

2020-2021
University of Alabama
Faculty Senate
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee Annual Report

Ignacio Rodeño & Lyndell McDonald, Co-Chairs

Julie Bannerman, Sheila Black, Michael Callihan, Mirit Eyal-Cohen, Holly Grout, Courtney Helfrecht, BC Kim, Sundar Krishnan, Bharat Mehra, Jenny Shaw

This year, the Committee was successful to establish periodic meetings with Dr. Christine Taylor, VP and Associate Provost for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. Those meetings are designed to maintain an open dialogue between her office and the faculty. The Committee discussed with Dr. Taylor the Path Forward Report. The Committee has continued to participate in the Inclusive Breakfast forum now organized digitally (due to covid-19 restrictions) by the Division of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion which involves initiatives on the topic of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

Following the Committee's efforts in previous years, we have continued to advocate a more inclusive holiday display on main campus. The Committee surveyed the possibility of increasing the diversity of cultures in the inclusive holiday winter display on University Blvd. To this end, the Committee met with the BSFA president regarding Kwanzaa celebrations.

The Committee took participated in the activities designed by the Faculty Senate Task-force for Improving Campus Culture.

The Committee advocated for the hiring of a permanent director for Safe Zone, a position that had been occupied by a graduate student and is currently led by committed undergraduate students. Once the hiring committee has been established, the Committee has been monitoring its progress.

The Committee's sustained effort to create greater awareness and connectivity on campus, continued to advocate for the creation of more Affinity Groups. Prior to UA entering in limited business operations due to covid-19 restrictions, the Committee held meetings with personnel from the Office of Disability Services to bolster the creation of an affinity group for disabled faculty and staff. Efforts were renewed this academic year, with talks with the Equal Opportunity Committee. The Committee also moved towards the creation of Asian affinity groups by contacting members in the community. Last year the Committee saw the creation of new affinity groups: the Jewish Faculty Staff Association (JFSA) and the Latinx Faculty Staff (LFSA); this year we assisted them in consolidating their foundation, alongside the well-established Black Faculty Staff Association (BFSA) and Capstone Alliance, the LGBTQ+ Faculty Staff association. The Committee advocated to the Division of DEI for the creation of a webpage that would offer information on affinity groups; such webpage can be found under the Office of DEI: <https://diversity.ua.edu/affinity-groups/>. The Committee looks forward to assisting in forming more groups in various affinity areas including but are not limited to International, Veteran, Males-in-Nursing, Mediterranean, etc.

In order to increment diversity on campus and to foster retention of diverse members on campus, the Committee started to pursue the creation of Post-Doctoral Fellowships, with the intention of creating fellowships in each College. The Committee researched the existence of similar positions at other SEC schools. The Committee also held meetings with the representatives of the Faculty Senate Academic Affairs and Research and Service Committees, and contacted the Office of the Provost to enquire the ratio of diverse hiring by UA.

Furthmore, the Committee met with Dean Joseph Messina and Associate Dean Roger Sidje (Arts and Sciences), who have created post-doctoral fellowships and could help the Committee navigate the creation of these fellowships for underrepresented minorities.

The Faculty Senate DEI Committee has high hopes and commitment to making a difference for all university constituents. We look forward to continued success in 2021-2022.