

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

**Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee Meeting**

April 14, 2022 – Virtual – 10 AM

# Minutes

**Committee Members in Attendance**

John Bartow, Co-chair DEI Committee

Yelena Bolante

Linda Brown-Robinson, Co-chair DEI Committee

Tom Carter

Eloise Curry

Marlena Daher-Rahman

Robert Dugan

Paul Hai

Rebecca Hoda-Kearse

Nicole Hylton-Patterson

Matthew Marko

Jade Morning Sky Little

Tim Volk

**Committee Members Absent**

William Fisher

**Guests**

Eddie Bevilacqua, Professor, Sustainable Resources Management

Sam Mukasa, Executive Vice President & Provost

Gary Scott, Chair, Academic Governance

**Staff in Attendance**

Nichole Dougherty

Ragan Squier, Secretary to the Board

**Call to Order**: *Welcome and Introductions*

Committee Co-Chair Linda Brown-Robinson called the meeting to order at 10:04 am. There were 13 voting members in attendance.

**Approval of Minutes from December 2, 2021:**

There were no objections to the minutes, the minutes were approved unanimously.

**Discussion with Invited Guests:**

Provost Mukasa discussed diversity at ESF:

* ESF community is not representative of the wider community.
* African America population of Syracuse is 30% whereas the African American population at ESF is 2%.
* ESF has started the process of hiring 13 new faculty members through faculty cluster hiring.
* Cluster hires tend to be successful in attracting a diverse pool of candidates.
* K-12 outreach can help reach and attract diverse students.
* Dr. Mukasa has experience in K-12 outreach via facilitating after-school programing at local schools.
* ESF is currently building a relationship with the Syracuse Academy of Science with outreach activities planned for this summer.
* ESF & SAS are also developing a partnership with Syracuse University to create a 4+1 Science Education program.
* Program would include a funding agreement from SAS that would require students to return there to teach upon program completion making the program beneficial for all involved.

Dr. Scott, Executive Chair of Academic Governancediscussed DEI in Academic Governance:

* AG does not have a stand-alone DEI Committee.
* DEI is imbedded within sub-committees, including:
  + Faculty & Staff Advancement Committee
  + The Student Experience Committee
  + Academic Affairs Committee

Dr. Scott noted that AG by-laws allow for ad-hoc committees to be added as appropriate. Dr. Scott introduced Dr. Bevilacqua, representative for the AG Academic Affairs Committee.

Dr. Bevilacqua, Academic Governance: Chair of Academic Affairs Committee (formerly the Curriculum Committee), reported in regards to revisions to the SUNY mandated general education requirements.

* Revision to general education requirements go into effect for fall 2023.
* Include a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice course requirement for all undergraduate students.

SUNY currently requires 30 credit hours of General Education across 10 subject areas with the following additional requirements:

* Two specific required course areas:
  1. Basic Communication
  2. Mathematics
* One course from 7 out of the 10 subject areas

The revised SUNY requirements will continue to require 30 credits of General Education across 10 subject areas, the areas have been updated and requirements adjusted:

* Four specific required course areas:
  1. Communication – Written and Oral
  2. Mathematics (and Quantitative Reasoning)
  3. Natural Sciences (and Scientific Reasoning)
  4. Diversity: Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice
* The requirement of one course from 7 out of the 10 subject areas will remain.

Dr. Bevilacqua reported that the Academic Affairs Committee is currently receiving guidance from SUNY and will be ultimately be tasked with reviewing curriculum revisions to all 24 undergraduate degree programs at ESF.

Chair Bartow requested that the Provost and Academic Governance members suggest ways in which the Board of Trustees and the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee can support them, particularly in the area of academics.

* T. Volk:
  + ESF has 3-4 classes of about 20-30 students each that could fulfill the SUNY’s DEI course requirement.
  + Expanding people (instructors) to accommodate the number of students that will be required to take these courses is imperative.
* Board of Trustees can assist by voicing support.
* Provost Mukasa:
  + ESF is STEAM School but is lacking recognition for the Arts.
  + Division of interdisciplinary studies does not have tenure track faculty.
  + Division could be strengthened by investing in their faculty.

