

LSU AgCenter & College of Agriculture Diversity Council Meeting Minutes

7/9/2020

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m. Ashley Gautreaux, informed the members that Dr. Mark Schafer will serve as co-chair of the council instead of Dr. Renita Marshall. After that announcement, Dr. Bill Richardson thanked the group for being a part of the council and informed us that he will not participate in a lot of meetings to allow everyone to be 100% free and honest with discussions that will occur, but said he will support the group. In addition, Dr. Richardson and Dr. Gina Eubanks, both attended a day long event where they were able to learn and listen from individuals surround race relations, diversity, inclusion. They both recommended the chairs invite Mrs. Maxine Crump, *President/CEO of Dialogue on Race Louisiana*, to talk to the council. Dr. Eubanks added with the conversations from the event they attended mental health was brought up by many students and faculty, and mentioned that mental health will not be added to the roadmap of diversity.

Asst/Assoc Vice President of Diversity, Inclusion and Opportunity Update

As of 7/9/2020, two applications have been submitted since it was released on July 1st. Dr. Eubanks, encouraged the council to spread the word about this position. The deadline to submit the application is July 31,2020. Dr. Richardson added that he has received numerous emails and calls in regards to the position and wanted to let us know that this is an OPEN position and no one guaranteed the job. Should anyone want more information they can contact Dr. Richardson or Dr. Eubanks.

New Member Announcement

As recommended during our first meeting, two additional students who represent the College of Agriculture will serve on the council. Those individuals are Colt Hardee, *President of the COA Student Association*, and William Gaspard, *Student of the COA*.

LSU College of Agriculture and LSU AgCenter Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan

Whittney Lathan mentioned that the review of the strategic plan is still on the table and is something we can and need to take time to digest and review. She added some have already began to submit feedback about the document, if you have feedback send them to either Whittney or Dr. Mark.

Council Information Platform

The council will be using Microsoft Teams for its communication of information. Everyone should have been added to the team site already, if you have not please contact Whittney or Dr. Mark. Whittney mentioned she does not check notifications from Teams much, added that once something has been posted, she will send out an email to everyone.

Purpose of the Council

Members had an opportunity to voice their view of the purpose of the council. The following individuals spoke at the time and shared their view.

- **Whittney:** The Council is an advisory council and here to provide an input and assistance in providing feedback to management in the area of diversity and inclusion
- **James Poissot**– He is all in. It is about education. Educating ourselves and others around us. Suggest have small seminars to have that those tough conversations with others.
- **Dr. Schafer** – We are ready to have those tough conversations. We need to find ways to figure out who we are to find those conversation. Also being more proactive rather than reactive.
- **Xavier Bell** – We all represent some part of the AgCenter or COA, therefore he saw his purpose on the council was to be a liaison for colleagues within his department (4-H) and the clientele he serves and provide guidance to the administration to help bring a more inclusive environment for everyone.
- **Joy Sims** – Want the LSU AgCenter to be a safe haven for those outside and inside the organization. Making sure that we are a positive place for our clientele and employees. Give the people a reason to trust us and our employees to trust us.

- **Herry Utomo:** Has been learning and want to find a solution to move forward. Engage our audience and friends and building the trust.
- **Dr. Marshall:** To be able to give an external view, and share experiences from students and faculty from Southern University
- **Mary Fisher:** Very important as we move forward that we are addressing as an organization the elephant in the room. Educate of other cultures. It will need to be a give and take from everyone involved. All the Agcenter to provide opportunities for people to learn more about other cultures.
- **Dr. Tara Smith:** From the administrative perspective, we need more training on inclusion
- **Amanda Martin:** Everyone here wants to do the work from both the AgCenter and College. Put in action to assist everyone involved in teaching and providing a more inclusive environment for all.
- **Demetres Casma:** To finally have a voice. Be able to voice concerns from things experience.
- **Collins Kimbeng:** Point of view as how students from other countries feel coming to the south. The dialogue needs to not look argue, but we need to educate and talk to colleagues. Diversity of the AgCenter and that will assist in helping with other areas. Glad that it won't look like black people just pushing an agenda, because we are a diverse group. Language is important, not wanting to loss audience, if we can get Ms. Maxine Crump to assist in delivering a message
- **William:** As a student, a gap needs to be closed and the representation of the faculty and staff to bridge the gap. More effect and things for intentions and not attention, as they feel things are done for attention. Transparent dialogue between the students and faculty.

After members voiced their purposed, the council was tasked with coming up with a purpose statement and if the group wanted to change the name, to do so at the time. Multiple individuals contributed to the purpose statement and suggested it be limited to one sentence, but be inclusive to the students, faculty and staff and clientele we organization serves. Mark kept a working document on the screen so others can view and will share with the council. No final decision was made on the purpose statement during this meeting.

Educating and learning more about diversity and inclusion was mentioned throughout the meeting, therefore it was suggested by multiple members that during our meetings that the group bring in guest speakers to educate us on the topic. Suggestions are as followed:

- Chris Tyson
- Maxine Crump
- Dr. Thomas Durant

Sharman Charles mentioned she was on the first diversity committee formed years ago and said they did train-the-trainer sessions and held a diversity conference and invited national speakers, and added that she doesn't want to group to just revisit some of the old things.

Establishing Committee Structure

Whittney wanted to revisit the meetings dates as she felt the group did not come to a conscience the first time when selecting occurrence of meetings. With that Whittney conducted a poll on Teams for the group to complete to see what day of the week works best for meetings. The results are as followed:

- Monday – 6% (1)
- Tuesday – 12% (2)
- Wednesday – 6% (1)
- Thursday – 75% (12)

The council was asked how long should membership and leadership terms be. Collin suggested to wait until after COVID to set the limits of terms due to right the organization going back to some form of normality in jobs. Right now, many people have more time to attend meetings due to the cancellation of many things. Also the newness of the council was brought up and it was suggested that the group have staggering terms, that way not everyone leaves at the same time and new members and have a smoother transition with individuals who have served on the council before. It was mentioned that with the newness that the council have a two – three year term or 18 – 24 month terms as it may take long to see action from the work that is being done since we are still forming an identity of the group. Colt suggested the students on the council serve a 1 year term due to upperclassmen graduating. Lastly, James suggested that we grow the group that way new members can be added with the current ones and assist with the staggering term limits.

Announcements

Amanda mentioned about the Stakeholder Conference registration was extended to Friday, July 10 and encouraged the council to sit on the meeting, as the purpose was to allow individuals in the industry, alumni, and students to have a voice in the strategic plan of the COA.

Other

Xavier suggested that the group be task with drafting a purpose statement and if they a new name and submit it to Whitney and Dr. Schafer before the next meeting to allow everyone to have a voice, as many individuals did not speak during the meeting. This way everyone has an input.

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, July 23, 2020 at 1 p.m. and a meeting invite will be sent out.

This meeting concluded at 3:00 p.m.

Attendance

- Amanda Martin
- Ashley Gautreaux
- Collins Kimbeng
- Colt Hardee
- Demetres Casma
- Frankie Gould
- Gina Eubanks
- Herry Utomo
- James O. Poissot
- Jamila Freightman
- Joy Sims
- Marcy Fisher
- Mark Schafer
- Matt Greene
- Mike Salassi
- Renita Marshall
- Sathivel Subramaniam
- Shannan Waits
- Sharman Charles
- Tara Smith
- Whitney Lathan
- William Gaspard
- Xavier Bell