

A&S Task Force for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (August 2019) Executive Summary Report, May-August 2019

Task Force Members: Kathleen Jenkins (Co-Chair), Logan Chappell (Co-Chair), David Armstrong, Francis Tanglao Aguas, Teresa Longo, Jennifer Bickham-Mendez, Kelsey Smoot

Charge:

Dean Kate Conley charged the Task Force in the Spring semester of 2019 with preparing a report to be submitted to her in May 2019. Completing the report by this date allowed Dean Conley to obtain feedback from the A&S community and to share with President Rowe, the Provost, Chon Glover (Chief Diversity Officer), and the A&S Council on Diversity and Inclusion by the final report deadline of June 30.

In her charge to the Task Force Dean Conley asked that the report recommend “concrete, achievable, and measurable goals, both short-term and long-term,” because this work is “pressing and will need persistence beyond a short period.” Furthermore, “the focus of the goals should be on hiring and climate, with ongoing curricular initiatives as a consideration.” In addition, Task Force members would have access to the “Climate Survey” data from W&M Human Resources.

The Dean requested the Task Force work with her as well “on bringing external experts to campus to advise on best practices we might adopt here to advance our work on diversity, inclusion, and equity in Arts & Sciences.” Finally, the charge indicated that Task Force recommendations include a budget for specific resources.

Process:

Task Force members met with Dean Conley at the start of the semester to review our charge and process. The chairs of the Task Force attended meetings with Chon Glover (Chief Diversity Officer) and members of the Task Forces of the School of Education, School of Business, Law School, and VIMS. These meetings provided a chance for the schools to share process, concerns, and emerging recommendations.

The A&S Task Force members met in January, February, March, April, and May as a full group. The Task Force also established working groups to focus on hiring issues, faculty climate, the faculty survey, staff climate, student climate, consideration of external reviewers for A&S DEI approaches, and curricular issues. The Task Force charged each of these smaller groups with reading the W&M Final Task Force Report on Race and Race Relations (March 28, 2016) and determining which recommendations, relative to our group topics in A&S, had been implemented to date and which had not yet been acted upon. These smaller groups prepared short reports with lists of recommendations and uploaded them to the Task Force’s Box folder. Each member of the Task Force was then asked to read all reports looking for overlap in needs, concerns, and recommendations.

Between April 18 and May 14, one member of the Task Force held one-on-one and group meetings with various staff in Arts & Sciences. They discussed needs and concerns, especially

around issues of race, promotion, retaliation, and respect. These meetings, combined with information from the climate survey, inform the Task Force recommendations.

Task Force members did not receive the Climate Survey until March 28, which left little time for in-depth analysis. We were able to review the draft report prepared by the Ad Hoc Committee on COLL 199 Implementation (April 2019) identifying curricular concerns and needs, along with that committee's draft recommendations. We also reviewed select departmental diversity plans. In coordination with Dean Conley, Task Force representatives met with Tia McNair and Pat Lowrie, of the American Association of Colleges & Universities, who provided an external review of A&S diversity initiatives. As a result of these conversations, we recommend that A&S submit a proposal to participate in the Summer AAC&U Institute on Truth, Racial Healing and Transformation in 2020.

Recommendations:

Each of our recommendations advances the larger goals articulated in the Arts & Sciences Action Plan for Diversity and Inclusion of "creat[ing] and promot[ing] an environment in which diversity can thrive" and to "maintain a safe, nurturing community that is respectful of our differences and what we share in common." We envision an environment where people can raise concerns without fear of retribution, where the respectful exchange of ideas is the norm, and where recruitment, hiring, retention, and professional development of more diverse faculty, staff, and graduate students are a shared priority. To the extent possible, we have included measurable outcomes and budget recommendations in our proposals. Throughout our deliberations, we determined that it would be unwise to make budget recommendations without additional time, adequate information, and sustained consultations with the Dean's Office. We also recognize the limitations of the A&S budget and know that the Dean's Office will need to work with other administrators across campus to secure adequate funding for the implementation of our Task Force's recommendations.

We agree with the conclusion of Pat Lowrie and Tia McNair that if diversity, equity, and inclusion are the end destination of our efforts, then there must also be a process that questions the status quo in order to arrive at our intended new reality of a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive community in Arts & Sciences. The University Task Force on Race and Race Relations has already recommended the establishment of a center for race, ethnicity, sexuality, and inclusivity. We echo this recommendation and urge Arts & Sciences to take leadership in creating this center, the work of which will do much to support the community as we engage in conversations, processes, research, and initiatives toward a DEI vision in Arts & Sciences.

The Task Force's first recommendation is to appoint, in 2019-20, a Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Arts & Sciences. This person will assist the Dean in planning and implementing the recommendations in our report and help to identify additional priorities. We also envision that this director will help to determine measurements for success on many Task Force recommendations.

Dean's reaction to the Task Force Report and Review

Dean Conley welcomes the report and the review. Here are the actions taken so far:

- In May, 2019, Dean Conley invited a review team to visit Arts & Sciences and submit a report, as recommended by the Task Force, comprised of Dr. Tia Brown McNair and Patricia Lowrie of the Association of American Colleges & Universities. The top recommendation in the review was for Arts & Sciences to appoint a new Director for Diversity & Inclusion.
- As of 23 August 2019, the position of Director of Diversity & Inclusion for Arts & Sciences with a dual report to the Dean and the Office of Diversity & Inclusion has been posted and a search committee appointed, in coordination with Chief Diversity Officer Chon Glover.
- Dean Conley has alerted the Faculty Affairs Committee for Arts & Sciences of the Review's further recommendation that Arts & Sciences establish an A&S standing Committee for Diversity & Inclusion, on which the new Director for Diversity & Inclusion should sit. She anticipates that this new, elected committee will supercede the A&S Council on Diversity and Inclusion, which has been appointed by the Dean since 2016.
- The Dean has also recommended to the Faculty Affairs Committee that the Arts & Sciences ByLaws should be updated to reflect a strong commitment to diversity and inclusion.
- Over the summer, the Dean's office prepared a new handout for the purpose of fundraising explicitly for diversity and inclusion in Arts & Sciences that will be distributed to frontline Advancement colleagues and presented to donors. The handout focuses on the multiple opportunities for investment, including WMSURE, the Boswell Initiative, the Neurodiversity Initiative, the Office of Academic Advising, and the Center for the Liberal Arts, which is working on implementation of the new COLL 199 requirement and preparing workshops to ready faculty to teach COLL 199.

A full list of the Task Force's recommendations is available on request to the Dean's Office.