

**Equity and Inclusion Advisory Council**  
Minutes  
August 24, 2021

**Present** - Amyre Cain, Chassidy Cooper, Adrianna Guram, Keith Johnson, Mary Jordan, Kim Maturo, Joe Sherlin, Laura Terry, Phyllis Thompson, Rachel Walden, and Jessica Wang

**Not Present** - Calvin Claggett and Felipe Fiuza

- I. **Call to Order** - Chassidy Cooper called the meeting to order.
- II. **Approval of Minutes** – A motion was made by Phyllis Thompson, and seconded, stating “I move that the minutes from the July 28, 2021 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** - None at this time.
- IV. **New Business**
  - A. **Welcome Dr. Kimberly McCorkle, Provost** - Council members in attendance introduced themselves. Provost McCorkle joined the University in July 2021. She shared her vision for diversity, equity, and inclusion prefacing that she is still developing a set of initiatives and goals. Provost McCorkle stated that we all share responsibility for increasing diversity, equity, and inclusion at the university. She will continue to meet with the colleges and other groups on campus to learn about what is currently happening across the university. As Provost, she will focus on what can be done in academic affairs; such as in the classroom, research agendas for faculty, service commitments that promote a diverse culture. An area she would like to focus on is recruiting, retaining, and supporting a diverse and inclusive faculty. This entails working to support the training efforts of those who do the hiring, understanding what it means to conduct a fair and equitable search, examining unconscious bias, and increasing awareness of best practices. Included is to create an environment to support these diverse individuals once hired to keep them successful. Provost McCorkle will continue to work with Keith Johnson and Amy Johnson from her office in these efforts as well as making revisions to the promotion and tenure process.

Keith Johnson shared that in his role as Vice President for Equity and Inclusion his areas of focus are on strategy, structure, and culture. The Office of Equity and inclusion has developed a strategic plan and added structure with inclusive excellence training, lunch and learn sessions, an advisory board, a website, and the annual conference. The third piece, culture is the hardest and stated that it takes all of us. The lack of consistency in equity and inclusion goals across colleges challenges a cultural change. Keith Johnson asked Provost McCorkle to help with the piece of getting a level of consistency across the university, assist in making others aware of the current efforts in equity and inclusion

on campus, bringing others on board, and embedding equity and inclusion across campus. Funding is also necessary to make significant progress. This hard work takes time and persistence.

Mary Jordan, who worked at the university for 30 years in Equity and Diversity, shared that over the years there have been many roadblocks and obstacles to overcome. Adrianna Guram added that how we put the university's values (treating people with dignity and respect, encouraging individuals to achieve their full potential, and commitments to excellence and efficiency) into work makes a difference. Bringing diverse students to campus also means attracting diverse faculty and staff to campus. Mary Jordan added that involvement in the SREB doctoral institute has aided in diverse faculty recruitment. Jessica Wang commented that retention comes first; retaining diverse faculty serves in retaining a diverse student. Phyllis Thompson noted that equity and inclusion are our goals, but it is also the practice of equity and inclusion that is necessary to sustain our goals. Joe Sherlin agreed that there has been lots of great work and still more to do regarding recruitment and retention. Amyre Cain shared that underrepresented students need to know that individuals on campus are mindful and understanding of where an underrepresented student is coming from so they feel the campus is inclusive and safe.

- B. Welcome Rachel Walden** - Chassidy Cooper welcomed new council member Rachel Walden who represents the College of Medicine. Rachel Walden is the Director of the Medical Library and Co-Chair of the COM Diversity Council. The COM Diversity Council is comprised of faculty, staff, and students. They will be revising their bylaws to include alumni as council members. She is also a member of the Annual Equity and Inclusion Steering Committee.
  
- C. 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Equity and Inclusion Conference** - Registration for the conference is increasing each day. Active registration of students will take place during the upcoming welcome week events. A digital flyer has been distributed internally and externally throughout the state to other institutions of higher ed, professional organizations, and businesses. Keith Johnson is scheduled for an appearance on DayTime Tri-Cities in early September. Jessie Wang suggested making a TikTok or Instagram reel to advertise the student track. She will contact Jay Guillory from the student track subcommittee to discuss the possibility. Laura Terry offered to assist with the project.

The conference platform, Whova, integrates with zoom and allows for the professional delivery of each session, and provides attendees with supporting information such as speaker bios and various supporting documents. Certificates of Attendance will be issued to attendees, CE's and CME/CNE's will also be available to attendees. A land acknowledgment will be done at the beginning of the conference by an ETSU grad student. Attendees will be sent an evaluation at the end of the three days to serve as an overall assessment tool. A short session feedback form is also being utilized in the Whova platform.

**D. Other Discussion Items** - Keith Johnson shared that the upcoming lunch and learn session topic is Critical Race Theory. The discussion will be lead by University Counsel, Mark Fulks. A number of faculty expressed concern about this topic; what does it mean for the university, for them as faculty.

The Office of Equity and Inclusion is partnering with the STRONG Brain Institute and the Center for Teaching Excellence to have conversations over the next couple of months with faculty and staff. The conversation series is about reacclimating back to campus and discussing concerns and anxieties faculty and staff may be experiencing.

**V. Next Meeting Date** – September 28, 2021, 1:00-2:00 pm, via zoom.

Meeting adjourned at 3:00 pm.

**Respectfully submitted by Kim Maturo**