A Center for Diversity and Inclusion at Washington University  
A Report for Vice Chancellor Sharon Stahl from the Fall Task Force

Introduction:
Washington University has aspired 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.” However, the University community has not always lived up to these important aspirations. A new Center focused on diversity and inclusion has great potential to help bridge this gap between mission and practice.

During the summer of 2013, Vice Chancellor for Students Sharon Stahl formed a Task Force 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 focused on the mission of the Center, the communities it would serve, and the type of facility that would most effectively serve the broad interests of the campus community. There are many noteworthy examples of similar centers at other institutions around the country, but ultimately the Task Force was charged with providing ideas for a Center to support the unique educational and co-curricular experiences at Washington University, and meet the needs of our students in the context of a modern global community.

This report summarizes the work and recommendations of the Task Force. It has been informed by regular meetings of the Task Force and over 30 individual meetings with student organizations, school committees, and departments. In addition, public town hall meetings were held in September and October. The Task Force engaged Professor Lori Patton Davis from Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) as a consultant and her recommendations are included as part of this report. Members of the Task Force also visited six Centers that focus on diversity as part of the process to inform this recommendation. The centers visited were at St. Louis University, the University of Chicago, DePaul University, Northeastern Illinois University, and Loyola University, Chicago. Members of the Task Force also visited the Living Insights Center in St. Louis.

This report will serve as the foundation for the inaugural Center Advisory Board as they begin their work in January 2014.

Center Mission:
The mission of the new Center was a topic of spirited debate during the Fall 2013 process. It is important for the future success of the Center that there be a clearly defined mission and set of achievable goals from the outset. It should also be noted that while the Task Force is offering clear direction on the initial mission and goals for the Center, it is expected that the mission, like that of all healthy organizations, will change over time to adjust to changes in the needs of the University community.
The Center will enhance and strengthen Washington University’s commitment to fostering a diverse and inclusive community. The Center will support and advocate for students from traditionally underrepresented or marginalized populations, create collaborative partnerships with others on campus, and promote dialogue and social change. The Center will be an integral part of the University’s core mission to develop students as future leaders in the diverse global community of the 21st Century.

The Task Force recommends that the Center focus on the following key areas.

**Advocacy**
The Center, its staff, and its programs must advocate for the type of a community aspired to in the University’s mission statement: “an inclusive community that is welcoming, nurturing, and intellectually rigorous”. To be an effective advocate, the Center must have a direct line of communication with senior University leadership in order to effectively champion ongoing progress and institutional change in the area of diversity and inclusion. The Center must also be a place that supports other campus organizations that are sources of advocacy for positive social change.

In order to be an effective advocate, the Center must understand the campus climate for underrepresented populations. To this end, the Center will facilitate regular surveys to assess campus climate in order to better provide targeted programs and change to improve the campus community for traditionally underserved or marginalized populations.

**Support**
The new Center must be a place where students from marginalized or traditionally underrepresented populations at Washington University can find a safe, inviting, supportive, and friendly environment. It must be a place where students can be empowered as leaders in the community. The Center must also be a place where students seek guidance and nurturing support as they explore identity, identity formation, and the intersection of multiple identities. The staff in the Center must be knowledgeable, accessible, approachable, and helpful.

To help support underrepresented individuals and groups, Washington University must have additional avenues for reporting bias on campus. The new Center will become the home of the Bias Report and Support System that will launch in January 2014.

**Collaboration**
Collaboration for the new Center has two meanings. First, the Center must be a place where organizations and people who want to bring in speakers, put on programs, and plan activities related to diversity can come together. Center staff must look for opportunities to bring together groups and people with similar interests. Resources must be made available to individuals and organizations that are willing to partner on activities related to diversity.

Second, the Center should actively maintain cross-campus partnerships. Through the work of the Task Force this fall, many organizations were identified who have strong interests in working with the Center and are key stakeholders in making the Washington University community more inclusive. These include school based efforts such as those in the Brown School of Social Work
and the School of Medicine, as well as other, more specific organizations and departments such as the Undergraduate Admissions Office, the Office of Student Involvement and Leadership, Residential Life, the Teaching Center, Student Health and Counseling Services, the First Year Center, the Campus Ministries, the Kathryn M. Buder Center for American Indian Studies, and the Social Justice Center. Rather than replace these other campus efforts related to diversity, the Center should become hub of activity that encourages and supports others as they engage in their work. The importance of sharing responsibility for diversity-related programs with the Center and others on campus was a key recommendation of Professor Lori Patton Davis and several directors of similar centers on other campuses.

