

CAMPUS LEADERSHIP RESPONSE TO THE MARCH 2020 RESOLUTION ON DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION AT PSU

Submitted to the Faculty Senate on November 15, 2020

In a March 2020 resolution, the Faculty Senate expressed concern about several diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) issues that have surfaced during their discussions with campus stakeholders. The resolution points out that PSU is “facing a number of challenges and problems regarding the diversity, equity, and inclusion of underrepresented groups and individuals,” even as we face a time of budgetary constraint. This is the truth.

In the March resolution, the Faculty Senate asked the administration to “*develop and present to the Faculty as soon as possible an updated plan with short and long-term strategies to support underrepresented faculty and staff, and remedy PSU’s diversity, equity, and inclusion problem to adequately serve our students, faculty, staff, and communities, including a protocol for its implementation.*”

The resolution also urged the administration to *take urgent action regarding the unsustainable situation and needs of the departments and programs of the School of Gender, Race and Nations.*

This report represents a formal response from President Stephen Percy, Provost and Vice President for Student Affairs Susan Jeffords, and Vice President for Global Diversity and Inclusion, Ame Lambert, to the March 2020 Faculty Senate Resolution.

Short and Long-term Strategies to Advance Racial Justice and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at Portland State

Campus leadership understands that the PSU community is committed to combating racism and advancing justice on our campus, and we appreciate that the Faculty Senate is providing leadership to create a more just university. Expanding diversity on our campus—including that among our administrators, faculty, staff, and students—is a vital component of our commitment to racial justice. Our efforts to implement our enrollment growth plans for both undergraduates and graduate students is key to advancing social mobility in Portland and the diversity of both the regional workforce and community leadership.

One very positive and significant development since this resolution was enacted by the Faculty Senate is the **appointment of a permanent Vice President for Global Diversity and Inclusion**. This summer, **Dr. Ame Lambert** commenced her appointment and has already become an active and effective member of the President’s Executive Council. Dr. Lambert brings deep knowledge, unshakable commitment, and non-stop energy to her work. She is an amazing asset as all of us across campus as we lean in to combating racism and advancing justice and equity.

The campus has designed and is implementing a variety of strategies, some shorter-term and others with longer-term focus, to advance equity, justice and inclusion at Portland State. The campus is making a strong commitment to this work.

Investment in Racial Equity and Justice at PSU

Recognizing that strategic action often requires investment, President Percy announced in the summer of 2020 a campus commitment of \$1.5 million over three years to support the creation and implementation of strategies to advance racial equity and justice. Funds will be awarded for initiatives outlined below under the leadership of Vice President Lambert.

In addition, the **Portland State University Foundation** will join with PSU to create investment funds to support this work through philanthropic giving. In Fall 2020, the PSUF created a Racial Justice and Equity Fund and announced that the Foundation itself would be the first donor to the fund through a gift of \$50,000. The President will work with the Foundation to expand philanthropic support for our racial justice and equity work.

Presidential Commitment to Racial Justice and Equity

Following upon his appointment as President, Dr. Percy has been developing the primary strategic directions to guide his term as university leader. At the October Equity Summit, he identified Racial Justice and Equity as his *top* priority and commitment throughout the period of his presidential appointment.

Leadership Education on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

The President and the Executive Council have committed to expanding their own knowledge and capacity to promote diversity, equity and inclusion on campus. In Fall term 2020, the Council participated in a learning session focused on utilization of an equity lens in planning and decision-making. This training was conducted by Dr. Lisa Hawash, Associate Professor of Practice in the School of Social Work. The training was based upon an equity framework created by Dr. Marisa Zapata, Associate Professor of Urban Studies and Planning at PSU. Dr. Hawash also served during 2019-20 as a Presidential Fellow, doing work centered on expanding the application of the equity lens at PSU (consistent with the 2016-2020 PSU Strategic Plan).

In addition, in the fall and winter the President and the Executive Council are engaging in the Intercultural U Program, a 25-hour program focused on the personal, cultural and societal dimensions of justice and equity facilitated by the Vice President of GDI. A concurrent campus-wide cohort will also be offered.

