

2014-2015 Report of the University Council Committee on Diversity and Equity

General Committee Charge

The Committee on Diversity and Equity aids Penn in fostering and taking full advantage of its diversity as well as in strengthening ties across all boundaries to enrich and enliven the campus community. The Committee shall advise the offices of the president, provost, and the executive vice presidents on ways to develop and maintain a supportive atmosphere on campus for the inclusion and appreciation of diversity among all members of the University community. The Committee will review and provide advice regarding the University's equal opportunity and affirmative action programs and policies. The areas in which the Committee shall report to the Council include diversity within the educational and work settings, integration of staff and faculty into the larger campus community, and ways to foster a campus environment that is inclusive and supportive of difference. The Committee also will advise the administration on specific diversity issues that may arise on campus.

2014-2015 Specific Charges

1. Examine efforts to recruit and retain diverse faculty and staff.
2. Continue to work with the Office of the Provost and other appropriate offices to monitor University processes documenting recruitment, retention, and graduation of underrepresented and diverse graduate students.

Priorities

At the first meeting on October 29, 2014 the Committee agreed to focus on both charges.

Number of Meetings

The Committee met six times.

Major Points Addressed by the Committee

1. The first meeting was held on October 29, 2014 and was spent reviewing the University's response to last year's Committee recommendations. Lubna Mian and Leslie Laird Kruhly were invited guests. The committee was brought up-to-date on committee recommendations made on monitoring Diversity Search Advisors. The Committee also discussed the 2014-2015 charges and agreed through subsequent meetings to focus on the charges related to retaining diverse staff and underrepresented, diverse graduate students.
2. The second meeting was held on November 19, 2014. Chaplain Charles Howard and Joseph Gasiewski were invited guests. The committee was given updates regarding 2013-2014 recommendations on religious diversity and inclusivity.
3. The third meeting was held on December 5, 2014 and was spent discussing the 2014-2015 plan of action for the committee. There were no invited guests.
4. The fourth meeting was held on January 28, 2015. Invited guests were Sharon Jacobs (Human Resources), Donna Showell (Human Resources) and Emma Grigore (PPSA Chair Elect). The committee was briefed on compensation and recruitment for university staff. The committee was also briefed on Penn Professional Staff Assembly's agenda on staff diversity. The committee further discussed plans and strategies to accomplish committee goals for the year.
5. The fifth meeting was held on February 23, 2015. Sharon Aylor (Human Resources) was the invited guest. The committee was briefed on conflict resolution strategies, performance

management, and engagement for staff. The committee further discussed the challenges of determining appropriate merit-based pay decisions, particularly for high achieving staff, in addition to its various charges, and how these issues may be addressed by the committee in 2015-2016.

6. The sixth meeting was held March 24, 2015. The graduate student representatives on the committee presented data they collected on the experience of diverse graduate students at Penn. They conducted semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and analyzed several documents related to diverse graduate students. They reported variable diverse student opinions of their experiences at Penn.

Recommendations to University Council

1. The Committee applauds the University's efforts in recruiting and retaining diverse staff. However the committee is interested in further examining data related to upward mobility of staff and the diversity of staff management who are likely directly involved with making upward mobility decisions. While the committee made some significant strides in understanding these relationships, the committee would like to further examine this situation in 2015-2016 before providing specific recommendations to the University Council.
2. The Committee applauds the University's efforts in recruiting and retaining diverse graduate students. However, the Committee recommends that the University find additional ways to specifically reinforce graduate student retention and to provide an optimal university experience for diverse graduate students who may otherwise feel isolated from the mainstream. To that end, the Committee suggests the following:
 - A. Conduct biennial campus climate surveys of all graduate students with special follow-up questions on inclusion for those identifying diverse backgrounds. Better data is needed to compare the experiences of different types of graduate students, and to identify the unique challenges faced by diverse and underrepresented groups. Subsequent targeted qualitative interviews with diverse students are also recommended.
 1. The goal is to gain a better understanding of how identity and diversity-related issues affect graduate students' experiences at Penn.
 2. These surveys and interviews would be an important tool for shaping an overall strategy for enhancing and supporting diversity among graduate students.
 - B. Develop a Special Officer for Graduate Student Diversity. Under the office VPUL, the officer would aid and coordinate financial and administrative support for affinity groups representing diverse graduate student members. The responsibilities of the officer would include optimizing the communications between graduate students and affinity groups, forming a working group on diverse student life at Penn, and collaborating in data collection on the experiences of diverse graduate students outlined in recommendation 2A.
 - C. Increase outreach and programming services for graduate students by existing cultural/support centers.

Recommendation of New Topics or Continuing Topics to be addressed the Following Year

1. Continue efforts related to recruiting and retaining diverse staff.
2. Continue to monitor and examine efforts related to retaining diverse graduate students.
3. Examine the campus climate for undergraduate students from low-income backgrounds.

NOTE: The Committee considers "diversity" comprehensively, to include components of identity including but not limited to race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, immigration and legal status, disability, mental health, veteran and family status, faith traditions, and socio-economic background. The Committee recommends including these varied identity components when examining faculty, staff and graduate student recruitment and retention.

Committee Members

Joseph Libonati, Chair : Nursing (faculty) ; Sam Starks, Administrative Liaison, Office of Affirmative Action ; Regina Austin, Law (faculty); Herman Beavers, SAS/English (faculty); Kendra Bence, Vet (faculty) ; Shereen Chang, Graduate Students; Kuan R. Evans, staff, Office of Affirmative Action; Kristin Field, PPSA; Chenoa Flippen, Sociology (faculty); Jonni Moore, PSOM (faculty); Abel McDaniels, Undergraduate Students; Oyinkan Muraina, Undergraduate Students; Gail Oberton, PPSA; Ezekiel Dixon-Roman, SP2 (faculty); Lloyd Talley, Graduate Students; Irene Tan, WPPSA.