

## Presidential Task Force for Opportunity and Equity

February 25, 2021

### Minutes

- **General Burgess Update**
  - \$287,400 was raised for the Together We Will scholarships on Tiger Giving Day.
    - The university will start allocating and awarding the money this summer.
    - The scholarships will be awarded to graduate and undergraduate students.
- **Diversity Statement – Dr. Taffye Clayton**
  - Dr. Clayton reported that a subcommittee is working on diversity statement and will report back to the larger group.
    - The statement will be mission mindedness and aspirational.
    - It will focus in on where we are and where we need to be as a university.
    - She said the statement will include an action plan.
    - Members of the committee suggested edits for the statement.
- **Graduate Student Concerns – Dr. Taffye Clayton**
  - Dr. Clayton met with Graduate School Dean George Flowers and Associate Dean Maria Witte. They discussed the best way to get an audience with the Black Graduate and Professional Association and other graduate student groups on campus and organize the meetings.
    - They are finalizing a date for listening sessions and those dates will be announced soon.
    - The listening sessions will take to heart what the graduate students have to say and will discuss what the graduate student subcommittee will work on and what changes graduate students can expect.
    - Transparency will be key and reports will be made to the graduate student groups to keep them informed as to what the is what we are doing.
    - Dr. Clayton said we need to strengthen relationships with graduate students overall, lean in more and learn from them.
  - **Tiger Giving Day – Gretchen VanValkenburg**
    - Ms. VanValkenburg reported that Auburn’s sixth Tiger Giving Day funded 40 projects across campus.
    - She said a great number of those projects focused on diversity and inclusion, such as the Dr. Josetta Brittain Matthews Memorial Endowed Scholarship and the Together We Will Scholarship.
    - Ada Ruth Huntley added that the National Pan-Hellenic Council Legacy Plaza raised more than \$31,000 from over 600 donors.
    - More information about the Tiger Giving Day projects is available:  
[https://ocm.auburn.edu/newsroom/news\\_articles/2021/03/2021031100-tiger-giving-day.php](https://ocm.auburn.edu/newsroom/news_articles/2021/03/2021031100-tiger-giving-day.php)

### Subcommittee Break-out Sessions

#### Student Retention – Dr. Joffery Gaymon

- The guest speaker for this meeting was Dr. Cordelia Brown, a Senior Lecturer and the Director of the Engineering Academic Excellence Program.
  - Dr. Brown said the Academic Excellence Program’s goal is to strengthen the recruitment and retention of underrepresented students in the College of Engineering.
  - She said the program focuses on creating a strong sense of community with the minority students in engineering.
    - They have a kickoff event each fall so that students can see that they have a community around them who will support them.

- Dr. Brown said providing visitation days for high school juniors, sophomores and freshmen helps create engagement opportunities with the prospective students and their parents.
  - They meet faculty, staff and current students while on campus. She said this helps them feel seen and feel a part of Auburn.
  - They provide tours of the engineering classrooms and labs so the students know where they will be studying.
- They also have STEM visitation days each year with COSAM.
- They sponsor an optional summer bridge program for incoming freshmen.
  - Dr. Brown said the bridge program is helpful to the students because they start to engage with their peers. They learn about the academic rigor of the engineering major. They work with their peers in team building exercises.
- The students involved in the Academic Excellence Program have a space in the Brown-Kopel Center to call their own. Dr. Brown said this is an important aspect of the program because the students see their peers there, they work on projects together and socialize in the space. They also receive academic support and professional development training.
- It is also key to the program's success that they have support staff in place to assist the program and the students.
- More information about the program is available:  
<http://www.eng.auburn.edu/admin/aep/index.html>

#### **Institute Subcommittee – Dr. Melody Russell**

- Dr. Russell announced that they would have a short meeting since they are waiting on information from the Deans and Assistant/Associate Deans of Research.
  - She reported that, thus far, they have received good information from deans and associate deans for research and anticipate more this week.
  - At the March 4 meeting, the subcommittee will have had time to review the research inventory and the projects.
- The subcommittee was asked to review all research projects included in the campus inventory and come to the next meeting prepared to sift through and discuss them.