

KU Staff Senate Diversity and Inclusion

Year-End Committee Report

2020 – 2021

CO-CHAIRS:

Michelle Wilson & Tiphani Dixon

STANDING CHARGE(S):

1. Organizes diversity, equity and inclusion training opportunities for committee members and staff senators
2. Collaborates with standing Staff Senate committees and counterparts in Student, Faculty, and University Senate
3. Represents staff senate in campus and regional committees and workshops around diversity, inclusion, and equity
4. Actively works to recruit a diverse and inclusive senate body through outreach and cooperation with relevant campus offices, departments, and organizations
5. Supports and promotes campus-wide diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives

SPECIFIC CHARGE(S):

Create a more inclusive environment for staff at the University of Kansas

As members of Staff Senate Diversity and Inclusion Committee of the University of Kansas, we recognize that as a Predominantly White Institution (PWI), our university is built on and upholds a culture of white supremacy, one that most obviously privileges its white constituents. We know that to meaningfully serve each and every KU staff member – including Black, Brown, and Indigenous staff; Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and Asexual staff; International staff; staff members with disabilities and those who experience challenges with mental health; and staff members with other marginalized identities – we have a responsibility to dismantle the systems that continue to allow this to happen. We are therefore committed to the goals listed below to bring out about necessary change.

During the 2020-2021 academic year, the Staff Senate D & I Committee forged ahead in regard to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) efforts in the midst of a global pandemic, continued racial unrest, and uncertain employment contingency. Despite this, the committee members are dedicated to making a difference to the underrepresented/marginalized groups on the KU campus and the communities in which they reside. Please see the brief highlights below of the amazing work the D & I ACTION Teams are doing with a DEI lens, focused on staff.

GOAL 1: Educate ourselves and others

It is important that as leaders in the campus community, we have a deep understanding of racism and white supremacy culture and develop the tools that are necessary to combat them. We will also explore opportunities to provide staff with tools for engaging in advocacy and social change outside the context of the workplace.

Objective 1.1 : Help Staff Senate members continue to educate themselves and be accountable.

Strategy 1.1.1: Continue to provide summer trainings tailored to Staff Senators.

Strategy 1.1.2: Develop regular opportunities throughout the year for education and for Staff Senators to demonstrate accountability.

Objective 1.2: Provide ongoing opportunities for staff education and professional development.

Strategy 1.2.1: Continue the “Unpacking Whiteness in the Workplace” workshop series.

Strategy 1.2.2: Offer a Lunch & Learn series featuring a range of diversity, equity, and inclusion topics that impact staff.

Strategy 1.2.3: Develop additional tools for outreach to campus departments (e.g. the D&I Newsletter, Resources section of our website, Unpacking Whiteness SharePoint).

Objective 2: Create a network of all the other D&I committees on campus to provide an avenue for sharing resources.

Strategy 1.2.1: Develop contacts throughout campus that include other D&I committees, Affinity Councils, and others providing DEI education and professional development.

Strategy 1.2.2: Establish a system for ongoing communication and sharing of resources between these groups.

ACTION: The **Education ACTION Team** and the “Unpacking Whiteness in the Workplace” ACTION Team merged in March. As separate teams they shared many members and the goals of furthering the education of the members of the Staff Senate Diversity & Inclusion Committee, Staff Senate members, and the wider university community regarding racism and white supremacy culture as well as the tools that are necessary to combat them. Before the merge, this team collaborated to gather resources on racialized trauma, Black joy, and Black History Month shared via *The Lens*, the Staff Senate D & I Committee’s newsletter. Members of the group are currently compiling resources on Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) history in Lawrence. These resources will likely be shared in an upcoming issue of *The Lens*.

ACTION: The “**Unpacking Whiteness in the Workplace**” ACTION Team continued to host the “Unpacking Whiteness in the Workplace” workshop series, transitioning to an online environment for Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 due to Covid-19 pandemic restrictions. Each semester, the team facilitated three 2-hour discussion sessions every other week for the span of about a month to cover the topics usually included in the in-person sessions. In advance of the live discussions, the group collaborated to create a SharePoint site with an introductory page and pages with materials for each of the three workshop sessions. The pages for each session include lesson objectives, introductions of terms, links to pertinent articles, educational videos, and worksheets that guide participants through the concepts discussed. Participants were asked to review the materials on the SharePoint site in advance of each session to be prepared for small group discussions held via Zoom breakout rooms. There was an average of 30-40 attendees per workshop over the course of the two semesters.

GOAL 2: Listen to marginalized voices and follow their lead

A significant part of our own learning must come from listening to those who are most impacted in the campus community and beyond. But listening is just the first step; we then must do what is asked of us. We must follow the lead of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color in our community.

Objective 2.1: Establish a system for gathering comments and feedback from the campus community.

Strategy 2.1.1: Create a comments form on the Staff Senate website, and develop a system for promoting the tool, reviewing feedback and responding to comments and concerns.

Strategy 2.1.2: Explore other in-person and online avenues for staff with marginalized identities to provide input and identify issues that should be addressed through this committee.

Objective 2.2: Establish regular communication with Faculty Staff Affinity Councils.

