

Presidential Task Force for Opportunity and Equity

June 10, 2021

Minutes

Attendees: Katrina Akande, Olasubomi Akintola, Akilah Alwan, Vinicia Biancardi, Michael Brown, Mikayla Brown, Chacolby Burns-Johnson, Angela Cannon, Taffye Benson Clayton, Astin Cole, Kevin Coonrod, Brian Cornish, George Flowers, Joffery Gaymon, Lady Frances Hamilton, Robin Jaffe, Dustin Johnson, Bridgett King, Kimberly Mulligan-Guy, Lastella Paradise, Ebony Robinson, Jared Russell, Melody Russell, Jailin Sanders, Cheryl Seals, Joellen Sefton, Bruce Smith, Giovanna Summerfield, Aariyan Tooley, Jeffery Turnipseed, Gretchen VanValkenburg, Rett Waggoner, Alan Wilson, Jennifer Adams, Kim Brown and Amy Weaver

Updates – Dr. Taffye Benson Clayton

- Dr. Clayton led the meeting as Gen. Burgess had a conflict.
 - Dr. Clayton acknowledged Pride Month and Juneteenth.
- Dr. Clayton quickly turned the meeting over to the subcommittees so they would have ample discussion time.

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 discussed that she is working with a strategic communication team and she will provide a compilation of notes from each listening session within the next week.
 - These notes will reflect the listening session comments and will be shared with the committee-at-large.
 - The listening sessions went well and were very important.
- A request was made that even though Dr. Clayton has a strategic communication team working on this data the subcommittee should also have access to all the raw data and the completed notes/minutes from each listening session to be placed in a Box folder.
 - There were also notes on the handouts with feedback from participants and the subcommittee will also be provided with this information so the subcommittee can all see the raw data, comments, etc.
 - The subcommittee members will review and compile data into primary themes (in addition to the information that the strategic communication team Dr. Clayton has organized).
 - For those on the subcommittee that may not want to review all the data they can just review the primary themes that emerge. Dr. Clayton said that her team will provide all notes and raw data (e.g. handouts with notes from participants) and this information will be uploaded to the Box folder within the next week.

- All subcommittee members will have access to review and at the next meeting the subcommittee will discuss primary themes. This information will be discussed in addition to the themes that Dr. Clayton's team will provide.
- Here are updates from Dr. Slocumb's talk during the last meeting regarding the status of the institute at North Carolina, Chapel Hill.
 - Dr. Slocumb is transitioning from her role as director and will become the Associate Dean for the DEI office in the UNC College of Liberal Arts.
 - Dr. Slocumb relates that resourcing for the UNC institute became challenging over time. They are presently revisiting the resourcing issue at that institution.
- We have finished the three listening sessions.
 - The participants in all sessions (two with faculty and one with administrators) shared enthusiasm about the idea of an institute.
 - Although there was a great deal of excitement and enthusiasm, we need to be cautious about over-promising and should maintain a narrow focus.
 - We need to continue to communicate with all participants at those sessions.
 - Questions from participants included: 1) How will the institute be funded? 2) Will the institute really be established? They were seeking certainty regarding the creation of an institute.
- A suggestion was made that we go back to the initial vision and mission and look at the comments of the participants in all the sessions to see where we can align.
- In the administrators' listening session there was a discussion about whether the institute will be forward-facing, or innovative or historical and engaging history.
 - Conversations were made around the question of whether this was going to be an academic, credit bearing construct or an interdisciplinary institute involving folks across campus.
 - The models provided from other institutions are quite different, so they engendered a lot of questions.
 - The administrators liked the idea of a focused effort; the idea of really thinking about Auburn and the AU land grant mission; what it means for us to take on the topic in a way that is authentic and unique to Auburn; engaging faculty across disciplines; thinking about the community components; being in partnership so we are doing things "with" rather than "to" people; and thoughtful as to how the components will be resourced. This resonates with our conversation with Dr. Slocumb regarding resourcing.
 - What processes will we undertake to move our mission forward? We will conduct a thorough review of all that has transpired and deposit the information into Box.
 - Administrators challenged us regarding the institute: 1) Is it forward-facing? 2) What kind of impact will it have on our students and research?
- We need to draft a proposal within the next month and send it out to strategic people for comment so we can further develop and finalize it for presentation to the Board of Trustees. We need to stay aligned with the outline provided for proposals that Gretchen provided initially.
- In two weeks (the next scheduled meeting is June 24th), we will have reviewed all data from each listening session and determine emerging and prevailing themes. In addition, at the next meeting, we can discuss how the themes from the data align with the mission/vision and what the next steps

will be in order to be sure we are aligned with the feedback (as best as possible). Our goal is to meet the August 11 deadline for submission of materials to the Board.

- June 24 is our next meeting. Our goal for that meeting is to have concrete items to discuss and see how they fit into the mission and proposal. The large conference room at the Auburn Alumni Center was offered for this meeting. We agreed to have a hybrid, face-to-face meeting at the Alumni Center, with the ability for people to attend via Zoom if they prefer that mode.
- Succeeding meetings will be held on July 8 and July 22 so that we can complete and refine the draft proposal for the Board of Trustees and our goal is to provide them with a proposal by August 11. We will also make sure we follow the correct protocol for submitting a proposal for the development of an institute.
- Dr. Godwin will follow up with the Provost to make sure we are following steps with our proposal that are within a correct protocol.
- Homework: review the new information that will be deposited in Box by early next week (this will also include all notes taken from the listening sessions) and completed feedback notes from participants will be placed in Box so we can access them.

Graduate Student Subcommittee

Chairs: George Flowers and Jared Russell

Members: Cheryl Seals, Bridgett King, Alan Wilson, Vinicia Biancardi, Astin Cole, Brian Cornish, Dustin Johnson, Bridgett King, Ebony Robinson, Cheryl Seals, Aariyan Tooley and Alan Wilson

- Introduction of committee members
- Discussion of subcommittee charge
 - Identify issues and concerns that impact opportunity and equity for African American and Black graduate students and provide recommendations to address them.
 - The mission is to work with various constituencies and get feedback from them about what is going right, what is not going right and how the university can address what is not going right.
 - Discussed how the committee is not only looking for things that aren't working, but looking for things that are working on campus and can be scaled up.
 - Come up with creative solutions to fix what is not working.
 - Need to make sure that graduate students are aware of the committee's charge.
 - Make clear what the committee can accomplish administratively and what is not the purview of this committee.
- Confidentiality expectations
 - Minutes will not be verbatim so that all committee members feel comfortable speaking freely and can fully engage.
 - The committee particularly wants frank feedback from the graduate students on the committee.
- Process transparency
 - Will be meeting through the summer and early fall.
 - Hope to have recommendations by late September or early October.
- Next steps
 - First major step is information collection

- Objective metric data such as Institutional Research data and Graduate School application data
 - Anecdotal information
- Need to identifying Constituency groups to interview and solicit feedback
 - Graduate Students
 - Members of the Graduate Student Council
 - Graduate Program Officers
 - Graduate faculty
 - Auburn Black Faculty Caucus
 - Members of the Black Graduate and Professional Student Association
 - Deans, Associate Deans or Department Chairs – liaisons to the Graduate School
- What will be the mechanism for information collection?
 - Town hall meetings, surveys or other sources?
- Determine recommendations to put forward and prepare report for presentation.