

**Presidential Task Force Meeting Minutes
9/17/2020**

General Ronald Burgess:

Called the meeting to order thanking the committee for being here today. Shared that Dr. Cook would introduce the colleagues that would do a presentation to the committee on the AU minority business strategy being created to serve the needs of this population. General Burgess shared that the Recruitment and Retention recommendations for faculty had been shared with the deans and that Provost Bill Hardgrave and Dr. Vini Nathan would report out on this. They would like to have a follow-up meeting with at least three (3) faculty members from the committee, Dr. Melody Russell, Dr. Katrina Akande and Dr. Oladiran Fasina. Faculty hires faculty and so it is important that they have input and understand the recommendations and provide feedback. There is a great need for these conversations and the art of the possible. The Provost does not always hear things at the departmental level, so we need to ensure that the leadership understands. The committee needs to articulate its recommendations, discuss immediate changes, long-term goals and how we will proceed. Mrs. Gretchen VanValkenburg's Recruitment & Retention Recommendations for Faculty and Staff presentation will be shared with AU administration in the near future as the faculty one was shared with deans.

Provost Bill Hardgrave:

Shared that he and Dr. Vini Nathan had met with the deans on Monday and Thursday at 11 am. There were good ideas that came from the meetings and it was noticed that the deans would like to truly make changes.

Dr. Oladiran Fasina:

Asked Provost Hardgrave if they had met with his college yet?

Provost Bill Hardgrave:

Shared that they had currently met with all of the deans.

Dr. Royrickers Cook:

Shared that one of his departments in the Office of Outreach has been doing research on and outreach to Black Minority Businesses across the state. The highly recognized colleagues will be Dr. Lakami Baker and Dr. Dave Ketchen. Dr. Cook reflected on his time as a graduate assistant in the 1990's when the university used to host the "African-American Entrepreneur Summit". His office currently still has a program very similar that it has taken to Africa to assist Black entrepreneurs there.

Coach Bruce Pearl:

Asked where are the Black businesses in the Auburn Community?

Dr. Royrickers Cook:

Stated that the presentation would shed light on where they are and how we can better service them for this initiative to be successful.

Dr. Lakami Baker and Dr. Dave Ketchen:

Presented Presidential Task Force committee their presentation on “Auburn Center for Minority Business Enterprise” *Presentation PowerPoint was not available prior to minutes completion.

Ombudsman C. Kevin Coonrod:

Told Dr. Lakami Baker and Dr. Dave Ketchen that the work they are doing will help with recruitment of students and their financial needs.

Mrs. Elizabeth Devore:

Added that this work will also help with recruitment and retention of faculty and the community at large.

Dr. Dave Ketchen:

Shared a story about the Michelin Tire Company that was once located in Opelika. When the company got ready to leave they provided loans to local businesses to assist with hiring the employees that were losing their jobs. He and Dr. Baker reviewed business plans for approval and the support they had provided allowed a lot of the businesses to qualify and most of those businesses are still around today.

Ms. Maya Strickland:

Asked if the Auburn Center for Minority Business Enterprise was also accessible to AUM?

Dr. Lakami Baker:

Yes

Ms. Maya Strickland:

Added that she knows a lot of people that would benefit from this.

Dr. Lakami Baker:

Expressed that they would like to provide authentic service and not lip service. They plan to meet the real needs of the constituents that they will service and this will require money and time to be successful for all.

Dr. Taffye Benson-Clayton:

Thanked Dr. Baker and Dr. Ketchen for the presentation. She added that these are the types of resources and assets that the Auburn Community needs to have the influence it needs to feed the ecosystem here at Auburn University and is excited about this.

Dr. Lakami Baker:

Added that the graduate assistant engagement is very important to the strategy of the Auburn Center for Minority Business Enterprise.

Dr. Oladiran Fasina:

Asked how the students, staff and community will find out about the Auburn Center for Minority Business Enterprise?

Dr. Lakami Baker:

Shared that they had just gotten approval in the last couple of days but they do have a marketing strategy that they plan to use to get the word out. They are still in the beginning stages but the 1st cohort will be chosen from the Lee County Area.

Dr. Oladiran Fasina:

Shared that he had not known about this or that he knew anyone that knows about the Auburn Center for Minority Business Enterprise but suggested reaching out to the academic advisors that might know of students that would like to be entrepreneurs as well.

