



State University of New York
College of Environmental Science and Forestry
Board of Trustees Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee Meeting
November 28, 2022 - 9:30 am
408 Baker Lab & Zoom

MINUTES

Voting Members in Attendance:

Co-Chair John Bartow, Co-Chair Linda Brown-Robinson, Tom Carter, Marlena Daher-Rahman, Robert Dugan, Paul Hai, Interim Chief Diversity Officer Rebecca Hoda-Kearse, Matthew Marko

Absent: Yelena Bolante, Eloise Curry, William Fisher, Timothy Volk

College Personnel in Attendance:

Kelly Berger; Nichole Dougherty; Ragan Squier, Secretary to the Board

Invited Guests:

Dr. Shiu-Kai Chin, Professor, Electrical Engineering & Computer, Syracuse University and Dr. Mary Grace Almandrez, VP for Diversity and Inclusion, Syracuse University

1. Call to Order

Chair Bartow called the meeting of the ESF Board of Trustees DEI Committee to order at 9:40 am. With eight voting Board members in attendance, a quorum was confirmed.

2. Approval of the Minutes April 14, 2022 – Chair Bartow called for a motion to approve the minutes from the April 14, 2022 Committee meeting. M. Marko motioned to approve the minutes. T. Carter seconded, all approved.

3. Update on BOT DEI Committee

- Chief Diversity Officer, Malika Carter, left at the beginning of the summer. She has gone to James Madison University. A search for a new CDO is underway.
- Limited communication took place during the spring semester.
- Nicky Hylton-Patterson has resigned from the Adirondack Diversity Initiative, a search for her replacement is underway with a preferred application deadline posted as November 30th – they hope to have someone in place by February 1st.
 - P. Hai noted that ADI is housed under ANCA. ANCA will remain supportive.
- Chair Fisher requested the DEI Committee meet with Syracuse University for a review of their work in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.
- Requirements in Open Meetings Law state meetings should take place in person and the public must have ability to attend and observe and listen in real time. Quorum must be present in-person. The Board of Trustees may be able to allow video conferencing, but will need to discuss the process.



- K. Berger recommended bringing the Open Meetings Law requirements to the Governance Committee for further discussion.

4. ESF CDO Search

- R. Hoda-Kearse, chair of the CDO search committee, provided an update on the search.
 - Position was posted widely - has garnered national and international candidates.
 - Search was extended to allow for more time, now open until December 15th.
 - May keep search open depending on review of applications.
 - Hoping to hire someone in the early spring – will provide an update at the next meeting.

5. Update on the Office of Inclusion, Diversity and Equity (OIDE) Needs & Projects

- Office has been focused on maintaining communication and stability
 - a. Fall 2022
 - Participated in meetings with student groups.
 - Hosted community event as part of Hispanic heritage month (Oct. 11).
 - Participated in Campus DEI Committee meetings on (Oct. 8 and Nov. 11).
 - Discussed structure and how to support the campus community.
 - Committee provided input on desired qualities of the new CDO.
 - Discussed restructure of Diversity 24/7/365 group.
 - Discussed restructure of clubs and student events: now fall under the division of Student Affairs.
 - Gender Inclusivity: ESF is on track to exceed SUNY requirements for gender inclusive restrooms upon completion of the Marshall Hall project.
 - Discussed working collaboratively with Interfaith Works on some pilots and proposals that would help provide a foundation for next CDO.
 - Will present more information to the BOT DEI Committee.
 - a. Spring 2023
 - Depending on start date, big event planned for Black history month. Work with students but also employees to provide an inclusive community event.

6. Input from SU on their Strategic Efforts/Plans for DEI:

- a. Dr. Shiu-Kai Chin shared that Syracuse University was in a similar situation, operating without a Chief Diversity Officer. He noted that he would be sharing his own views:
 - Shared context of bias incident that occurred with the Theta Tau fraternity in 2017
 - Incident sparked campus protest and made national news.
 - The College recognized a credibility gap with the administration.
 - College enlisted the help of Interfaith Works – served as an outside organization comprised of trusted members of the community.
 - Syracuse University participated in authentic conversations and actions, including training from the Damen Williams Institute.
 - The Syracuse University Board of Trustees formed a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Committee that was tasked with creating a DEIA Strategic Plan.



