

## Diversity Catalyst Committee Quarterly Teleconference Notes

July 2, 2020 at 3:00 PM EDT

**In attendance:** Ali Fares (Chair), Alton Thompson, Gary Thompson, Henry Fadamiro, Bret Hess, Brian Raison, Chris Hamilton, Cynda Clary, Jeff Jacobsen, Shannon Archibeque-Engle, Rick Rhodes (Executive Vice-Chair), David Leibovitz

Prior to beginning the meeting, Rick Rhodes recognized Chair Ali Fares for being chosen as a fellow of the American Society for Agronomy. Additionally, Rick announced that the ESS meeting in September 2020 will be held virtually rather than face-to-face.

1. Approval of agenda (Ali)
  - **The agenda was approved unanimously.**
2. Approval of minutes April 2, 2020 (Ali)
  - **The minutes were approved unanimously.**
3. DCC Best Practice: Diversity in Retrospect: Reflections and Suggestions from an Outgoing Director – Gary Thompson
  - Gary Thompson has served as the Penn State Ag Experiment Station Director for 10 years
  - Today's discussion focuses on challenges that Penn State has been faced with, particularly over the past six months
  - We need to think about institutional racism, because our institutions have not changed over decades of perceived effort.
  - On January 20, 2020, a group of black professors examined the status of African American professors at Penn State University from 2014-2018
    - i. # of black professors decreased 1.9% compared to any other race or ethnicity
    - ii. "Individual colleges are falling short in increasing their representation especially in white dominated fields such as the sciences and business"
    - iii. "A student could potentially receive his or her Penn State degree without ever having a black professor, and a black student could go through their college education without having an instructor who might look like them."
    - iv. "Being few in number means there's no critical mass or group that you might consult with, and that creates issues."
    - v. One author (King) attributed the low numbers at Penn State to "leadership, the lack of commitment from certain departments and the lack of upper levels of the administration holding individual colleges responsible."
  - Penn State is not becoming more racially diverse. Black faculty growth <1% over 30 years relative to total # faculty
    - i. Challenge 1: Overcoming Stagnation
      1. Need to change, institutionally, significantly
    - ii. Challenge 2: Increasing representation of Blacks in Senior Leadership
      1. 3 administrators at PSU are black, all recent hires as of July 2020
    - iii. Challenge 3: Reporting and Implications
      1. A major role especially in reports that affect promotion and tenure opportunities
    - iv. Challenge 4: Changing the reality of the black experience at Penn State

- January 28, faculty senate met at PSU
  - i. PSU President acknowledged the report but did not own it for Penn State specifically, bringing focus to it a national issue.
  - ii. President indicated he wants to work with the senate to convene a task force that directly addresses the issues in the report.
  - iii. Gary had not heard any follow-up on the report until the murder of George Floyd happened in May 2020, when the PSU President sent a letter to the community that was filled with soft language and somewhat cliché buzz terms.
- In June 2020, the PSU Presidential Commission for Racism, Bias, and Community Safety was created
  - i. One statement said the commission aims for “Real and tangible change” – there is no administrative agenda.
  - ii. 7 Critical Goals of the commission:
    1. Convene a task force to initiate a full review of the Student Code of Conduct
    2. Initiate mandatory bias training for all employees
    3. Require racism and bias coursework for all students
    4. Develop improved policies, procedures, and expectations that will increase hiring and retention of faculty who are members of underrepresented groups at the University
    5. Work with the Board of Trustees to help ensure that educational and employment equity has the full attention of the trustees
    6. Ask the Task Force on Policing and Communities of Color to reconvene (progress since the task force completed its work in 2017)
    7. Prioritize the well-being of all students and employees, including enhanced mental health resources, and community building initiatives
- One article drafted by Dr. Gary King questioned the commission and identified four immediate down payments that could help dismantle systematic racism at PSU:
  - i. Recognize the enormity of this transformational period by discarding the pre-George Floyd framework of diversity, equity, and inclusion and replacing it with a concentration of radical justice and identifying and expelling systematic racism.
  - ii. Make it transparent how each dean and head will be accountable in addressing and eradicating systemic racism within their colleges or departments.
  - iii. Suspend the administrative use of student ratings of teaching effectiveness (SRTEs) that are replete with racial bias and used for promotion and annual raises.
  - iv. Stretch out and make whole. Don’t just limit the scope of the commission or recommendations to University Park, but include the Commonwealth Campuses.
- Most colleges across PSU have Diversity, equity, and inclusion offices, however this report focuses most on faculty. This report did not focus on the efforts and success of those diversity, equity, and inclusion offices.
- Colorado State just expelled a student in July 2020 because of crossing a First Amendment line. The student used violent and threatening, racist and homophobic language in an online post. The student conduct code could be used to expel the student, there is no state-backed means for disciplining that situation.

- Henry mentioned that at Auburn, there has been a lot of conversation around the topic of Diversity and Inclusion. The institution is taking some steps to implement real change.
  - Penn State's activities are focused on recruiting students, faculty, but numbers are not changing.
  - Rick suggested we think about how we can take the messages that Gary shared and create an agenda moving forward for this committee. Perhaps this is a shift for the DCC: what are the things we wish to pursue in the upcoming months?
  - Should the DCC consider elevating its status to the BAA level? Cynda mentioned on the Academic Programs side they talk about similar issues and there might be a reason to consider bringing Extension and Academic Programs into a new formation of the DCC.
  - The DCC had the luxury of starting from scratch. An Extension rep and an Academic Programs rep are included in the committee's structure. It would be worthwhile to re-engage NIFA as well.
  - Brian asked if this committee roll out a simple challenge: Ask each director to look at their 20-year historical numbers on faculty diversity... and do it within the next 60 days. And then ask them to share those stats... start the discussion... and set some goals. Have Directors looked at these numbers recently?
    - i. **Rick and Brian will discuss this challenge and consider integrating it into the opening session of the ESS meeting. Brian serves as a facilitator for that session.**
    - ii. **Be clear about what information is being sought.**
  - Recommended resources from Shannon:
    - i. <https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2017/03/30/colleges-need-language-shift-not-one-you-think-essay>
    - ii. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XLfJME7gnKk&feature=youtu.be> (This is a free and recent webinar.)
    - iii. An upcoming free event: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/ibram-x-kendi-on-how-to-be-an-antiracist-tickets-110866502694>.
    - iv. Especially folks in the Southern region, consider working with the Racial Equity Institute in North Carolina. Their presentation is as they say done with "mind numbing consistency". It is VERY data heavy. (<https://www.racialequityinstitute.com/>)
  - Brian mentioned that Ohio State offers faculty membership (free) in this org: *The National Center for Faculty Development & Diversity* which is an independent professional development, training, and mentoring community for faculty, postdocs, and graduate students. They support academics in making successful transitions throughout careers. (<https://www.facultydiversity.org>)
  - **The Penn State *More Rivers to Cross* report is available for free download:** <https://drive.google.com/file/d/18FTb0FAKiU0m-YbpeziwPqinQMYW1g5C/view>
4. DCC Business (All)
- National Experiment Station Section Diversity and Inclusion Award
    - i. Identification of the 2020 winner: University of Florida's Department of Family, Youth, and Community Sciences Diversity and Inclusion committee.
    - ii. Discussion of the selection process. Should the DCC have a group award and an individual award? What are the best strategies for identifying the winner(s)?  
**The group was asked to consider this for next year.**

- Rick and Dave will be in touch with the DCC to schedule its next meeting sometime in the next couple of months.
- **The meeting adjourned at 4:01 pm EDT.**

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