Dr. Lakami Baker:

Shared that the Tiger Cage Competition held for the students was one way for the young entrepreneurs to become involved but are looking for strategies to grow participation.

Mrs. Elizabeth Devore:

Suggested that they send direct emails to students and student groups to increase awareness and participation in the future.

Dr. Royrickers Cook:

Asked if there were any additional questions?

Dr. Joffery Gaymon:

Shared that this presentation was insightful and this initiative would reinforce positivity here at Auburn.

Dr. Royrickers Cook:

Shared that the program has already had virtual participation and the participants had positive testimonies about the program. This program nurtures the business intentionally and helps the business reach higher ground and opportunities.

General Ronald Burgess:

Asked that Dr. Baker and Dr. Ketchen share the presentation with Kim Brown and thanked them for their presentation to the committee.

Dr. Taffye Benson-Clayton:

Asked if the data from the presentation today could be shared?

Dr. Lakami Baker:

Shared she would pull the data together and share with the Presidential Task Force committee.

General Ronald Burgess:

Asked that Coach Pearl share information on the current Unity T-Shirt sales.

Coach Bruce Pearl:

Shared that they have sold 5,000 T-shirts so far and that the Tip Off Club just bought \$10,000 worth of T-shirts for all the athletes. There are some podcasts with Charles Barkley and Earl Johnson that should also assist with spreading the word and increase purchases. He shared that Monday Dr. Taffye Benson Clayton and Mr. Garry Morgan from the Office of Inclusion and Diversity, and a representative from the Military to come over to speak with the athletes about the national anthem. The students asked questions and the education was good for those present.

General Ronald Burgess:

Shared that Mike Clardy from Communications and Marketing will be sending out communications that Friday before the Arkansas game, everyone will wear a shirt on campus providing an opportunity to take pictures and capture everyone supporting this great idea.

Coach Bruce Pearl:

Shared that donations have begun to come to be added to the scholarship.

Ms. Maya Strickland:

Asked where proceeds are going.

Coach Bruce Pearl:

Shared that the proceeds minus the cost of the production of the T-shirts would go towards retention and summer programs, etc. that would have the greatest impact.

General Ronald Burgess:

Asked that Dr. Joffery Gaymon respond since she had set up the scholarship account.

Dr. Joffery Gaymon:

Shared that the information about the scholarship can be found on the general scholarship website.

Mrs. Gretchen VanValkenburg:

Shared that the link for the scholarship should be included on the website and on the social media networks.

General Ronald Burgess:

Agreed that the information should be on the website as well and the information about the Arkansas Unity Shirt day. We should also have this in the Opelika-Auburn Newspaper to make sure we get it to the people. He shared that he is currently speaking with the newspaper about this.

Coach Bruce Pearl:

Shared that he was excited that they are in talks with donors regarding 15,000 T-shirts for the students to wear during the first football game.

Ms. Ada Ruth Huntley:

Shared that no one recognized Coach Bruce Pearl in the Unity video with his beard and that the students expressed some concern that the T-shirts they saw were Under Armor brand but the ones that they ordered were different.

Coach Bruce Pearl:

Shared that the Under Armor were the first orders but they went with another vendor for mass printing to lower production costs so that more could go to the scholarship proceeds.

Ombudsman C. Kevin Coonrod:

Told Dr. Lakami Baker and Dr. Dave Ketchen that the work they are doing will help with recruitment of students and their financial needs.

Dr. Joffery Gaymon:

Shared that Unity scholarship award is renewable for the awardees as well.

Dr. Angela Cannon:

Suggested that something is published to show where the funds are to go and accessible for anyone wanting to know the details about the scholarship.

General Ronald Burgess:

Agreed that we as a committee should remain as transparent as possible.

Dr. Joffery Gaymon:

Shared that Unity scholarship will be tracked and will capture data like how many were awarded and the amount given out.

Ms. Maya Strickland:

Asked what the criteria was and was this departmental.

Dr. Joffery Gaymon:

Shared that there is blanket language that is being used that is pretty standard. The minimum GPA is 3.0 and this is targeting underrepresented groups and will have similar number of

awards as the funds are available. The applicants should use the Auburn University general scholarship link to apply.

Ms. Maya Strickland:

Asked if the Unity Scholarship was similar to the Coca-Cola scholarship based on merit.

Dr. Joffery Gaymon:

Shared the minimum GPA is 3.0 and this is for the new scholarship and freshman/sophomore population.

