

Presidential Task Force for Opportunity and Equity

April 22, 2021
Minutes

Attendees: Katrina Akande, Akilah Alwan, Michael Brown, Ron Burgess, Chacolby Burns-Johnson, Taffye Benson Clayton, Kevin Coonrod, Joffery Gaymon, Norman Godwin, Jaime Hammer, Robin Jaffe, Jared Russell, Melody Russell, Jailin Sanders, Joellen Sefton, Bruce Smith, Gretel Thornton, Jeffery Turnipseed, Gretchen VanValkenburg, Rett Waggoner, Kim Brown and Amy Weaver

Updates – General Burgess

- Reviewed the upcoming Bessie Mae Holloway and Josetta Brittain Matthews residence hall naming ceremonies.
- Discussed (in very generic terms) two racial problems on campus this week:
 - The first social post showed a video of a high school student, who people on social media said planned to apply to Auburn, spewing a racial epithet at an African American male and having an altercation with another.
 - The emails sent to the university were shared with admissions and student affairs.
 - The second social media post showed a photo sent to a group chat by an Auburn University student. The comment written on the photo was racially offensive.
 - This was referred to the Office of Student Affairs, which oversees all student conduct issues.
 - The book [“Free Speech on Campus”](#) by Erwin Chemerinsky and Howard Gillman was recommended to General Burgess. He is reading to bring himself up-to-date on free speech issues.
- Asked all members to think about how we want to meet over the summer: weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, not at all, etc. Gen. Burgess doesn’t want anyone on the task force to burn out and wants to be respectful of those wanting to take off on some much needed vacation time. He asked the committee to have suggestions ready for next week’s discussion and, if necessary, Kim will send out a poll.
- Reminded everyone that the next subcommittee will be led by Dr. George Flowers and Dr. Jared Russell regarding retention and recruitment of graduate students.
- Reminded the group that Dr. Gaymon’s subcommittee will present their findings next week during our regular meeting April 29.
- Gen. Burgess opened the meeting to general discussion:
 - Chacolby Burns-Johnson asked if notification of events could get to our membership a little faster so they could plan to join (i.e. naming ceremonies).

- Coonrod suggested the Office of Communication and Marketing may have videos for people to watch who were unable to attend.
- Amy Weaver said she will send the video links to Kim Brown to send out to the group.
- Chacolby Burns-Johnson asked for any updates related to the NAACP.
 - Gen. Burgess reported that NAACP members attended the Bessie Mae Holloway naming ceremony.
 - He communicated with Bernard Simelton, the President of the Alabama State Conference of the NAACP, and they both agree that the line of communication between Auburn and NAACP is working satisfactorily.
 - As an example, a protest flyer was circulated that indicated the protest was supported by NAACP, Southern Christian Leadership and Black Fraternities & Sororities. All organizations were contacted and while some were aware of the protest, none had given their OK to support. The protest involved two people lasted about 20 minutes.
 - The NAACP opened up a separate communication directly with the Board of Trustees task force.
 - There is ongoing research right now over the amount of vendor contracts that can be designated to minority groups.
- Chacolby Burns-Johnson asked for posting minutes on a more timely basis.
 - Several took responsibility for being delayed in getting the subcommittee notes to Jennifer Adams, which causes the delay in posting the minutes. They said they will try to do better.
- Chacolby Burns-Johnson reminded everyone to join the Auburn Black Alumni Council's 'Conversation with the Council' virtual meeting on Sunday, April 25, at 3 p.m. (CST).

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

- Subcommittee reviewed a draft of the PowerPoint and discussed additional items that should be addressed and included.
- Items included next steps and key stakeholders that should be included.
- The presentation and recommendations will be presented to the task force on April 29.

- Dr. Gaymon, Gretel Thorton, Chaolby Burns-Johnson, Jeffery Turnipseed and Mikayla Brown will make the presentation to the taskforce.

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

- Dr. Clayton shared a slideshow on PowerPoint. An overview of that presentation and subcommittee discussion are reflected in these notes.
- We have two upcoming in-person listening sessions for research faculty, allies, and potential allies on April 23 and April 27.
 - Invited Faculty include faculty, staff, and administrators from AAUP, ABC, and the diversity-related research inventory contributors and we have received 62 RSVPs.
- We will give an overview of the progress and set parameters/guidelines for a focused discussion.
- We will introduce 5 different institutional models on other R1 public campuses:
 1. University of Virginia
 2. University of Georgia
 3. Purdue University
 4. Clemson University
 5. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
- Questions:
 - What existing assets should this institute be connected to in its work?
 - Use 5 adjectives to describe reaction to the institute's mission.
 - What versions are recommended to the proposed mission and vision for the institute?
 - Rank the 5 institutional models, above
 - List 3 untapped resources that this institute can activate.
- After the two listening sessions:
 1. Review and present results of the listening sessions
 2. Prepare for the May 14 listening session with administrators
 3. Advance a proposal for the institute toward formalization and a Fall 2022 launch
- At the listening sessions we will give our timeline, progress to date, engage in a conversation approach, and reflection questions.
- For the PowerPoint:

- Progress to date
- Conversation Approach – we will have worksheets for the participants
- What have we overlooked?
- Reflection 1: Existing assets
- Reflection 2 – Use 5 adjectives
- Which model do you believe is the most aspirational and attainable for Auburn?
- We will share a link to ask the listeners for the name and contact info of scholars potentially suited to lead the institution.
 - A question was raised whether we are prepared yet to ask for potential leaders of the institute.
- 62 people interested, either in person or via written responses. 46 will be there in person, at 23 people per session. We will have 23 tables set up, with one person assigned to each table. Box lunches will be provided.
- We talked about having a hybrid delivery model where some people will be able to participate remotely in a subsequent meeting. We will send the package and questions to those that can't be accommodated in the limited space for a live session and ask them to deliver their responses via email.
- A question arose from a subcommittee member:
 - Can we revise the PowerPoint or program prior to the second group after learning, ourselves, during the first session?
 - Answer: We want uniformity for the first two sessions designated for faculty, but we are likely to have a different set of questions for the administrators during our meeting with them.
- Subcommittee member question:
 - Can we do a Zoom presentation for the Black Student Union over the summer?
 - That was an excellent idea, per group consensus.
- Dr. Clayton and her team from OID along with Mrs. Gretchen Vanvalkenburg will organize all meetings and members of Dr. Clayton's team will be facilitators for the listening session.