

Presidential Task Force for Opportunity and Equity

April 8, 2021

Minutes

Attendees: Michael Bennett, Madison Birckhead, Michael Brown, Mikayla Brown, Ron Burgess, Chacolby Burns-Johnson, Angela Cannon, Taffye Benson Clayton, Royrickers Cook, Kevin Coonrod, Joffery Gaymon, Norman Godwin, Lady Frances Hamilton, Jaime Hammer, Ada Ruth Huntley, Lastella Paradise, Jared Russell, Melody Russell, Joellen Sefton, Kamden Strunk, Gretel Thornton, Jeffery Turnipseed, Gretchen VanValkenburg, Rett Waggoner, Jennifer Adams, Kim Brown and Amy Weaver

- **Updates – General Burgess**
 - **Welcome & Thank You**
 - Welcome Norman Godwin, Associate Provost for Academic Effectiveness, and students Molly Boudreaux, SGA Executive Vice President, and Lady Frances Hamilton, Panhellenic Council President.
 - Thanks for service to Bill Hardgrave and Oladiran Fasina and students Michael Bennett, Madison Birckhead and Ada Ruth Huntley, who will be graduating Spring 2021.
 - **Minutes Survey**
 - 25 people out of the 33 eligible voted in the anonymous Qualtrics survey.
 - 21 votes for “I want the minutes reported with summaries of what is said.”
 - 4 votes for “I want the minutes reported verbatim with exactly who said what.”
 - Starting today, the names and a summary of the comments will be reported from the general portion of meeting. The subcommittee meetings will be more general in nature to encourage conversation and sharing of ideas.
 - **Diversity Statement deployment**
 - Socialization of the Diversity Statement with campus groups.
 - Will deploy the diversity statement no later April 19 unless we really get a lot of input.
 - The statement was approved by the Board of Trustees task force.
 - Statement was shared with the four governance groups:
 - Rett Waggoner, president of Student Government Association
 - Don Mulvaney, chair of the Faculty Senate
 - Penny Houston, chair of Staff Council
 - Paige Patterson, chair of Administrative & Professional Assembly

- Burgess received some input back that he provided to Dr. Clayton and she is working through the comments.
 - The statement will then be shared with more units on campus for a broader socialization of the statement.
- Reminder to everyone on task force to share the statement with their constituencies and keep them informed of the task force's work.
- Thanked everyone for their work on this subcommittee.
- **Retention subcommittee**
 - Will give its final report on April 29.

Subcommittee Break-outs

Student Retention

Chair: Dr. Joffery Gaymon

Members: Akilah Alwan, Madison Birckhead, 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

- The student retention committee did not meet on April 8.

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

- We are switching from Box to Google Drive for sharing documents. However, we will continue to include items in Box. It will just be easier to work together in "real-time" using Google Drive.
- We reviewed and discussed the first draft of our proposal and believe have a strong working draft.
- Our strategic plan and mission statement are integrated nicely into the proposal.
- We have newly proposed titles:
 - Institute for the Study of Race and the Black Experience in the American South
 - Auburn University Institute for Racial and Social Justice
 - The African American Institute at Auburn University
 - Harold Franklin Institute for Equity, Racial and Social Justice.

- Question from member – If we name the Institute after an individual, will he or she be from Auburn?
- Dr. Lesley Feracho, University of Georgia Associate Director of Institute for African Studies will be speaking with us next Thursday.
- We have narrowed the focus of institute from national level to the region of the South, but increased focus from Alabama and those states surrounding our state.
- We have finished the general discussion on mission and vision. The words are specific to African Americans and we will continue to discuss how we will ensure the Black experience is critical to the institute focus too. Words are specific but not totally exclusionary. Many things are intertwined in the African American experience. It is important that we are intentional and focus on the geographic region and demographics of the area surrounding Auburn and Alabama as a whole.
- We discussed the following for inclusion in our goal statement: who are our stakeholders and what do they want out of the institute?

Goal 1: Providing students with experiential learning opportunities with scholars in certain areas and fields that focus on the institute goals. This will promote recruitment and retention. We want to establish a framework of equity and diversity. Equity-mindedness is less transactional and more transformative.

