



Council for Diversity, Inclusion, Equity and Change

Co-Chair Message

The Joint Council for Diversity, Inclusion, Equity, and Change has been actively meeting since July. We have formed subcommittees to explore opportunities with respect to education, climate, recruitment, communications, and partnerships. We have set rules to ensure our council's efforts are transparent and fair. We have been learning about and from each other, and we look forward to engaging with more of our colleagues throughout the Agriculture community, on campus, and across the state.

One of our student council members, **Kayla Benton**, president of the **LSU Chapter of Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, & Related Sciences (MANRRS)** has offered to gather MANRRS students for a "conversation with MANRRS" at our next council meeting. Our goal is to work toward a more welcoming environment for all.

We look forward to meeting the final four candidates for the Asst./Assoc. Vice President for Diversity, Inclusion, and Opportunity position. They are scheduled to come for on-campus visits from November 10 -13. Each candidate will give a presentation seminar (both in-person and on Teams) on the topic: **Reducing Bias and Championing the furthering of Diversity, Inclusion, and Opportunity of a Tier 1 Land-Grant PWI** (primary white institution). Please look for announcements and make plans to participate and provide feedback

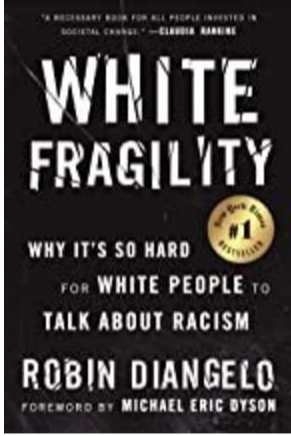
Whitney Lathan and Mark Schafer
October 2020



About the Joint Council

The joint council advises our organizations on policies, programs and actions that support and guide our students, faculty, staff, partners, and communities in working toward a more diverse, safe, positive, equitable, and inclusive environment for all citizens of Louisiana regardless of their race, color, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, disability or age.

[Council Members](#)



Book Club

The Council will recommend books and other resources to broaden our awareness of diversity, equity and inclusion. The next book the group will read is *White Fragility* by Robin DiAngelo. A December discussion group is planned, and the date will be posted in the November edition of Connections. The book can be found on [Amazon in audio, kindle, and hard cover](#). [Mark Schafer](#) will be the discussion leader.

Assist./Assoc. VP for Diversity, Inclusion, and Opportunity Seminars

All AgCenter and College of Agriculture faculty, staff and students are invited to participate in the public seminar and question/answer session for each of the candidates for the position of Assistant/Associate Vice President for Diversity. The seminar topic is: "Reducing Bias and Championing the furthering of Diversity, Inclusion and Opportunity of a Tier 1 Land-Grant PWI." The seminars will be held November 10 - 13, 2020. More information about each candidate can be viewed at www.lsuagcenter.com/candidates. At the conclusion of each candidate's seminar we would ask that you please provide your comments via the online form, https://lsu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8lCkezVWVTgnaO9.



Vice President's Diversity Graduate Assistantship

The LSU AgCenter and College of Agriculture has established The Vice President's Diversity Graduate Assistantship for African American students. This program's goal is to increase and enhance diversity, equity, and inclusivity in the graduate programs of the College of

Agriculture. Four \$25,000 assistantships will support funding for Ph.D. graduate students. The award also includes a waiver of both in-state and out-of-state tuition. More information is available at this [link](#).

Council Member Spotlight

Mark Schafer

Next July, my wife and I will celebrate our 30th wedding anniversary. She was born and raised in Malawi, Africa. Diversity and inclusion are personal to me because I want my children and grandchildren who are Black (and everyone else, too) to have the opportunities they deserve. Diversity and inclusion are also important to me professionally. As a sociologist, I have studied how systemic and institutional factors can either support or obstruct efforts toward positive change. I have much more to learn. I am grateful for the opportunity to serve with my co-chair, Whitney Lathan, and all council members. I have been inspired by their passion to work in good faith toward positive change. Engaging in heartfelt discussions is necessary for growth, but not always easy. I have become more aware of my own misunderstandings, biases and shortcomings. Still, I look forward to engaging more with students, faculty, staff, and partners — on campus and across the state — to learn more about how we might make improvements so that we all feel welcome and valued.



[Mark Schafer](#), Ph.D. is an Associate Professor in the LSU College of Agriculture's Department of Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness.

ABOUT the LSU AgCenter

The LSU AgCenter provides Louisiana with research-based educational information to improve lives and economic well-being. The AgCenter plays an integral role in supporting agricultural industries, enhancing the environment and improving the quality of life through 4-H youth, family and consumer sciences and community development programs. The AgCenter is one of the 8 LSU campuses, and consists of 16 research stations, 64 parish extension offices and 13 academic departments, a statewide campus bringing university information and outreach to every corner of Louisiana.

MISSION of the LSU College of Agriculture

The LSU College of Agriculture provides innovative academic programs, creates essential knowledge, advances collaborative research, and drives outreach to solve local and global challenges.

Visit the Diversity and Inclusion website: LSUAgCenter.com/DiversityandInclusion

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