

Diversity & Inclusion Committee of the Faculty Senate Academic Year Report, 2017-18

Committee members: Samereh Abdoli (Nursing), Gladys Alexandre (BCMB), Brian Ambroziak (Architecture), Misty Anderson (English), Michelle Kwon (Law), Niki Labbe (Forestry), Mary McAlpin (MFLL), Marcy Souza (Public Health), Chair: Monica Black (History).

The Faculty Senate's Diversity & Inclusion Committee set four goals for the 2017-18 academic year: 1) to work with Pride Center Working Group toward implementation of the 2017 Pride Center Report; 2) to work with other diversity and inclusion-related campus organizations; 3) to propose responses to any Tennessee legislation that adversely affects the university's diversity and inclusion goals; and 4) to advocate for a campus climate survey of faculty addressing issues of diversity and inclusion.

Some of these goals changed or became less relevant as circumstances changed over the course of the year, but they served as a framework for the plans we made, the guests we invited, and for many of our discussions. The committee sometimes responded to unexpected requests, as when the members were asked in October 2017 to review accessibility documents developed under the leadership of Chancellor Jimmy Cheek by the university's Accessibility Implementation Team.

Concerning our goal (4, above) of advocating for a campus climate survey addressing issues of diversity and inclusion: we learned in fall 2017 that two PhD psychology students were conducting precisely this kind of research and invited them to visit with our committee to discuss it. The student-researchers attended the committee's Dec. 6 meeting, where they shared some preliminary results and described their methods (they use a methodology called Critical Participatory Action Research, which aims to bring social scientists and community members together to formulate research plans and questions in concert, making research more inclusive, democratic, and useful to communities). The Faculty Senate later distributed a link to a survey the students developed, in the hope of increasing the number of respondents. The committee also invited the students to the March 5 Faculty Senate meeting, where they presented their findings.

Concerning our goal (1, above) of working with the Pride Center Working Group: this goal changed with the appointment of the new Pride Center Coordinator Bonnie Johnson. The D&I committee invited Bonnie Johnson to our February 7 meeting. She kindly shared with us the plans for moving into the new Pride Center, which will be located in the new Student Center beginning next year, as well as her ideas and thoughts on a number of topics of interest to the committee and the broader campus.

Concerning goal 2 above, members of the committee participated in a variety of activities, among them:

1. FS President-elect and committee member Misty Anderson (and FS President Beauvais Lyons) developed Play It OUT, a one-semester, pilot program that uses socially-engaged performance pieces to model civil and inclusive social interactions. Using a model developed at the University of Michigan, the project seeks to address issues related to bias openly and to provide models of communication between groups of people from different backgrounds.
2. Committee member Misty Anderson also worked to support the visit of former NFL football player and United Nations Champion for Innovation Wade Davis, who addressed students on March 5 on the topic "Overcoming Homophobia in American Sports."
3. Committee member Brian Ambroziak co-authored a design charette within the College of Architecture + Design as part of the College's MAXMIN competition series with Associate Dean Katherine Ambroziak for a new UTK Pride Center. The poster designed for the competition was used by Chancellor Davenport for fundraising purposes.
4. Our campus was marred in mid-February by the visit of a Nazi-inspired, white-supremacist hate group. Faculty Senator Helene Sinnreich and FS D&I committee chair Monica Black helped organize an "Anti-Nazi Teach-In: Fascism's Past and Present." The event brought together faculty and graduate students from eight different departments, who led a day-long series of presentations and discussions for students and community members.