

COSAM IED Taskforce- Implementation Plans

January 25, 2021

In attendance: Kimberly Mulligan, Akilah Alwan, Julian Oliver, Cheryl Colquhoun, Vince Ortiz, Courtney Leisner, Melissa Halford, Stephanie Shepherd, Zachary Reichle, Luke Oeding, Valerie Tisdale, Beth Yarbrough, Beth Schwartz, Will Blakeley, Brennan van Alderwerelt, Yanzhao Cao, Rebecca Folmar, Corinne Staheli, Chinedu Eleh

This semester the meeting times have been designated to strategize an implementation plans for the goals outlined in the strategic plan. During the meeting, the group was broken into groups based on the goal they wish to focus on and tasked with thinking about the following questions:

1. Where are we currently on this goal? Have the departmental IED groups began working towards accomplishing this goal?
2. How should we prioritize the work? Which short-term (or mid-term) objective should we tackle first?
3. What are some actionable steps towards accomplishing the objective?
4. Is there someone who has already done similar work that we can use as a model?
5. Who should be involved to help accomplish this goal?
6. What are the potential obstacles to accomplishing the goal?
7. If money and time were no object (anything was possible) what would you want to do to accomplish this goal/objective?

Goal 1- Utilize an evidence-based, equity-minded lens to create policies and procedures that dismantle structural inequities that adversely impact marginalized communities. (Kimberly Mulligan and Akilah Alwan):

- We discussed the objectives that COSAM has already began working on. Things that have been done include:
 - Objective A- The development of strategies to increase the pool of diverse candidates (discussions with all search committees by COSAM OIED and HR about best practices for recruiting diverse faculty, expanding where and how we advertise; becoming partners with other STEM focused groups who are prioritizing these efforts; but there are still things we can work on in this area).
 - Objective B- We required all members of search committee to undergo bias training.
 - Objective C- This year we required all applicants to include an inclusion statement which had specific questions for the applicants to answer (<https://www.auburn.edu/cosam/about/mission-vision-oied.htm#job-statement>).
- We looked at the remaining objectives and created a list of which we would like to prioritize. The list fluctuated because there are some things that need to be worked on concurrently but ended up as: E, F, I, J, H, G
 - Objective E- We need bring in individuals/groups from inside and outside of the college/university that can conduct relevant, on-going IED training pertaining to current events and STEM fields. This should be specific to demographics of the department and address cultural competency. These types of training should happen at least once/year for each department.
 - Objective F/G- To address this issue we need to have a definition for what invisible labor means for the college. What does IED look like in each department? How can we track

this? We also need to get a baseline of what annual evaluations actually look like so we know how/where this can be weighted (service; what percentage? Does it provide any incentive for people to want to do this work?). This would involve the Deans, Chairs, and Supervisors.

- Objective I/J- We need to involve HR to help us understand current policies, what policies were developed as a result of COVID, what did we learn from this and how can we use this knowledge to create better, more inclusive policies.
- Other items we discussed included thinking about those who are differently-abled and how can we address strategies to assist them. Much of the focus is on undergraduate students and we need to think about our graduate students and how we can make sure they receive the support they need. The same goes for mental health.

Goal 2- Recruit, retain, and develop a diverse COSAM undergraduate student population. (Beth Yarbrough, William Blakeley, Beth Schwartz, Valerie Tisdale):

For retention:

- Biology is working on a mentoring program. They have talked with OIED about their ideas and goals. This would be a great pilot program for COSAM.
- FLUNCH with faculty/advisors and students would be great. Right now, university FLUNCH is initiated by students. It would be great if it could be initiated by us. Students so often won't take the first step. We should be sensitive to issues of students feeling forced – maybe not while they are an active student in your class. Maria informed the group that she has been working with Bob on an idea for Coffee with COSAM which would place the onus on the faculty to reach out to students and possibly make the interactions less uncomfortable since coffee is a shorter interaction.
- This past year Student Services matched new FR with Peer Advisors for the sake of registration. We could expand that program and carry it through the whole year with a larger impact potentially.

For recruitment:

- The committee agreed that a university-wide scholarship program for URM students is critical to compete effectively and make the strides we want in COSAM.
- In the meantime, BIOL is doing outreach with 4 high schools. Names from that effort could help us reach students before they apply. Finding any similar efforts in other departments is also critical.
- COSAM also needs to consider what is working well in other colleges to support students. For example, Engineering has expanded academic support with career advising, etc. and it would be helpful for retention of all students if our Student Services Office were able to offer some of these same types of support.

Goal 3- Recruit, retain, and develop a diverse COSAM graduate student population. (Vince Ortiz, Maria Gebhardt, Yanzhao Cao)

- The group focused on what areas would be needed to make COSAM's graduate brochure inclusive to all of our students. Highlighting the following areas were discussed:
 - student organizations
 - interdisciplinary seminar series
 - awareness of a community of people in COSAM-highlighting current graduate students
 - life in Auburn
 - ways to stay safe

- A discussed how we can make international and underrepresented students feel that they will be welcomed in COSAM. COSAM needs to consider support tools for graduate students.
- We also discussed how important it would be to increase awareness of scholarships available to graduate students.