- Committee wanted to provide a plan and program that could serve as a helpful framework for a new Chief Diversity Officer.
- Board involvement was critical for an institutional alignment of DEIA goals.

b. Dr. Mary Grace Almandrez, Syracuse University Vice President for Diversity & Inclusion

- Dr. Almandrez reiterated that active participation from the Syracuse University Board of Trustees was crucial for the success of DEI initiatives. She noted that rhetoric alone is not successful when working with serious issues and that DEI initiatives fall to the wayside without support from the highest level of leadership.
- Dr. Almandrez shared what attracted her to Syracuse University:
 1. DEIA Strategic Plan DRAFT (framework that allows CDO to comment and add)
 2. Campus climate survey and reports (historical documents)
 3. The institution's responses to student activism (active and committed leadership)
 4. Infrastructure (Decentralized: DEIA Deans and Departments work directly with supervisors and CDO)
 - These four items served as a springboard for immediate action.
- She shared the five key focus areas that SU has developed based on the Strategic Plan and the National Standards for Diversity Officers in Higher Education:
 1. Inclusion and belonging
 2. DEIA Learning and development
 3. DEIA Research and Assessment
 4. Disability access: Just recently moved from HR – recommended at SU, may not work at other campuses
 5. Communications
- Dr. Almandrez referred the Committee to the 16 standards of professional practice from the National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education (NADOHE) – noting that she uses these standards to assess her work.
- She shared the different models of DEI Offices, noting that there is no standard within NADOHE:
 1. All compliance: EOP/Title IX
 2. Programmatic
 3. Multicultural Centers & Student facing Departments

M. Marko noted that ESF has only had a CDO since 2017 and that infrastructure is in the early stages of development. He commented that ESF lost a lot of momentum with the resignation of the CDO and he questioned how the structure works at SU.

Dr. Almandrez responded: Syracuse has a long history of the infrastructure for DEI, but did not have a CDO position until 2019. She reviewed the three typical models of OIDE at College Campuses:

1. A Chief Diversity Officer with 1-2 staff members who do all of the work for a university.
 - Most difficult model: does not allow the ability to provide a lot of resources.
 - CDO often becomes a figurehead rather than an agent of change.
2. Unit Model: CDO with several staff members who oversee institutional-wide initiatives.



3. Portfolio Model: All things DEIA fall under the CDO.

- SU currently has a model that is a mix of the unit and portfolio models.
- Several titles report directly to their deans with a dotted line to the CDO; they meet and discuss best practices, etc.
- She noted SU values shared governance and they have several advisory councils from different areas of the University that work indirectly with the CDO.

M. Marko questioned how well the structure of SU is communicated to the campus. Chair Bartow questioned if the structure is communicated in the Strategic Plan.

Dr. Almandrez Responded regarding the structure:

- Several councils: these serve as advisory in nature and there is a lot of overlap within the groups.
- She would like to streamline the councils into a single overarching council that work with other groups as working groups.
 - Ensure that the work is distributed toward the functional areas. Example: Gender Inclusive Bathrooms should be the work of facilities rather than someone who is passionate about this issue and has volunteered to serve on a committee.
 - A diversity title is not necessary to engage in diversity work.

She also responded regarding communication both within and outside of the strategic plan:

- Syracuse's Academic Strategic Plan explicitly communicates that diversity must be shared across all units and fully integrated.
- Strategic Plan consists of three pillars:
 1. Educational excellence and student success.
 2. Research and creative excellence.
 3. Public Impact.
 - Several crosscutting values within the pillars, including DEIA.
 - DEIA is not a separate goal – it is integrated throughout the plan.
- CDO conducts a public forum with the state of DEIA each semester.
- Quarterly Newsletters.
- Annual report each academic year (new this year). Will showcase DEIA work across all units.

