Equity and Diversity Committee  
College of Agricultural and Life Sciences  
September 13, 2021, 10:00am-11:00am  
Bock Laboratories Penthouse

Attendees: Erika Anna, Christiana Binkley, Brad Bolling, Thomas Browne, Karie Cherwin, Natalia de Leon, Christelle Guedot, Laura Hernandez, Becky Larson, Bret Payseur, Mark Rickenbach, Julie Scharm  
Not present: Dominique Brossard, Mickenzee Okon, Doug Rouse, Hans Smith, Erin Wall, Bre Sinotte Wang  
Minutes by: Julie Scharm

Attending as public meeting: None

MINUTES

The meeting was called to order by Tom Browne at 10:03am.

Welcome and introductions
committee members introduced themselves.

Review agenda
No changes were made to the agenda.

Approval of May 10, 2021 meeting minutes (attachment)
Laura Hernandez made a motion to approve the May 10, 2021 meeting minutes. Brad Bolling seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Committee charge and function
The Equity and Diversity Committee is advisory to the dean and is a governance committee of the college. The committee is not a decision-making group but makes proposals and provides feedback and votes on items brought forward by the dean. The committee follows Robert’s Rules of Order and quorum is based on voting members. The various employee categories and graduate/undergraduate students are represented in the committee’s membership. The committee charge and function can be found at: https://cals.wisc.edu/cals-committees/#equity-and-diversity-committee.

Natalia de Leon is the co-chair of the committee, but her term is ending at the end of the academic year. A new co-chair will need to be explored later in the academic year.

Recruitment of members – postdoctoral trainee and undergraduate student
There is not a set process for recruiting a postdoctoral trainee member to the committee, as this position was recently added to the membership. Brad Bolling will inquire with his postdoctoral trainee about connections with the campus postdoctoral association. Another option is to contact Imogen Hurley for ideas.
Tom Browne will work to recruit the second undergraduate student member.

**Subcommittee review: purpose, membership, and structure for 2021-22**

The subcommittees are a way to work on and move forward with proposals. The four subcommittees last year were communications, department diversity representatives, lunch and learn, and recruitment and retention.

Last academic year, the communications subcommittee looked at outward-facing resources. The subcommittee is discussing reorganization of the committee website so people can easily find resources and information on the committee’s work. The subcommittee is putting together a Microsoft Teams channel for the full committee to discuss ideas. The committee can also assist with communications about the latest issues/topics and ensure we have a quick response time.

Last academic year, the lunch and learn subcommittee focused on Our Shared Future to build a greater awareness of the First Nations in Wisconsin. Events were well attended, and the subcommittee collected feedback to evaluate future activities. The subcommittee is meeting soon to develop ideas for the fall series.

Last academic year, the recruitment and retention subcommittee identified main issues in this topic area. The subcommittee decided to focus on the retention of graduate students and postdoctoral trainees. For postdoctoral trainees, the Office of Postdoctoral Studies identified similar issues and the subcommittee is waiting for the office’s future actions. For graduate students, the subcommittee connected with the Teaching Assistants Association (TAA) which was focusing on the segregated fees waiver. The subcommittee provided feedback on the TAA letter of support and it was presented to the committee. The subcommittee also discussed faculty retention and salary equity and processes in departments, in addition to equity in start-up packages. The subcommittee will continue to work on all of these items.

Last academic year, the department diversity representatives subcommittee created guidance on the department diversity representative role and provided ideas to the Dean’s Office on department diversity representative meeting topics. The subcommittee also developed the rubric for the review of five-year plans. This subcommittee will now be closed, as the five-year plan review has been moved to the larger committee and the department diversity representative role has been well-established.

Are there topics the committee would like to consider this year, which can provide an area of focus for a new subcommittee?

- Some departments are finding challenges in creating concrete next steps to pursue from the college climate survey. The committee could advise departments on this in a more direct way.
- After departments receive their five-year plan feedback, the committee could have a discussion with departments.
- The committee could provide ideas on what has worked well in other departments so other departments can use this as a resource.
- Develop training best practices.
Regarding the above, should this be the focus of department diversity representatives and not the committee?

- The department diversity representatives have discussed similar items but have not developed guidance/resources, gelled the information, or translated the work into joint activity.
- The platform for department diversity representatives is often the monthly department meeting and those agendas are so full that it’s hard to follow up. The newly-formed JEDI committees might be more helpful.
- Some departments assign academic staff to be the department diversity representative and it’s often harder for staff to find a platform for moving topics forward.
  - We might want to reiterate why faculty are a good fit for the role. We could require the representative to be a faculty member, who could still have an academic staff partner.
- Maybe we could ask the department diversity representatives to focus on one item to report on at each departmental meeting, as opposed to having multiple and or open-ended topics.
- We should consider being strict with the two-year term for department diversity representatives.

The committee will have four subcommittees for the academic year, the newest being a departmental planning subcommittee. Committee members can indicate which subcommittee(s) they prefer to serve on. Everyone is asked to join at least one subcommittee and it is preferable to have 3-4 people in each subcommittee. Julie Scharm will send out a sign-up spreadsheet for subcommittees.

**College updates and questions from the committee**

The college has developed a professional development requirement in diversity, equity, inclusion and anti-racists practices for faculty and staff. For this requirement, individuals will choose a professional development opportunity they deem best for their learning and growth. A tracking system is currently being developed.

A college statement against racism and hate has been developed. Edits made to the statement were based on UW Legal feedback and adding language of what the college is for, not just what we are against. The shorter statement will be included in position vacancy listings and the longer statement will be posted on the college website. This statement will be released soon after this meeting.

The chief diversity officer search is underway, with an extended application deadline of October 1, 2021. Committee members are encouraged to share the posting through their networks. Final candidates will be brought in for in-person interviews and public presentations.

**Adjourn**
The meeting adjourned at 11:02am.