A Center for Diversity and Inclusion at Washington University
A Report on Key Themes from Fall 2013 meetings

Introduction

Over its long history, Washington University has strived to be an institution where spirited debate of critical issues can be held free from discrimination or censorship. Equally important, the University has worked to become a place where people from all backgrounds can study, work, live, conduct research, and learn from one another. As stated in the University’s mission statement, “our goal is to welcome students, faculty, and staff from all backgrounds to create an inclusive community that is welcoming, nurturing, and intellectually rigorous.”

In recent history, there has been much discussion about the creation of a Center for Diversity and Inclusion that would serve the Washington University community. During the summer of 2013, a task force was formed to explore the development of this new Center. The charge of the Task Force was to lead a public, transparent discussion with key stakeholders regarding the creation of a new Center. Specifically this conversation has focused on the mission of the Center and the communities it would serve, as well as determining the type of facility that would most effectively serve the broad interests of our campus community. There are many noteworthy examples of similar centers at peer institutions around the county, but the Task Force was charged with providing ideas for a unique Center to support the outstanding educational and co-curricular experiences at Washington University in the context of a modern global community. The Task Force has committed to providing University Administrators with a report of its findings from these community meetings by December 2013.

Using the report as a guide, an appointed advisory board, made up of students, faculty, and staff, will be convened in the Spring of 2014. Although the eventual goal of the advisory board will be to oversee the new Center, the advisory board will have two distinct priorities in the Spring: 1) hire the new Director of the Center; 2) identify and design the space for the new Center.

Themes related to the Center’s Mission

Support

- Create, foster, and promote a supportive, safe, and friendly environment that is welcoming to students from historically underrepresented or marginalized student populations on the Washington University campus.
- Provide resources for students in need of support on issues concerning identity, identity formation, and the intersection of multiple identities.
- Administer the Bias Report and Support System which records, responds to, and tracks incidents of bias at Washington University.
In partnership with Student Health Services, provide mental health resources for students. More specifically these resources should offer support to students who are actively engaged in diversity work, or who are struggling with their own identity formation.

Collaboration

- The Center should complement, not replace, existing campus centers and organizations focused on diversity, such as the Social Justice Center, the Gephardt Institute for Public Service, and the Diversity Affairs Council.
- The Center should be a place that brings together different groups that focus on diversity, providing a venue and additional resources for programming that explores diversity, identity, and inclusion.

Education

- Balance the need to be a safe, supportive space for students from underrepresented populations with the desire to be a place that is open to people of all races, ethnicities, nationalities, religions, gender identities, socioeconomic statuses, sexual orientations, and abilities – a place that helps all students understand interculturalism, intersectionality, identity, and intent.
- The Center should partner on educational programming with existing organizations on campus that are working to establish strong community values that promote diversity, such as the Office of Residential Life and the First Year Center.
- The Center should provide financial resources that organizations committed to diversity can access to facilitate community-wide programming.

Critical Attributes of the Center

- The Center should be a physical location, centrally located on the Danforth campus with adequate space to facilitate the mission of the center. The space should be comfortable and inviting.
- The Center should be staffed with a senior, director-level professional who has experience and core knowledge related to diversity. Additional staffing will be necessary to oversee the key functions of the Center.
- The Center needs an advisory board consisting of students, faculty, and staff that will monitor programs related to the center and identify new ways for the Center to have broad and meaningful impact.
- The Center must serve all students – both undergraduate and graduate/professional students.
The physical space must be inviting to all people – i.e. considerations should be made to ensure it is accessible to people of all abilities and there should be gender inclusive restroom facilities in the Center.

The Center must include physical storage space for students and student groups in order to facilitate the planning and clearing of large programs, events, presentations, and travel.

The Center needs to provide a 24/7 safe space that is accessible to students who feel marginalized, underrepresented, and unsafe in their residences.

The Center should include a physical space where students can choose to reserve for their general body meetings, host discussions and affinity spaces, and plan and hold small events and programs. This space should be reserved free of charge for student groups or programs that have missions that align with that of the Center.

Without compromising the quality of the new Center, efforts should be made to open the new Center as soon as possible, understanding that some of the programs and efforts of the Center will change over time.

The Center will assume oversight of the key projects that have developed from the Mosaic Project:

- **Assessment & Benchmarking**: Synthesize results from student surveys to assess campus climate as it relates to issues of diversity and identity.
- **Bias Report and Support System**: Implement a system through which students can report incidents of bias.
- **Community Values & Expectations**: Develop and maintain principles and standards that reflect our ideal WU community.
- **Diversity & Inclusion Within Student Groups**: Examine ways that student groups across campus can better foster inclusive environments.
- **Diversity in the Classroom**: Explore ways of incorporating more consistently and thoroughly respect for diverse perspectives and diverse students in WU classrooms.
- **Policies & Procedures**: Monitor all relevant University policies related to diversity.
- **Social Media**: Develop a range of educational initiatives related to online speech and social media use.

**Center For Diversity and Inclusion Task Force Membership**

Seiko Shastri, Art & Sciences, Class of 2015, co-chair
Rob Wild, Associate Vice Chancellor for Students, co-chair
Ayah Abo-basha, Arts & Sciences, Class of 2014
Josh Aiken, Mosaic Project student co-chair, Arts & Sciences, Class of 2014
Amee Azad, Arts & Sciences, Class of 2015
Christine Dolan, Coordinator of LGBT Student Involvement & Leadership
Tyler Hackmann, Arts & Sciences, Class of 2015
Tabea Linhard, Associate Professor of Spanish
Leanndra Martinez, MSW Student, Brown School
Nick Miller, Ph.D. Candidate, Graduate School of Arts & Sciences
David Patterson, Assistant Professor of Social Work
Michelle Purdy, Assistant Professor of Education
Valronica Scales, Assistant Director of Residential Life
Naomi Sigg, Assistant Director of Student Involvement and Leadership
Jessica Wilen, Mosaic Project Coordinator
Brendan Ziebarth, Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts, Class of 2015

Fall 2013 Meetings
Between September 1st and October 16th, members of the Task Force on the Development of a Center of Diversity and Inclusion met with the following organizations. In addition, a public town hall meeting was held on September 25. A second town hall meeting will be held October 24.

- Brown School Diversity Committee
- Campus Diversity Collaborative
- Congress of the South 40
- Danforth Scholars
- DIFFs
- Diversity Affairs Council
- Interfraternity Council
- Latino Graduate Student Alliance
- Northside Association
- Office of Diversity, School of Medicine
- Olin Undergraduate Deans
- Pride Alliance
- Residential College Directors
- Resident Student Advisory Board
- Social Justice Center
- Student Union
- Uncle Joe's Peer Counseling and Resource Center (Uncle Joe's)
- University Management Team
- Women's Panhellenic Association
- WU for Undergraduate Socio-Economic Diversity (WU/FUSED)