A Time to Act: Bold Commitment to Advancing Racial Justice and Equity

A fundamental and critical component of our work to promote DEI is the **Time to Act Initiative**. This work, with both short-term and long-term implications, includes the below elements:

1. Efforts to galvanize campus energy and idea-generation to combat racism and promote justice.
2. A commitment to update and respond to important task force reports that were initially crafted a few years ago but were not implemented. These reports were from: The Portland State University Task Force on Asian-American, Asian & Pacific Islander Student Success, 2017; and the PSU President's African American, African, and Black Student Success Task Force Report, 2017.
3. Creation of a Racial Equity and Justice Nexus, a center point of campus dialogue, learning, idea-generation and problem solving all aimed at advancing justice and countering racism.
4. A commitment to centering and elevating BIPOC voices and communities.

Element 1: Galvanizing Energy and Ideas to Promote DEI and Racial Justice

This element is focused on generating dialogue and engagement to create new strategies to advance equity and justice. The work began with a bang through an ***Equity Summit*** convened on October 31, 2020. More than 500 people gathered virtually to discuss DEI and racial justice at Portland State University. Dr. Lambert introduced this new event by sharing the theme for the day's events: "*We are the ones we've been waiting for.*" Participants spent the day learning, discussing, and developing concrete visions for PSU's future. The summit focused on four parts: Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny. Participants broke into virtual sub-groups at each juncture to share and collaborate with each other. Dreams for PSU included shifting from an access institution to an inclusive institution, more authentically celebrating cultures and embracing a truly diverse campus and investing in inclusivity.

To support planning for the Equity Summit, and to take the reins of idea generation, Dr. Lambert created five cross-campus Task Forces organized around the following themes: (1) Student Access, Success and Equity, (2) Leadership and Infrastructure, (3) Employee Access, Success and Equity, (4) Education, Scholarship and Service, and (5) Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations. Now that learnings from the Equity Summit have been gathered, each of the Task Forces is preparing three strategic projects to advance racial justice and equity over the next 2-3 years. These collective 15 projects will be vetted by the campus, and the initiatives with the greatest potential for impact will qualify for funding through the Racial Equity and Justice Fund. Implementation of the resulting projects will be shepherded by the five Task Forces. Each initiated project will be assessed to determine impact.

Element 2: Appreciating and Responding to Task Force Reports on Student Success

During 2017 and 2018, reports were submitted to President Shoureshi by the **African American, African and Black Student Success** and **Pacific Islander, Asian and American Student**

Success Task Forces. Unfortunately, the recommendations of these Task Force reports remained unexplored as the result of campus leadership transition. Upon assuming the role of Interim President, Dr. Percy began action to put serious campus attention on these important Task Force reports. During the 2019-2020 academic year, the President appointed Marshawna Williams as a Presidential Fellow charged with reconnecting with the African American, African and Black Student Success Task Force to explore updating the report. The update is nearly completed and will be received by the President by the end of the Fall term 2020.

In 2020-21, the President appointed Dr. Betty Izumi and Ms. Bree Kalima as Presidential Fellows with an expectation that they would update the Pacific Islander, Asian and Asian American Student Success Task Force Report. The updated report is expected to be completed and submitted to the President by the end of the Fall term 2020.

The President and campus leadership team are committed to immediate review of the findings and recommendations of the updated Task Force reports and to respond to them in a timely manner. That review should be in concert with the recommendations coming forward from the Task Forces.

Element 3: The Racial Justice and Equity Nexus: Center Point for Idea Generation, Exploration, and Assessment

The heart of any university is its intellectual core: the commitment to the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge to inform theory and praxis. Within this core, new ideas are proposed and critically evaluated, data and evidence are used to test theoretical assumptions and assess the real impact of innovation so that lasting models of change can be formulated. For this reason, it is logical and important to link the campus commitment to racial equity and justice to our intellectual core. We will do this through the ***Racial Justice and Equity Nexus***.

We are in the formative stage of envisioning this campus focal point for intellectual attention to pushing PSU forward in its pursuit of greater justice and equity. The Nexus will include research, praxis, dialogue, and idea generation. Our commitment to this work is long-term. As we pursue this work, we need to give sustained attention to generating ideas and creating new pathways to justice. Our work should be informed not only by the voices of people who have experienced injustice but also through knowledge represented in such areas as critical race theory, multi-cultural research and learning, and decolonization studies. The work should also be informed by an appreciation of the values, traditions, and knowledge of BIPOC communities. We will also need to focus intellectual attention on the intersectionality of identities and the life experiences of persons who have experienced racism, diminished opportunities and injustice. The Nexus can serve as the home of this work.

