

Equity and Inclusion Advisory Council
Minutes
April 28, 2022

Present - Chassidy Cooper, Felipe Fiuza, Gladstone Gunn, Adrianna Guram, Keith Johnson, Mary Jordan, Kim Maturo, Joe Sherlin, Laura Terry, Phyllis Thompson, and Jessica Wang

Not Present - Amyre Cain and Rachel Walden

I. Call to Order - Chassidy Cooper called the meeting to order.

II. Approval of Minutes – A motion was made by Adrianna Guram, and seconded, stating, “I move that the minutes from the March 24, 2022 meeting be approved as written.” The motion carried. In keeping with open lines of communication, the approved minutes will be uploaded to the Office of Equity and Inclusion website.

III. Old Business

A. Council Membership - Chassidy Cooper noted that the membership term for several council members (Felipe Fiuza, Adrianna Guram, Mary Jordan, Joe Sherlin, Laura Terry, and Phyllis Thompson) ends June 30th. As stated in the Equity and Inclusion Advisory Council Bylaws, these individuals do have the option to renew for up to three years. Chassidy Cooper had previously spoken to some and asked the others to indicate their intention to move on or renew via email to either her or Phyllis Thompson.

IV. New Business

A. ETSU Commission on Women - Phyllis Thompson shared that the Women and Gender Resource Center (formerly the Women’s Resource Center) is now centrally located in the Culp Center for easier student access and will amplify the ability to meet student needs as well as those of faculty and staff. The name change is more inclusive and not a redundancy of services on campus. Phyllis Thompson also shared that Bethany Novotny has been elected as the new Chair of the Commission on Women. Bethany Novotny is invested across many units/disciplines on campus. She serves as the Director of the Dr. Patricia Robertson Pride Center, was recently promoted/tenured as an associate professor in counseling and human services at Clemmer College, and founding director of the nature based therapy program graduate certificate on campus.

The Commission on Women will also be holding its annual light and safety campus tour. This driving tour, done at dark, goes from one end of campus to the other including the VA campus. The members look to see if any lights are out, where bushes/shrubs might need to be pruned on walkways, and other safety issues.

B. Open Discussion Items - Keith Johnson noted that May is mental health awareness month and his message in the upcoming issue of the newsletter will focus on student mental health. He applauded the ETSU Counseling Center which has been challenged with an increasing demand for services. The pandemic has provided an opportunity to highlight that for many years across the country there has been an increase in individuals seeking help for mental health, anxiety, depression,

etc. Keith Johnson expressed that there is a need to find a person of color to work at the Counseling Center as students tend to relate to someone who looks like them, who they think understands their plight and lived experiences. There are so many underrepresented students who have been underserved.

Mary Jordan added that recently there has been an increase in suicide among student athletes, particularly women athletes. Keith Johnson shared that with Calvin Claggett's leaving he will be working directly with Scott Carter to help identify someone to fill his position. Including athletics in the overall equity and inclusion plan is a priority. Keith Johnson has been working with athletics to develop a strategic plan that looks different from the rest of the campus. The Office of Equity and Inclusion will continue to be a part of the dialogue with athletics to help come up with solutions to help out student athletes.

Joe Sherlin added that ETSU has added resources to the Counseling Center and partnered with a national company that provides virtual support to augment the on-ground services. The virtual service also provides more diversity than the current campus staff which is a step in the right direction. He also shared that they are looking into opportunities to support doctoral interns to help increase more support. Phyllis Thompson noted that Clemmer College's Department of Human Services has a counseling center that was closed during the pandemic but will re-open in fall 2022. Phyllis Thompson also shared that there is also a Mental Health First Aid Program that can be made available to faculty and staff to help identify mental health problems as well as respond to them.

Keith Johnson shared that the Office of Equity and Inclusion's new magazine, *Community Voices - Helping People Hear Each Other...One story at a Time* will be launched on 4/30 or 5/2.

Keith Johnson mentioned that HB2670/SB2290 has created a lot of unrest on campus regarding divisive concepts. Townhall forums were held to address any concerns of the faculty and staff regarding this bill. Mark Fulks, University Counsel has provided the office with the article *Academic Pursuits at ETSU: A Safe Space for Professors and a Safe Space for Critical Race Theory*. Access to the article is through the monthly newsletter, the Equity and Inclusion website, and the magazine. Keith Johnson assured the council that the bill won't stop the work of equity and inclusion across the campus. The strategic plan is to stay steady and keep up the pace to be a part of the culture change taking place in the next eight to ten years.

Felipe Fiuza shared about a Tennessee bill HB2309/SB2464 recently approved that allows undocumented and DACA individuals to receive a state license in their profession after they graduate from college. He also had the opportunity to meet with the legislators who were drafting the bill to make recommendations when pitching the need for the bill.

Felipe Fiuza also shared about a student who is a recipient of the Equal Change Education Scholarship. This scholarship supports undocumented students in their journey to achieve a higher education degree to secure meaningful career opportunities.

Gladstone Gunn, the newest council member and resident director at Davis Hall introduced himself to the members. He shared that he is in the second year of the master of social work program. He is looking forward to working with the geriatric population one day as he feels that are often forgotten.

Jessica Wang shared that Clemmer College will hold its first Equity and Inclusion Council meeting next week. The agenda for the kickoff meeting is to discuss summer plans, bylaws, mission, values, how the College has incorporated diversity, equity and inclusion throughout the College, make suggestions to the leadership, language changes, etc. Fall plans include prioritizing recommendations that were put forth in their diversity and belonging task force from the prior academy year. Jessica Wang stated that the College will be redesigning the STRIVE (Students of Color Mentoring Program) to open it up to any student of color, not just first-year students.

Kim Maturo and Adrianna Guram shared that the Equity and Inclusion Conference Program Committee is looking for both in-person and virtual session moderators.

Kim Maturo mentioned that the Office of Equity and Inclusion is always looking for faculty and staff to contribute to the office's monthly newsletter.

Joe Sherlin stated that with strong support from the SGA, campus recreation is hiring a wellness coordinator for the campus. This individual will play a lead role in the programming and wellness efforts across campus and will support mental health broadly. Some of the work done in the counseling center has done will be moved to this area freeing them up to see more students.

Joe Sherlin noted that new student enrollment numbers are looking good and are cautiously optimistic that the next first-year class will be larger than last year. The underrepresented incoming student enrollment was slightly up last year and is trending in that direction again. Keith Johnson added that recruitment and retention is everyone's responsibility.

IV. Next Meeting Date – May 26, 2022, 2:00-3:00 pm, via zoom.

Meeting adjourned at 2:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Kim Maturo