

Presidential Task Force for Opportunity and Equity

March 11, 2021

Minutes

Updates – General Burgess

- Gen. Burgess welcomed [Dr. Michael Brown from the School of Kinesiology](#). Dr. Brown introduced himself. He joined Auburn four years ago.
- Gen. Burgess reminded about the Graduate Student Meeting tonight, March 11, from 6 to 7 p.m. Everyone is welcome.
- Gen. Burgess talked about University Leadership, including several from this Task Force, who will participate in next Friday's meeting with the NAACP. The NAACP requested the meeting. A couple of trustees will also participate. Gen. Burgess will report back to the Task Force about the meeting.

Update on Diversity Statement – Dr. Taffye Clayton

- Dr. Clayton reviewed the changes that were incorporated into the diversity statement. New suggestions were shared.
 - Gretchen VanValkenburg wants to accept and move forward.
 - Burgess says we can and will adapt as necessary in the future and a big thank you to all for the hard work.

Updates to the Staff Recruitment/Retention Sub-committee – Gretchen VanValkenburg

- Ms. VanValkenburg shared their group's sub-committee results on Recruitment and Retention of African American Staff.
- A number of specific highlights were mentioned such as the role of an Equity Advisor in HR, HR partnering with HBCUNetwork.com for advertising, broadening hiring postings to websites and adding the AA/EEO statement on the job postings, etc.
- Angela Cannon asked if this information will be shared by Dr. Gogue? Gen. Burgess said it would be added to the next monthly communication that comes from Dr. Gogue.
- Burns-Johnson gave kudos for all the work and asked if there a written goal for implementation of the various improvements? Burgess reminded everyone he can nudge on the A&P/Staff side, but faculty hire faculty and he has no oversight.

Subcommittee Break-outs

Student Retention

Chair: Dr. Joffery Gaymon

Members: Akilah Alwan, Madison Birkhead, Mikayla Brown, Chacolby Burns-Johnson, Angela Cannon, Rick Cook, Oladiran Fasina, Ada Ruth Huntley, Seymour Irby, Ronny Isaac, Lastella Paradise-Watson, Gretel Thornton, Jeffrey Turnipseed and Rett Waggoner

- Data informed Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT).
- The committee continued to discuss the [Auburn Students & Community for Change](#) List of Demands that were added to the shared drive. The four categories of demands include Monetary Commitments; Campus Culture; Education & Training; and Structural Changes.
- Final topics include Athletics, Post Grad outcomes and High Impact Practices
 - Academic Affairs Assessment

- Office of Inclusion and Diversity
- Athletics Academic Support
- Subject Matter Experts:
 - **Ada K. Wilson**, Assistant Vice President for Access & Inclusive Excellence in the Office of Inclusion and Diversity
 - Provided an overview of OID's programing, including Tiger Network First Gen, the Cross Cultural Center for Excellence.
 - Retention and Graduation data was provided on Auburn's first-gen population and TESP programing outcomes.
 - Lengthy discussion was centered on disaggregating data.
 - **Dr. Kathryn Flynn**, Senior Associate Athletics Director, presented information on retention and student success efforts within the department of Athletics.
 - In addition to academic advising, their model includes academic counselors and the Tiger Academic Strategist Program.
 - She provided information on the role of athletics "Academic Counselor" which compliments a student athletics academic advisor.
 - Recommendations included focusing on composition classes, addressing technology issues i.e., lack of personal computer, Bridge program, helping to ensure students feel comfortable with interacting with faculty.
 - Final presentation will occur Thursday, March 18, Dr. Katie Boyd, Director of Academic Assessment. Presentation will focus on post-graduation outcomes and high impact practices.

Equity & Social Justice Center

Chair: Dr. Melody Russell

Members: Katrina Akande, Michael Bennett, Michael Brown, Taffye Clayton, Kevin Coonrod, Robin Jaffe, Kimberly Mulligan, Jared Russell, Jailin Sanders, Joellen Sefton, Kamden Strunk, Giovanna Summerfield & Gretchen VanValkenburg

- The subcommittee is at the stage of determining what information we provide to give insight on the planning process relative to the institute proposal (since we are in such an early stage of proposal development and still working on the vision, etc.). It is important that we communicate that even if we provide information on what we have learned so far that some of what we have discussed may change.
 - It is also important to provide information on the stage we are currently in relative to the proposal development (also making sure people are aware that there is even an institute subcommittee working on a vision, goals, objectives, etc. since some people may not even know this).
 - We also need to continue are discussions on the institute possibility (e.g. what it will accomplish) and communicate more of what we are doing and the role of this subcommittee.
- A point was made that AU is moving to an advancement model, which has Alumni Affairs, Alumni Development, and the Office of Communications and Marketing. A lot more intentional strategy regarding communications. Fast, proactive, transparent, continuum of feeding people information so they can work with students and colleges going forward. This is an opportunity that Auburn needs to capitalize on.

- A comment was made that AU is risk adverse. Our institution is good at communicating within our own community at Auburn, but not so much outside of Auburn.
- The subcommittee designated communications person is working on a strategic plan that will capture what we are doing at this stage. We also want to be prudent in deciding when to disseminate information because we don't want to underdeliver after setting expectations.
- Re: Information in inventory.
 - We would like to include a graduate student on the subcommittee and will touch base with General Burgess and Dean Flowers.
 - What do we want the institute to speak of more broadly? How do we disaggregate the information we have?
 - A comment was made by a member that many institutes elsewhere are exclusive. There are a number of institutes like the one we are proposing as well as institutes for women, disabled veterans, veterans, Jewish Americans, etc. We need to be sure that it is clear that having an institute for Black and African American individuals is inclusive and will be inclusive even if the focus is on the Black and/or African American experience.
 - A member noted that Student Affairs Assessment Office is very good at survey design distribution. Let people know what we are developing.
 - An excellent group of word clouds was developed based on the data we received from various colleges for different entities' diversity work being done on campus reveal trends and interesting subjects shared by individuals in those entities.
- Need to provide structure in gaining input from directors at existing institutes with a similar focus
- We would like to continue gathering information and finalize the vision so we have this clear when presented to others gather input.
- We plan to bring in a director, founder or developer of an institute at a comparable or sister institution so they can discuss with us the challenges and triumphs of putting an institute together.
- Homework: Look at the word clouds in Box to select and discuss them. Ideas for who we want to bring in as a speaker.