The Racial Equity and Justice Nexus may include affiliated faculty and/or fellows who are formally connected, some of whom may conduct research, explore practice, or convene dialogues around DEI and racial justice initiatives. The Nexus can also be a home base for assessing the impact of campus initiatives focused on eliminating injustice. It is important that we monitor and understand our projects to determine the type and magnitude of impact so as to

inform better practice. The President and the Vice President for Global Diversity and Inclusion are interested in perspectives of the Faculty Senate and other stakeholders on the creation of the Racial Justice and Equity Nexus.

Funds will be made available through the Racial Equity & Justice Fund to support start-up funding for the Nexus.

Element 4: Other Initiatives for BIPOC Communities.

Multiple programs in Global Diversity and Inclusion are underway to advance racial justice and equity at PSU. These include the following:

- In response to a carefully crafted student proposal delivered to the Board of Trustees in the Winter term of 2020, the President commissioned Global Diversity and Inclusion to work on a phased implementation plan to create a **Dreamer Center at PSU**. GDI will partner with the Associated Students of Portland State University (ASPSU) on this critical initiative.
- Working with the BIPOC community, GDI will host an annual celebration and showcase of work by, and for, the BIPOC community.

The institution is also exploring leadership development initiatives to advance students and employees from underrepresented backgrounds.

Presidential Initiatives

The PSU President has launched several other initiatives intended to provide energy and momentum to campus efforts to fight racism and expand justice. These include the following:

1. ***Exploring Greater Connections to Native American Tribes and Indigenous Peoples:*** The President appointed Dr. Theodore Van Alst, Professor and Chair of Indigenous Nations Studies and Interim Director of the School of Gender, Race, and Nations as a Presidential Fellow in 2019-2020 with a charge of exploring the feasibility and potential impact of creating deeper ties to Indigenous Nations and Native American Studies. Also included was a request to explore a Tribal Liaison position at PSU. That report was submitted in the Summer of 2020 and is being reviewed by the President and the Vice President for Global Diversity & Inclusion.
2. ***Expanding Utilization of an Equity Lens at PSU:*** The President appointed Dr. Lisa Hawash, Associate Professor of Practice in the School of Social Work, in the 2019-20 academic year as a Presidential Fellow with a charge of exploring strategies to advance the use of an **equity lens** in policy creation, decision-making and assessment across the campus. The report will be submitted soon and will be shared with the Vice President for Global Diversity and Inclusion as the campus considers expansion of an equity lens application at PSU.

3. ***Creating Executive Expectations for DEI and Racial Justice Work:*** Campus leadership is committed to deeper work on combating racism and promoting justice as a primary component of their ongoing leadership responsibilities. In appointing Dr. Percy as President, the PSU Board of Trustees established six goals for his presidential leadership. One of the six goals focused directly on DEI: *The President together with the Vice President of Global Diversity and Inclusion and the campus leadership team will plan and implement initiatives to advance equity at PSU, including the publication of a new Diversity, Equity and Inclusion plan and to initiate action to implement it.* The Board of Trustees will evaluate the President on the basis of achievements related to this and other goals.

The President and the members of the President's Executive Council have agreed that diversity, equity and inclusion is so imperative that it deserves to be a key responsibility for each of the roles that reports to the President. The President has asked members of the Executive Council to include within their annual goals and objectives strategies and action to advance DEI within their respective area of responsibility. The President will consider accomplishments related to DEI goals as a key part of annual performance reviews.

4. ***DEI Goals and Expectations for Unclassified, Unrepresented Employees:*** As the Faculty Senate embarks on an exploration of expectations of PSU with regard to tenure and promotion, the President's Executive Council taking action to determine how diversity, equity and inclusion relates to the job expectations for all employees who fall into the Unclassified, Unrepresented job classification. Human Resources is exploring current practices and policies, as well as innovations at other universities. This office will devise draft policies for the President's Executive Council to consider for creating job expectations related to advancing equity and justice for "UnUn" employees. Once established, these expectations will be referenced as part of performance reviews.

University Challenge to Support Food and Housing Needs of PSU Students and Employees

In Fall term 2020, the PSU Homelessness Research and Action Collaborative (HRAC), a university center for excellence, released a study that describes housing and food insecurity experienced by university students and employees, including an update on these experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic.[1] The study demonstrated that both our students and our employees experience housing and food challenges. PSU has in place several strategies to support the needs of those who experience these challenges, yet more is needed. The President will appoint in Fall 2020 term a committee to collaborate with HRAC in identifying new or expanded initiatives that can contribute to amelioration of the housing and food security needs of our students and employees including, but certainly not limited to, partnerships with nonprofit and social service agencies whose mission focuses on these important issues.