Goal 2: Serve as an interdisciplinary hub for African American related research. Focus will be on instruction, applied research and outreach. This will aid Auburn University in increasing research and applying new knowledge to benefit Alabama, national, and world citizens. We discussed moving outreach to Goal 3. We have tremendous contributions from our Extension units. It was proposed that we work in diversity, equity, and inclusion language. We want to be a hub of applied research and outreach.

Goal 3: Facilitating university-wide collaboration in related outreach activities to service citizens in areas of greatest need. It was suggested that we include “service” with outreach and scholarship.

- This will allow us to engage in activities that are not strictly scholarship. Word-phrasing: Carnegie designated engaged scholarship. Community designation of engagement in Carnegie, more recently referred to as “engaged scholarship.”

- **Carnegie Classification for Community Engagement**

- Research and Engaged Scholarship definition: “Community engagement describes collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity.”

Goal 4: Engaging students in volunteerism. Outreach activities throughout the state.

- We are switching from “Black” to “African American” communities as a focus. We discussed that we will need to remain consistent and refine the language we use.

- Funding comment: For the long term, we will need permanent funding. In the beginning, however, we will be looking for seed funding to launch the institution and then sources for sustainable funding will be used.

Goal 5: Strategic Enrollment. Institute will be a strategic asset for recruitment of underrepresented students.

- Summary of Peer and Aspirant Institutions was emailed to us previously by a subcommittee member and discussed today. The list of those institutions is found at the bottom of these notes.
 - What will we need money for? What resources will we need?
 - Once up and running, we will be able to ask for grants.
- The AU leadership will need to demonstrate they are supportive of this endeavor for an institute that focuses on the African American or Black experience in Alabama and at Auburn University.
 - If we can show increased opportunities for research and funding, administrators will be interested. We will also want to encourage researchers to bring their own funding and projects to the institute. We will need to overcome this obstacle: If the researcher has grant money, why will he or she need the institute?
- Discussions about how funding will be allocated (e.g. funding should go to students for internships, fellowships, visiting professorships).
 - We want to grow our undergraduate and graduate students research experiences. The door is open for broad and encompassing opportunities.
 - We also need a 3 to 5-year plan that will be self-sustaining.
- What do each one of us envision the institute to be on the first day of its existence? Should it to be student oriented, faculty oriented? This is something we need to discuss in more depth and think about before our next discussions.
- We need to use our goals as a framework to vision how our people are going to function and work forward. The goals can guide us to the institute outputs. It was proposed that we create a focus group of campus leaders to discuss the institute and their thoughts on the goals.
- We discussed proposing multiple focus groups to gain insight and perspective from faculty, staff, and administrators (as a start). Deans' meeting was one example of where we can gain insight and perspective. We could complete this as a whiteboard meeting. The subcommittee will work on pulling together a robust list of names. We also proposed having a Town Hall for anyone who wants to participate.
- Our goal is to a proposal on the feasibility on an institute for the African American or Black experience completed and ready to disseminate to leadership by Mid-May.
- We will work with task force leadership in our subcommittee to come up with a list of people to invite for focus groups.
- Possibly have an in-person meeting during week of May 19 or May 30.

List of Peer and Aspirant Institutions

Peer Institutions

- **Florida State University** – [FSU Civil Rights Institute – Housed in the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.](#)
- **Oklahoma State University** – [Center for Africana Studies at Oklahoma State University, housed in the College of Arts and Sciences.](#)
- **University of Kentucky** – [Center for Equality and Social Justice at the University of Kentucky is housed in the College of Arts and Sciences.](#)
- **University of Mississippi** – Partnership with the William Winter Institute for Racial Reconciliation. <https://www.winterinstitute.org/>
- **University of Oklahoma** – [African Studies Institute at the University of Oklahoma, housed in the College of International Studies.](#)

Aspirant Institutions

- **Clemson University** – [Charles H. Houston Center, housed in the College of Education.](#)
- **Purdue University** – [African American Studies and Research Center](#), housed in the College of Liberal Arts.
- **University of Florida** – [Center for the Study of Race and Race Relations](#), housed in the Levin College of Law, and the [Center for African Studies](#), housed in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.
- **University of Georgia** – [Institute for African American Studies](#), housed in the Franklin College of Arts and Science.
- **University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill** – [Center for Civil Rights](#), housed in the School of Law.
- **University of South Carolina** – [Center for Civil Rights History and Research](#), sponsored by the College of Arts and Sciences and University Libraries.