

2019-2020
University of Alabama
Faculty Senate
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee Annual Report

Mirit Eyal-Cohen & Ignacio Rodeno, Co-Chairs

Sundar Krishnan, Holly Grout, Michael Callihan, Jenny Shaw, Sheila Black

This year, the committee repeatedly attempted unsuccessfully to meet with Dr. Christine Taylor, VP and Associate Provost for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in order to maintain an open dialogue between her office and the faculty. The committee was successful in meeting monthly with Crossroads Center director, Lane McClelland, and participants during the Inclusive Breakfast forum and was involved with initiatives on the topic of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

Earlier this year, and following the sudden resignation of Dr. Reilly, VP Student Life, faculty and students felt unsafe expressing their opinions openly in class and on social media. The committee took part in creating a faculty senate task force for improving campus culture and several of its members transformed to serve on the task force, which created the need mid-year to change the composition of the committee.

Following the committee's previous year efforts, the committee continued to advocate a more inclusive holiday display on main campus by surveying SEC universities that maintain and support such a display. The committee created a memorandum and worked together with Provost Whittaker and Faculty Senate President Rona Donahoe and was successful in obtaining permission to display an inclusive holiday winter display on University Blvd.

The committee's continuous effort to create greater awareness and connectivity on campus, shifted gears this year with the creation of new affinity groups on campus alongside the existing Black Faculty Staff Association (BFSA) and the LGBT Faculty Staff association (Capstone Alliance). The committee was successful in creating conditions and bolstering two new affinity groups on campus: the Jewish Faculty Staff Association (JFSA) and the Latinx Faculty Staff (LFSA). The committee members are working on calling campus community to form more groups in various affinity areas including but are not limited to International, Veteran, Disabled, Asian, Males-in-Nursing, Mediterranean, etc. An e-mail address has been created for people to contact the committee if there is an interest in creating an Affinity Group: affinity@ua.edu. Two news articles have appeared (one in *Crimson White*: <https://cw.ua.edu/62759/news/committee-encourages->

formation-of-new-affinity-groups/; the other in UA News: <https://www.ua.edu/news/2020/03/faculty-senate-seeks-to-create-new-affinity-groups/>.

The committee also continues to work with BFSA and Chief Diversity Officer (CDO), UAB Health System (UABHS) Dr. Deborah Grimes to study the structure and operations of existing affinity groups to create a model for future groups. The committee hopes to continue to work on this endeavor and support the creation of more affinity groups on campus.

Lastly, the Committee discussed proposed changes to University syllabus template by including a Diversity Statement per the Task Force on Improving Campus Culture's request. The committee drafted a revised diversity statement that would serve as a guide, not a requirement, for faculty to include in their syllabi. The committee forwarded the revised diversity statement to the Academic Affairs committee with the proviso that there are many open issues including its interaction with the current UAct statement.

The DEI committee has high hopes and commitment to making a difference for all university constituents. We look forward to continued success in 2020-2021.