Ms. Maya Strickland:

Asked if this was for transfer and new freshman.

Dr. Joffery Gaymon:

Shared that yes, this would include transfers.

Dr. Taffye Benson-Clayton:

Added that this is similar to the Goal Completion grant.

Dr. Joffery Gaymon:

Shared that the scholarship would also fill in the gaps as well.

General Ronald Burgess:

Shared that next Monday the Presidential Task Force would be at the BSU meeting and asked that all that could attend be present.

General Ronald Burgess:

Stated that he wanted to share that Auburn University is a public institution who follows the laws and have to adhere to competitive laws that allow bids to be awarded to the lowest bid and cannot provide business to companies based on them being a minority.

Dr. Melody Russell:

Asked if the recommendations had been shared with the deans of the colleges.

General Ronald Burgess:

Answered that Dr. Nathan and Provost Hardgrave had met with the deans of the colleges and would like to follow up with three (3) faculty members of the Presidential Task force – Dr. Melody Russell, Dr. Oladiran Fasina and Dr. Katrina Akande.

Dr. Vini Nathan:

Shared that the faculty recruitment and retention document had been shared in full form with the deans and asked to digest and have an opportunity to ask for clarification.

Provost Bill Hardgrave:

Added that the deans will have a chance to apply what works for them in their area and disregard what will not. Next Monday and Thursday will be a larger discussion with the Presidential Task Force faculty members as well.

Dr. Melody Russell:

Shared that she is concerned about the strategy of the faculty recruitment and retention recommendations. She wanted to make sure that the African American faculty are at the front of the recommendation since they will be the ones effected the most. We want to make sure that we have an authentic representation. She stated the she recalled that the Presidential Task Force committee next steps were to rollout the recommendations to the Auburn Black Caucus being transparent and allowing their feedback and then expanding them to the deans next. There are currently no African American deans. This would also impact herself as an African American faculty here at Auburn University. She asked that the committee step back and go to the Black Caucus with the recommendation before taking further action.

General Ronald Burgess:

Recommended that the committee step back and allow the Black Caucus to make recommendations before Dr. Nathan and Provost Hardgrave meet with the deans again allowing to receive input and consider the input.

Dr. Melody Russell:

Shared that this will add value to the recommendations and show how the committee wants to be as authentic as possible.

General Ronald Burgess:

Agreed with Dr. Russell.

Provost Bill Hardgrave:

Added that he does not have an issue with more interactions at all. Some of the recommendations can be done and some of them cannot be done without the Faculty Senate approval. As a university we are building the foundation for long term goals to be met.

Dr. Melody Russell:

Shared that being intentional how we move forward for all involved will add value and showed appreciation for the willingness to step back.

General Ronald Burgess:

Stated that the committee will step back change the schedule around a little bit and he will take this task up with Kim Brown.

Dr. Melody Russell:

Shared the news regarding the University of Alabama changing the names of their buildings and statues that have racial history. Board of Trustee member Elizabeth Huntley has mentioned

monuments and statues, but Auburn University has the opportunity to send a great message about our community by changing names of buildings as well as statues and monuments. She also asked what the protocol for the BSU meeting would be on Monday and what does the Presidential Task Force there want to accomplish.

Ms. Maya Strickland:

Shared the BSU meeting general overview and that this was very casual meeting. BSU wanted to provide a platform for the students to find out what the Presidential Task Force is doing. All committee members that can attend should join the link at 5 pm Monday.

General Ronald Burgess:

Stated that Kim Brown and Mya Strickland will connect to confirm the details and which five committee members will be highlighted to participate. We as a committee definitely want to remain transparent at all times. The committee should also plan to attend the Black Caucus meeting next week and the next Presidential Task Force meeting will be via zoom, Thursday, September 24th at 3:30 pm.

Task Force Members

Ada Ruth Huntley

Amy Weaver

Angela Cannon

Bill Hardgrave

Bruce Pearl

C. Kevin Coonrod

Donielle Fagan

Elizabeth Devore

Gretchen VanValkenburg

Ja'lia Taylor

Jaime Hammer

Joffery Gaymon

Katrina Akande

Lastella Paradise

Madison Birkhead

Melody Russell

Mya Strickland

Oladiran Fasina

Ronald Burgess

Ronny Isaac

Royrickers Cook

Seymour Irby

Sylvia Masango

Taffye Clayton

Vini Nathan