J. Bartow questioned what Syracuse is looking for from the Board of Trustees DEIA Committee.

Dr. Almandrez responded:

- Syracuse's Campus commitments are a standing agenda item for the SU Board of Trustees.
 - These are a response to campus demands after the 2017 bias incident.
- CDO Educates the Board on the progress of the institution, new positions, and new protocols.
- CDO reports institutional or structural concerns around DEIA.
- CDO reports to the Board on high level initiatives and updates and progress of the implementation of the DEIA Strategic Plan.
- Board helps provide oversight, but is not responsible for the day-to-day work.



Dr. Almandrez shared more information regarding research and creative excellence:

- Universities serve consumers of knowledge.
 - Syracuse OIDEA will serve as a producer of knowledge.
 - Create fellowships for staff and graduate scholars with subject area expertise.
 - Syracuse University will focus on critical research questions that will advance DEIA initiatives.

M. Marko questioned if ESF uses Syracuse University for disability services.

R. Hoda-Kearse responded:

- Syracuse University provides academic accommodations for ESF students.
- ESF's Office of Human Resources provides workplace accommodations for ESF faculty/staff.

J. Bartow questioned how physical disability needs are accommodated at ESF.

R. Hoda-Kearse responded:

- Facilities is available to assist students with accommodations for physical disabilities.

Dr. Chin noted that the Syracuse University Board of Trustees requested a DEIA Strategic Plan in under 9 months, resulting in the need to hire consultants (Damon Williams) to assist with the process.

- Board was available to offer support, embolden, hold accountable, and provide the resources needed.
 - Board's voice matters, especially from the Chair.
- Strategic Plan draft was presented to Board for approval.
 - Plan included campus input – was visible evidence to the community that their thoughts and words were being included.

7. Update on Campus-based IDE Committee and relationship to BOT DEI Committee

- The Committee discussed the idea of adding Accessibility to the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion to align with model at Syracuse University.
 - Campus DEI committee has also presented the idea of including environmental justice as a focus within the OIDE office.
- J. Bartow requested information about the 24/7/365 Outlet.
 - Safe and healthy discussion group on DEI related topics, led by IDE graduate students.
 - Students and members of the community have requested the program brought back.
 - Uncertain of the training that student facilitators received – will be important that they are equipped with the tools and expertise.
- J. Bartow requested a clarification of the intention for engaging with Interfaith Works.
 - Garner support in developing the ESF diversity plan from experts in the community.
 - J. Bartow stressed the importance of making sure the DEI efforts focus not only on our campus and local community but also our larger community of New York State.
 - Lengthy discussion on confidential bias reporting (Maxient system) and trends that have



been observed.

- The committee engaged in a lengthy discussion of the structure of different IDE groups and committees on campus and discussed the following possibilities for moving forward.
 - Perform a campus IDE audit to provide helpful information to incoming CDO and help reduce redundancy among IDE groups.
 - Identify different IDE committees and groups and the charge of each.
 - Formalize the structure of groups.
 - DEI BOT Committee to serve to support, empower, and provide resources and oversight to those doing the day-to-day work.
 - Identify IDE tools and/or documents.
 - Living Document, etc.
 - Evaluate the need for new tools & make recommendations.
 - Identify the means to provide resources that are needed.
 - Collect student data around underrepresented populations.
 - P. Hai will research the expense for an IDE audit from an outside consultant and report back with a budget proposal.
- It was noted that SUNY Central is currently restructuring its IDE Office. Guidance from that office would be beneficial.
- It was also noted that ESF will be instituting a DEI course that is required for all students.

T. Carter commented that he would like the Board of Trustees DEI Committee to support professional development opportunities.

- Training has been previously discussed. Committee has encountered challenges in providing training.
- Interfaith Works may be able to assist with training opportunities.

Adjournment:

P. Hai motioned to adjourn. M. Daher-Rahman seconded. All approved. Meeting adjourned at 11:35 AM.