

## **Institute Subcommittee Provost's Meeting, August 16, 2021**

The subcommittee introduced its proposal for an Institute for African American and Black Studies to the Auburn University Provost.

### **PROPOSAL**

Provide space for scholarly research and academic excellence

To promote research and academic experiences

Solution-focused research ideology

The institute will be interdisciplinary, connecting academic programs, being solution-focused.

Intended to be innovative and a solver of problems that are prevalent to African American and Black populations in the state of Alabama and the South.

We want to attract excellent scholars and students

#### Vision

Nationally recognized beacon for intentional and innovative approach to identifying and solving inequities in education, health disparities, and obstacles to economic prosperity that are prevalent in African American and Black communities throughout the South.

#### Benefits for AU

Recruitment of diverse faculty and scholars

Opportunities for visiting scholars, cross-institutional and regional research endeavors

Enhance faculty engagement and research endeavors for faculty and students

Promote sense of belonging and community on and around the campus

Providing opportunity for partnerships

Building collaborations across colleges

#### Institute Organizational Structure

Director

- Well versed in diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Extensive research experience in academia and external fund raising
- Track record of developing and implementing strategic initiatives
- Record of obtaining external funding
- Ability to leverage all interested parties and be committed to AU's vision to lead and shape the future of higher education

Administrative Board that will report directly to the Provost

Resources and Facilities:

1 full-time director, 1 half-time assistant director, 2 full-time administrative staff members, and graduate student fellows. Director will not serve in a dual role as faculty member and director, to ensure time allocation will be dedicated to the establishment and sustainability of the institute.

Equipment – technology, Wi-Fi, hybrid programming

Facilities – building or separate space – meeting space, offices, exhibition area, library and archives, designated classroom and conference space.

### Funding Sources

Seed funding from university for at least 5 years with supplemental support for up to 10 years.

Potential funding sources might be tied to FTE (majors); fellowships; summer camps; and research grants.

### Broader Impact

Enhance student recruitment and retention

Expand ability to recruit and retain premier faculty

Enhance business and workforce development

Research

Economic and cultural prosperity for people of state and nation

Enhance and expand relationships with Auburn alumni and new donors

Situate the Auburn region as a cultural destination and to enhance tourism

Research side: There would be a STEM focus to the institute. This may set us apart from other Black and African American Centers. This could distinguish us. It should help with donors as well.

## **FEEDBACK**

Generally, there are three reasons for establishing a center or institute

1) As an outgrowth of a current, successful research strength

2) When there are pockets of research or activities going on across campus that are in need of stitching together. The center or institute would provide an umbrella or home for them to reside.

3) A placeholder or pragmatic reason for creating a structure under which things could happen.

It appears that the institute subcommittee is attempting to stitch together multiple things that are happening on campus.

What is the value proposition of the proposed institute?

What's the value add that is not already being generated across campus?

What can university units do together that they aren't doing separately?

What are we offering to get the segments to want to stitch together?

Is the proposal different from what we are already doing on campus?

What is our differentiation within the state, and across the nation?

We will need to show that there is a clear difference. To stand on its own, the institute has to offer something that will cause people to say, "I'll invest in that."

We must be financially self-sufficient. There must be a strong business model that says, "this is how we do it."

In terms of financing, there are 3 legs to the financing stool

- 1) Gifts and endowments
- 2) Research
- 3) Services

Of these, one leg might be stronger than the others.

Which of those 3 legs are ours?

The center or institute must stand on its own.

In 30 seconds, we should be able to state the institute's purpose. Why does this exist?

What is our elevator speech?

Our proposal contains a lot of good things, but we are probably trying to do too much. We are very broad.

Are we trying to be all things to all people?

What is going to set us apart from what is already out there?

What is the life span of what we're trying to do?

How long is it supposed to last?

Is it set up to stand the test of time?

Two successful institutes at Auburn are the RFID and the McCrary Institute.

The RFID Institute is a lab, funded through research, services, and gifts.

The McCrary Institute came about because of a major grant. A ten-million-dollar endowment was established, and external funding is now a huge source of funding for that institute.

The value proposition is important for deans, to see how it will benefit their colleges and schools.

Scope of institute:

Institutes don't have academic programs. No majors or credit hours.

An institute doesn't do recruiting or faculty hiring.

Institute can support recruiting of programs, post-docs, under-represented student population.

In our proposal, we use the term “space” a lot. How is this term meant? Physical space?  
Another type of space?  
We will have to pay for our physical space.

Think about what we are trying to do. Are we possibly biting off too much?

What are our potential funding sources? What about this institute proposal is attractive to a major donor? We need to be more focused on the value we are adding.

What kind of research are we doing and what is the value proposition of what we are doing? We want to have a proposal that we can sell. In this case, we will be asking the Board of Trustees for approval, and that will present us with a high bar to surpass. We will need to show we are well funded.

Seed money from the university is present just to get us going. We need detail regarding financing, certainly to get approval from the Board. We have to add value and know what the cost will be.

What will we be known for?

Are we on the right track as a proposed Institute?

What is the life span of the institute? What will it be doing in three, five, and ten years?

We will need a strong business model.