Goal 4- Recruit, retain, and develop a diverse COSAM faculty and staff community. (Rebecca Folmar, Corinne Staheli, Brennan van Alderwerelt)

- COSAM should investigate developing a mentoring program for faculty and staff.
 - The College of Agriculture has a program that we should look into as a model to create a mentoring program.
- The COSAM Staff Inclusive Excellence Committee was created in 2019. This group meets bi-monthly to discuss ways that COSAM can create a more inclusive environment for staff across the college. The goal was to have a staff member from every department and the administrative staff. The group does not currently have someone from every department/admin office represented and they feel that we need to make having voices from each department a priority.

Goal 5- Foster a more inclusive climate with a greater sense of belonging for all students, faculty, and staff. (No one is currently working on this goal)

Goal 6- Develop curricula, teaching, and scholarship which increases awareness of how inequitable practices and structural racism are embedded in STEM while advancing practices that support inclusion, equity, and diversity. (Stephanie Shepherd, Luke Oeding, Chinedu Eleh, Melissa Halford)

- Development of teaching, book/journal club, and /or workshops for faculty that will be utilized to discuss what inclusive teaching looks like.

Goal 7- Strengthen communication between COSAM administration, faculty, staff, and students to create an environment where everyone feels valued and heard. (Julian Oliver, Cheryl Colquhoun, Nedret Billor):

- Chemistry Department is doing a good job at placing information on their website pertaining to mission, vision and IED statement. Math has not currently done much to strengthen communication between administrators, faculty, staff, and students.
- In working towards prioritizing the objectives, we need to first identify which objectives can be completed easily and quickly, then move on to the few that are more long-term and require several (3-5) people in each department to accomplish.
- Short-term (In order of priority):
 - Prominently display the COSAM mission, vision, IED statement and strategic plan on the website (**This information is currently on the COSAM website:** <https://www.auburn.edu/cosam/about/mission-vision-oied.htm#inclusion-statement>).
 - Create an effective system of communication to include all faculty and staff to ensure that everyone receives pertinent information. Examples include updated listservs for different constituents.
- Mid-term (In order of priority):
 - Create an organizational structure chart on the website of all staff and their roles within COSAM to highlight overlapping responsibilities and emphasize how staff duties directly impact faculty jobs, resources, and decisions in order to foster a more respectful dynamic between faculty and staff.

- Provide multiple, accessible mechanisms for faculty, staff, and students to communicate (examples include town halls, forums, confidential communication, etc.).
- Expand opportunities for informal interactions between faculty, staff, and students to improve the quality of their interactions.
- Biology is a model that can be utilized to create communication channels for other departments in COSAM.
- Ideally everyone in the department, but realistically this is not what is happening. Math especially is having a lot of trouble getting people involved and committed. Chemistry is working on it but still has room for improvement.
- Potential obstacles to accomplish the goals are uncommitted people in department and lack of organization.

Goal 8- Create a culture of accountability. (Courtney Leisner and Zachary Reichle):

- Biology and Geosciences have created websites to highlight their IED goals, held events, and have some resources to support the goals of the committees.
- The work should be prioritized by:
 - Adding meeting minutes/updates to IED website- **Kim Mulligan informed the group that we will add the strategic plan and meeting minutes to the OIED webpage.**
 - Give regular updates to the advisory board.
 - Maintaining meetings in our task force.
 - Determine how we want to integrate the work of our taskforce with the work of the University task force. However, we would need to know what the priorities of the University are and how they align with our goals/objectives.
 - Is there a higher authority to report to or are we on our own?
 - Do we want to be related to the university task force?
 - Mid-term objectives (prioritize these)
 - Improve and expand on the COSAM Champions model to develop confidential reporting mechanisms for incidents of discrimination and harassment to create a safer work environment.
 - Who are the COSAM champions?
 - Can we trust them?
 - Do we need a mutual person?
 - Online confidentiality model?
 - Auburn Cares for IED
 - Submit anonymous complaint, designate who will follow up on the complaint
 - Do we want to know the champion?
 - Provide an external point of contact to report issues that have not been addressed to ensure they are discussed, and solutions are presented. **Beth Yarbrough mentioned that we need to consider the University ombudsperson, Kevin Coonrod.**
- As we think about if there is someone already doing similar work that could serve as a model, we need to know how we would go about searching for this information outside of Auburn as well as within Auburn in other departments. We don't know if there are models out there to Is there someone who has already done similar work that we can use as a model?
 - We don't know if there are other models out there
 - Title IX, having someone who is trained regarding IED

- University IED group, department Champions within COSAM should all be involved to help accomplish this goal.
- Obstacles to accomplishing this goal include:
 - Are people above us equipped to handle these complaints and means to mitigate?
 - Training and mediation skills are needed
 - Understanding of federal laws
 - Possibly a greater concept of IED through experience
 - We need people who can help in this position, and this position needs to be a full-time job essentially
 - Coordinator for Accountability
- If money were no object it would be nice to have someone in a full-time position within each department to address these issues that could work more closely with offices at the university level like Title. Students and faculty volunteering to help with IED cannot put as much time in this as is needed.

Points of Discussion in the Large Group:

- Akilah Alwan made the point that inclusion efforts for current students, faculty, and staff should be prioritized over recruitment because we do not want to bring in people that we could potentially lose because we have not created a climate that is inclusive and equitable for them to feel supported.
- Nedret Billor asked if we could share a model that other departmental IED committees have in place to provide some sense of structure/guidelines for other departments to set-up their committees. **The Department of Biological Sciences was selected as the example and their structure was sent to the taskforce.**

Next Meeting will take place February 22nd.