Key Initiatives in the Office of Academic Affairs

Under the leadership of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Academic Leadership Team, the Office of Academic Affairs is engaged in substantial work to promote racial justice, equity and inclusion.

1. The Provost has committed to adding DEI responsibilities to all positions that report directly to the Provost and will assess work in this arena as part of annual performance reviews.
2. A proposal for an ethnic studies degree requirement is under consideration. The proposal suggests two course expectations that would be required of all PSU undergraduate students. One course would focus on the experiences and histories of ethnic groups and systemic racism within the United States and the other would explore international perspectives. These courses could be taken to fulfill major, minor, junior cluster, and/or elective requirements. It is anticipated that this proposal will be reviewed by the appropriate committee(s) of the Faculty Senate and by the full Senate body during the 2020-21 academic year.
3. The deans of the schools and colleges are considering appointment of leadership positions to further DEI work. Some schools, such as the College of Education, had previously appointed a position of Coordinator of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. Others, such as the School of Public Health, have created new positions such as the new Associate Dean for Diversity and Inclusion.
4. The annual Winter Symposium sponsored by Academic Affairs will be conducted this year in partnership with the VP for Global Diversity & Inclusion to move forward topics from the Summit.
5. Integrate DEI work into the planning and design of the Vernier Science Center: Critical Race Theory practice will be integrated into the design and planning of the VSC.

Advancing the School of Gender, Race and Nations

In the March 2020 Faculty Senate Resolution, the Senate urged campus administration to *take urgent action regarding the unsustainable situation and needs of the departments and programs of the School of Gender, Race and Nations*. Since this resolution was enacted by the Senate, the following actions have been taken.

1. The Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and the Director of the School of Gender, Race and Nations (SGRN) have agreed to a cluster hire of multiple new faculty

members in the School. The Dean and Director are working out details regarding design of the cluster to support the mission of SGRN and its departments.

2. The President has committed \$65K in supplemental funding for special initiatives in Black Studies. He has also provided targeted funding for the Equity Summit and other initiatives, such as the Black Bag Series in Black Studies.
3. The Annual MLK celebration will be jointly planned by GDI and Black Studies, with the leadership from the Chair and the Director of the Black Studies center. The 2021 celebration will include a panel of PSU scholars exploring Blackness in Oregon and a holistic look at the life of the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Moving Forward

This report represents current work and future plans. It represents a renewed and deeper commitment to the hard work we need to undertake to advance equity and racial justice at PSU. The activities, initiatives and projects identified in the report are the start of this renewal. This is formative work and, without question, our efforts will be modified as we learn from its outcomes. We appreciate that work in addition to that outlined in this report is being done across the campus and will contribute to our efforts to advance equity and justice.

Our work to advance justice, equity and inclusion will not always be easy. We will undoubtedly need difficult dialogues. We need to recognize past harm and must pay attention to healing. We must be willing to be bold and take risks. As we move forward together, there will be setbacks along the way, and we will not always get it right. However, every concrete action we take towards achieving real diversity, equity, and inclusion is another step towards dismantling systems, policies, and practices that hinder our efforts to promote justice and fight racism. It is a commitment from campus leadership to stay the course and to make this a dedicated, long term, and collaborative effort. We are fully committed to this effort, and we cannot – we will not – lose momentum. We are also very committed to working in collaboration with the Faculty Senate in the initiatives outlined in this report and others that will emerge.

This summer we lost a great leader in John Lewis, a Civil Rights giant. In his words: *“Democracy is not a state. It is an act, and each generation must do its part to help build - what he called - the Beloved Community, a nation and world society at peace with itself.”* We need to make PSU the best it can be in creating and supporting our community to develop equity and justice. I look forward to working with you all to continue building our own Beloved Community at PSU.

[1] See *Housing and Food Insecurity at Portland State University*, Homelessness Research and Action Collaborative, Portland State University, September 2020, found at https://www.pdx.edu/homelessness/sites/g/files/znldhr1791/files/2020-09/PSU%20Housing%20%26%20Food%20Insecurity_Final%20Report.pdf