

## Presidential Task Force for Opportunity and Equity

### February 18, 2021 Minutes

- Welcome to Gretel Thornton, a graduate student, who is now a member of the task force.
- Gen. Ron Burgess
  - Announced that Bruce Pearl obtained a \$250,000 donation for the Together We Will scholarship for undergraduate and graduate students.
    - \$30,000 was raised from T-shirt sales
      - 30 students received a \$1,000 scholarship to offset tuition as well as an additional \$1,000 in Dining Dollars to apply toward dining costs.
      - [https://ocm.auburn.edu/newsroom/news\\_articles/2021/02/251630-unity-tshirt-scholarship.php](https://ocm.auburn.edu/newsroom/news_articles/2021/02/251630-unity-tshirt-scholarship.php)
- Dr. Taffye Clayton reported that she reached out to Graduate School Dean George Flowers and Associate Dean Maria Witte about organizing listening sessions with the Black Graduate and Professional Association and other graduate student groups on campus.
  - Dr. Clayton, Dean Flowers and Dr. Witte will meet on Feb. 22 to discuss specifics.
  - Dr. Clayton said she would then reach out to the graduate students on the task force to work with them to schedule the listening sessions. The goal was to have the listening sessions in early March.

### **Subcommittee Break-out Sessions**

#### **Student Retention**

- The committee discussed their schedule and upcoming guest speakers:
  - Feb 22 – 3 p.m. to 4 p.m. Session 1- Offices include Ms. Katherine Hettinger, Auburn Cares Manager will discuss minority student success barriers based on the case management model. Jamie Miller, Director of Academic Support will discuss and provide data on tutoring and academic support resources and the impact on minority student success.
  - Feb. 24 – 3 p.m. to 4 p.m. Session 2 - Dr. Abby Langhem, Director of Assessment for Student Affairs, will discuss engagement and how it affects minority student success.
  - The Feb. 25 guest speaker will be Dr. Cordelia Brown, Senior Lecturer and Director of Engineering Academic Excellence Program. She will discuss with the group the minority student recruitment and retention efforts in the College of Engineering.
  - The March 4 guest speaker will be Dr. Kimberly Mulligan, Assistant Dean for Inclusion, Equity, and Diversity in the College of Sciences and Mathematics. She will speak about her work to develop and implement initiatives which create an inclusive environment for a diverse student body, faculty, and staff, particularly those from traditionally underrepresented groups in STEM.
- **Other Items to be finalized and discussed**
  - Summary of findings - Qualitative and Quantitative Data
  - Discuss Climate Study Themes – major findings
  - Peer Benchmarks
  - Outstanding request – High impact practices by demographic breakdown, post grad outcomes.

## Institute Subcommittee

- Dr. Melody Russell announced that an email would go out on Feb. 19 from Gen. Burgess's office to the Deans and Associate Deans for Research to gain information on faculty conducting scholarly research on Black and African American people/communities. The text of the email is below.
  - Question expressed as to how the information is intended to be returned to us. We will watch for each unit to send and then place it in the Box.
- We will need a consultant to perform a feasibility study to determine whether our plan for an institute is viable.
- John Morris is coming aboard as the Senior Vice President for Advancement. He comes to us from Kansas State University, which has just established a multi-cultural center. He will bring helpful knowledge.
- We have a template for creating an institute.
- The institute will affect all segments of the university. We should educate student body and faculty on the prospect of establishing an institute and listen to input.
- We will have a representative(s) attend a Black Student Union meeting on a 2<sup>nd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> Monday at 5:00 PM to discuss task force initiatives and listen to input.
- We have a new progress report on the Task Force website.
- Dr. Gogue recently published a communication after two residence halls were renamed after Black Auburn alumni.

Dear Deans and ADR's:

A subcommittee of the Presidential Task Force for Opportunity and Equity has been created to investigate the possibility of establishing an institute at Auburn University focusing on the unique history, experiences, and narratives of Black and African Americans through scholarly research. As the subcommittee begins working on establishing a framework for this institute, one of our first goals is to collect data on any existing scholarly research that is taking place across campus that directly or indirectly investigates the experiences of Black and African Americans.

Please provide information on scholars whose research focuses on Black and African American people/communities currently being conducted within your college to help the subcommittee compile data on current or existing research endeavors. In addition to research, we are also very interested in information on various outreach initiatives that focus on Black and African Americans.

In an effort to expedite this phase of our work, **please send a brief summary of research projects, research grants (internal and external), outreach initiatives,** etc. by Feb. 27th to Dr. Melody Russell, subcommittee chair ([russeml@auburn.edu](mailto:russeml@auburn.edu)). If you have questions, please feel free to email or call at 334-844-4434.

Thank you in advance for your assistance with this important initiative. We will keep you posted on our progress.

Sincerely,

Presidential Task Force for Opportunity and Equity subcommittee