

CAL Diversity Council Minutes September 17, 2018

Appointed Members:

Chair: Heather L. Scheuerman scheuehl@jmu.edu Justice Studies

Members:

Liam Buckley	bucklelm@jmu.edu	Soc/Anth (FA18)
Jennifer E. Byrne	byrneje@jmu.edu	Political Science (FA18)
Jessica B. Davidson	davidsjb@jmu.edu	History
Bill Knorpp	knorppwm@jmu.edu	Phil/Rel
Diana Galarreta	galarrdf@jmu.edu	Foreign Languages (FA18)
Adrienne M. Hooker	hookeram@jmu.edu	SMAD
Elizabeth Pass	passer@jmu.edu	WRTC
Mary Thompson	thompsmx@jmu.edu	English
Isaac Woo	wocw@jmu.edu	SCOM

Sitting Members:

Robert Aguirre aguirrrd@jmu.edu Dean of CAL

In attendance: Heather L. Scheuerman, Liam Buckley, Jessica B. Davidson, Bill Knorpp, Adrienne M. Hooker, Elizabeth Pass, Mary Thompson, Isaac Woo, Robert Aguirre, and Abe Goldberg (invited).

1) After introductions, Heather Scheuerman recounted the mission of the Council and discussed old business, which pertained to a letter the Council sent to the Provost last November in support of an external campus climate study. No response has been received as of yet.

2) Abe Goldberg, founding director of the James Madison Center for Civic Engagement and Associate Professor of Political Science, presented on JMU's participation in a project on civic engagement that has a campus climate component. This project is led by two significant organizations: the AASCU's American Democracy Project (<http://www.aascu.org/programs/ADP/>) and the Institute for Democracy and Higher Education (<https://idhe.tufts.edu/>). JMU's participation in the project involves a guided self-assessment to study campus climate for political learning and engagement. Developed by the Tisch College for Civic Life at Tufts University, the study taps into institutional norms, symbols, culture, history, events, policy-making, academic freedom and electoral engagement. There is also an important focus on diversity and inclusion.

So far, 9 focus groups have been conducted: four student, two administrators, one student affairs, and two faculty. There is another focus group scheduled for Friday, September 28, 2:30pm, for untenured faculty.

The study reflects a two-year process that involves the James Madison Center for Civic Engagement, its advisory board and the Center for Assessment and Research Studies. Abe expressed a desire to support diversity and inclusion efforts and welcomes feedback from the

Council regarding how to disseminate information obtained from the study and how we might benefit as a campus community from what we learn.

A discussion of this study and campus climate ensued. As the civic engagement study was not done in concert with any other university initiative, it was suggested that the Center for Civic Engagement coordinate with the university-wide task force on diversity and with Marilou Johnson regarding the NewPoint Strategies findings from diversity and inclusion focus groups that were conducted during the 2017-2018 academic year. It was also recognized that although this study does tap into diversity and inclusion relevant to a civic engagement initiative, it does not reflect a comprehensive campus-wide study that uses a probability sampling strategy. The civic engagement study utilizes a convenience sample, which is not representative of the entire campus community.

It was also discussed how upper-administration is prioritizing diversity and inclusion and appears ready to implement initiatives to improve campus climate. Despite this focus, some concerns were raised that developing policy initiatives that attempt to enhance diversity and inclusion in response to this project, and other studies that use similar methods (i.e., internally conducted studies that utilize convenience samples), would be ineffective and ultimately lead to the perpetuation of the very conditions these initiatives are attempting to improve. Namely, an external, comprehensive, campus climate study would provide a more accurate and generalizable picture of issues relating to diversity and inclusion at JMU. An ad hoc committee convened by the Provost this summer and the Provost's Gender and Sexuality Taskforce are also in support of such a study. Indeed, the former has drafted a letter that indicates different options and costs of an external climate study.

Dean Aguirre reiterated that diversity is being prioritized by: 1) ensuring that faculty search committees are familiar with hiring procedures that ensure diverse pools of candidates; and 2) examining data from IR to see changes in demographic composition of the student body and how success data relate to various demographic groups.

3) Members of the Council approved of the creation of a Canvas site so that diversity-related reports, Council minutes, and letters advocating for an external climate study could be available to members who needed to reference information.

4) Heather Scheuerman received an update from James Robinson concerning the status of temporary handicap parking passes on campus. Previously, individuals who had a JMU parking pass and provided documentation were limited to one temporary handicap parking pass per calendar year to park on campus. This pass would last for two weeks and could not be renewed. James Robinson, Director of the Office of Equal Opportunity, and Towana Moore, Associate Vice President, worked to make the policy more accessible. Parking Services will now extend the amount of time that a person can have a temporary handicap permit to six weeks. The passes will be distributed in two-week increments and can be renewed three times, which is meant to prevent the potential abuse of these spaces. In addition, the policy regarding only one permit per year will be abandoned. More than one instance of requiring a temporary handicap permit will need to be approved by the Director of Parking Services. Last, if a person needs the permit for longer than six weeks, they will need to go to the DMV for an official handicap permit.

5) Elizabeth Pass served as the representative for the September Diversity Chairs Council meeting. Key Highlights from this meeting are as follows:

- a) Vice President of Student Affairs, Tim Miller, an alumnus of JMU, introduced himself and indicated his interest and work in the area of diversity and inclusion. At his previous institution, George Washington University (GWU), Tim created the First Generation Program, which included a variety of events, funding, and mentoring, and helped address food insecurity among this population. GWU now has a Food Pantry on campus, which helps to alleviate need but is not a permanent solution. He is concerned with campus climate and will be studying issues relating to diversity and inclusion by talking with students. He is currently working with focus groups and CMISS and is focusing first on sexual misconduct. He then plans to assess food insecurity and homelessness among JMU students in addition to researching issues related to alcohol and healthy relationships.

Tim also highlighted how many people in Student Affairs (SA) will be retiring and he is open to suggestions regarding how SA will address diversity and inclusion. He is also in favor of an external campus climate study to accurately identify issues on campus. General support for an external campus climate study was also indicated by others present at the meeting. It was suggested that the Chairs Council compose a document supporting an external climate study and to discuss this document at a forthcoming meeting.

- b) In addition, a variety of changes were highlighted that improve accessibility and inclusion. For instance, links to Diversity and Accessibility on the JMU website will now be in the footer, accessibility information is more readily available (refer to campus map, events, mobile versions), members who identify as LGBTQ will have information for bathrooms, and homecoming will be changing Mr. and Mrs. JMU to make it more inclusive.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Pass and Heather L. Scheuerman