-programs-fail>

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at approximately 3:05pm.