In response to Provost Mukasa’s announcement regarding 13 new hires, E. Curry requested that Implicit Bias training be required for any search committee member.

* R. Hoda-Kearse noted that ESF requires all search committee members to participate in the Harvard Implicit Association Test but would be interested in expanding implicit bias training.

Committee members and guests provided the following comments in response to new SUNY curriculum requirements:

* Relating mandated subject areas to STEM may help decrease resistance.
* SUNY is moving in the right direction by incorporating social justice into its curriculum.
* Proper training for faculty members is imperative when teaching social justice.
* Taking courses offered at Syracuse University could help fulfill requirements.
* Credit limit caps could require that courses embed the mandated topics into current courses within each program, otherwise parts of the curriculum may need to be removed.
* Course development is the responsibility of the faculty member.
* Next Hardy Shirley Faculty Mentoring Colloquium can focus on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.
* Adirondack Diversity Initiative may be able to assist with faculty/staff and trustee training.

**New Business:**

Student committee members noted that the current Brave Space, a space to help improve campus climate and foster a greater sense of community among underrepresented and marginalized people and their allies, is hidden away in a basement and should be in a more welcoming location.

Chair Bartow summarized the meeting with the following points:

* 1. The Board of Trustees can support DEI with a focus on resources and personnel, including more tenure track positions within the division of interdisciplinary studies.
  2. 2023 Hardy Shirley Colloquium could serve as an effective tool to provide Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion training for faculty.
  3. ESF needs a more welcoming space for students of color.

Chair Bartow proposed including implicit bias training in a fall retreat for the ESF Board of Trustees.

**Committee Update and Call for Recommendations:**

M. Daher-Rahman reviewed the purpose of a DEI initiative at an organization, noting the following:

* Acronyms often help to avoid talking about subjects that can be uncomfortable.
* Instituting a DEI initiative at ESF recognizes that:
  + Students, faculty, and staff at the College are not as diverse as our collective community.
  + Students, faculty, and staff are sometime made to feel uncomfortable in the classroom and workplace.
  + Physical spaces and operational practices are not accessible to everyone and the College is not doing enough to develop a culture to make people feel welcome, regardless of their identity.
* As allies, we must also recognize that there is a restorative justice side to a DEI initiative.
* The DEI Committee will make recommendations to the College but will not be responsible for perform duties related to the recommendations, as the work must be done by those who work for the College.
* DEI goals must be accessible.
* Members of the DEI Committee have a lot of contacts in the community and can act as a boots-on-the-ground campaign committee.

Chair Bartow noted that ESF is the state environmental College and should be reaching the entire state through outreach and recruitment. He also noted that we should reach out-of-state and out-of-country populations. Chair Bartow also emphasized the need to focus on the Board of Trustee’s role in DEI initiatives, noting that it could be disruptive to be too focused on individual programs.

N. Hylton-Patterson noted that the DEI committee had requested data from ESF in the High School to evaluate the reach of that program, but has not yet received the data.

Chair Bartow opened the discussion to ideas and constructive criticisms:

* P. Hai reported that ESF was allocated $2M in the NYS budget to create a pathways program.
  + The program is designed to help traditionally marginalized students explore education that will lead to career paths that they have not historically had access too.
  + CUNY Medgar Evers college will be ESFs partner institution.
* E. Curry noted that Syracuse, Rochester, and Buffalo have poor minority populations that should not be forgotten. These school districts and community colleges could be public partners for similar pathways programs.
* P. Hai envisions the CUNY program as a pilot that can be expanded across the entire state.
  + - * E. Curry requested a summary of survey results from DEI related survey that was conducted by Dr. Carter. R. Hoda-Kearse will attempt to locate the survey results.

**Adjournment:**

Chair Bartow thanked the student representatives for serving on the Committee and requested they appoint new representatives from their organizations. He invited the student representatives to discuss space on campus at the Board of Trustees meeting on May 6th at 9:00 a.m. It was noted that space may be limited, the student representatives offered to provide a statement in lieu of attending the meeting.

R. Squier reminded the Committee that the next meeting, scheduled for July 14th, is scheduled to be remote.

Meeting adjourned at 12:01 p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Nichole Dougherty