Strategy 2.2.1: Develop routine communications between D&I Co-Chairs and Affinity Council leadership.

Strategy 2.2.2: Coordinate with D&I Committee members who are also members of Affinity Councils.

ACTION: During the 2020-21 semester, the **Listen and Respond ACTION Team** endeavored to create more open lines of communication for feedback from staff to Staff Senate regarding issues of diversity and inclusion by creating a feedback form accessible on the Staff Senate website. The team also researched alternate models for structuring our committee to center marginalized voices in agenda setting.

GOAL 3: Examine our own complicity and dismantle systems of racism and oppression

As an organization, an institution, and as individual representatives, we must come to terms with our own complicity in racial violence and oppression, and how our individual and collective actions and inactions establish a foundation for the violence against BIPOC and others with marginalized identities: Ultimately, we must dismantle the systems that support racism and white supremacy.

Objective 3.1: Conduct a review and evaluation of the new Title IX policy, staff handbook, and DCRP.

Strategy 3.1.1: Evaluate documents and make recommendations to the committee regarding possible changes, additions, and edits needed

Strategy 3.1.2: Provide final recommendations to departments responsible for overseeing each document, and follow up after an agreed upon review period.

Objective 3.2: Review and evaluate the current staff handbook's staff hiring training and protocols.

Strategy 3.2.1: Research how online DEI training is being used in the hiring process.

Strategy 3.2.2: Develop strategies for marketing the handbook and making it mandatory for staff searches.

Objectives 3.3: Review the structure of the D&I Committee to ensure marginalized voices are centered.

Strategy 3.3.1: Investigate models for decision making for prioritizing topics and taking action.

Strategy 3.3.2: Work with Staff Senate to implement changes across all committees.

ACTION: Due to the University's DEI restructure in December 2020, the **Dismantle ACTION Team** was put on hold until the D & I committee can regroup to see if this ACTION Team can be merged with one of our exiting ACTION Teams.

GOAL 4: Hold ourselves and others accountable

We will continue to engage with leadership - including University Governance and administrative leadership of the institution – to press for more meaningful change. We will hold others – and ourselves – accountable to the commitments that have been made. And, we expect to be held accountable by the staff that we aspire to represent.

Objective 4.1: Develop a set of best practices for D&I Committee action teams to maximize accountability.

Strategy 4.1.1: Investigate best practices for workflow (e.g. research & learning, listening to BIPOC and other marginalized voices, taking action, demonstrating accountability).

Strategy 4.1.2: Devise system of checks to ensure the committee is centering BIPOC and other marginalized voices when establishing priorities and setting priorities.

Objective 4.2: Hold Staff Senate and the D&I Committee accountable for commitments they have made to diversity, equity, and inclusion work.

Strategy 4.2.1: Publish a DEI Plan on the Staff Senate Website and share broadly with campus partners and constituents.

Strategy 4.2.2: Gather information from other Staff Senate committees regarding how they plan to incorporate DEI into their processes and initiatives.

Strategy 4.2.3: Establish a monthly process for updating and documenting progress toward goals of the plan through a publicly shared platform (e.g. website dashboard).

Objective 4.3: Hold University leadership accountable for institutional commitments made to DEI

Strategy 4.3.1: Catalog previous communications, plans, and initiatives and request a progress update where such documentation does not exist.

Strategy 4.3.2: Identify new commitments made by the Provost and Chancellor since the start of 2020.

Strategy 4.3.3: Establish a system for following up with the Provost, Chancellor, and Vice Provost of DE to request information and encourage action when progress is not publicly documented (e.g. through meetings between administration and Staff Senate leadership).

Strategy 4.3.4: Request information about DEI initiatives from Student Senate, Faculty Senate, and University Senate and develop a system for maintaining communication with these bodies and tracking progress on their initiatives.

ACTION: Over the past year, the **Accountability ACTION Team** created two objectives: 1) hold Staff Senate and the D & I Committee accountable for commitments they have made to diversity, equity, and inclusion work; and 2) hold University leadership accountable for institutional commitments made to DEI. Research was conducted on the accountability work being done at peer institutions. Those findings will be used as a template to develop an accountability framework and will be included on the Staff Senate D & I webpage for fall of 2021. The ACTION Team is meeting with the Chairs for each Staff Senate committee to hear how they are incorporating D & I into their processes and initiatives. We will gather information from each Chair about how they would like to report initiatives to the Accountability ACTION Team. Once we have established this routine within Staff Senate we will move forward with additional accountability efforts.

ACTION: The **Supervisor Accountability ACTION Team** is currently providing a supportive role towards the Staff Fellows group. This year, their research project includes performance evaluations (i.e. 360 reviews, etc.). Part of that research includes conducting an internal focus group of KU employees this spring to evaluate current practices. The D & I committee offered to review those focus group questions and topics to ensure they are inclusive. This ACTION Team will pick up where the Staff Fellows concludes to start putting recommendations into ACTION.

If you are interested in learning more about the Staff Senate D & I Committee and how to get involved, please contact Michelle D. Wilson, D & I Committee Chair, michellewilson@ku.edu or Tiphani Dixon, D & I Committee Co-Chair, dixonty@ku.edu.