**Education and Outreach**

Inspiring and empowering individuals to learn more about their own unique identities and to explore the identities of others will be a key objective for the new Center. Over time, the Center should develop a resource library and far reaching programs that touch everyone on the Washington University campus. There are important places where outreach can take place, such as programs of the First Year Center in which all new students will participate. Student leaders in organizations such as Greek Life, Residential Life, the Graduate and Professional Council, and Student Union should be encouraged to collaborate on programs and trainings developed by the new Center.

Throughout the process, we heard from students that they want more academic courses related to diversity and intercultural communication. While there are already courses and majors within the existing curriculum that focuses on diversity, the Center must play a key role in expanding these offerings and finding ways to increase the numbers of students enrolled in these types of courses.

Programs of the Center should help people to understand privilege and power, systems of oppression, interculturalism, intersectionality, identity, equality vs. equity, and intent vs. impact. There should be resources available through the Center that students, faculty, and staff can access to develop programs that focus on these important concepts, as well as other topics related to diversity and social justice.

**Center Advisory Board:**
The inaugural Center Advisory Board should be appointed immediately. The board will include students, faculty and staff. Current members of the Task Force should be given the opportunity to continue on the Advisory Board, but they must be willing to commit time to the work of the Board. The Advisory Board should have a staff or faculty co-chair and a student co-chair.

The Advisory Board will have two main objectives in the spring: hire the Director and finalize the space.

The meeting schedule and committee structure of the Advisory Board should be determined by the co-chairs. The Advisory Board should annually consider new members in staggered terms and the size of the Board should be flexible.
The board should consist of representatives from the following constituencies at Washington University:

- Students from the four undergraduate academic schools
- Graduate and professional students
- Student Involvement and Leadership
- The Libraries
- Residential Life
- The Social Justice Center
- Students from Fraternities and Sororities
- The First Year Center
- Alumni & Development
- Office of the Provost
- Representative from the LGBT Advisory Board
- Public Affairs
- Campus Ministries
- The Diversity Affairs Council of Student Union

**Center Location:**
The new Center must be located in a central, accessible space on the Danforth Campus. The Center should be highly visible to prospective members of the University community, and it should be in a location that is viewed as accessible to undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, and staff. The space should have an office for the Director and office space for additional staff. It should have space that can be reserved for meetings and should also include places where students can informally gather during the day and into the evening. Students should actively be involved in the design of the space. It was also suggested that the Center include permanent artwork such as a mural or other student art.

Several locations should be considered and pursued by the Advisory Board in the spring. There may be other options as well, but these spaces should be thoroughly considered first:

- Mallinckrodt Center
- Olin Library
- The Women’s Building
- South 40 or the Northside Residential Community
- The Academy Building

**Center Staffing:**
The Director of the Center must be the first hire. A sample job description is included with this report. The Task Force is intentionally not recommending specific additional staffing because of the view that the staffing model should be developed primarily by the new Director. However, in benchmarking other successful Centers, they all included staff in addition to the Director. In addition to permanent Center staff, student employees should be an important and visible component integrated into the staffing structure of the Center. Strong consideration should be made to appoint a faculty liaison to the Center.
The Director should be a senior level staff member, reporting to the Vice Chancellor for Students. The Director should also have a clearly defined reporting relationship with the Provost through the Vice Provost for Diversity.

During the Fall 2013 process, there was much discussion about the role that existing staff and organizations who focus on diversity will play with the new Center. The Social Justice Center, the LGBT Coordinator in Student Involvement and Leadership, the TRiO Coordinator in Cornerstone, the Disability Resources staff, and the Coordinator for Diversity and Inclusion in Student Involvement and Leadership are examples of organizations and individuals who work with programs related to diversity. The recommendation of the Task Force is that existing people and organizations remain in their current locations rather than becoming part of the new Center. The long term success of the Center will depend upon strong collaborations with people and organizations that focus on diversity. Bringing current organizations and people under the umbrella of the Center might unintentionally discourage these collaborations. This should be a key, ongoing discussion of the Center Advisory Board.

**Center Name:**
The name of the new Center is of critical importance. The name should convey the mission of the Center and the populations it will serve. Several key phrases and terms were suggested as possibilities to include in the name. These terms cross-cultural, identity, inclusion, advocacy, and intercultural should be considered in the name of the new Center. The Advisory Board should finalize the name of the new Center and may want to consider doing so in collaboration with the new Director.

**Conclusion:**
Efforts should be made to open the new Center as soon as possible, recognizing that some of the programs and activities of the Center will change over time. There was significant disagreement during the process about whether the Center was being developed too quickly and whether developing a Center in reaction to several public, negative campus events will have a detrimental effect on the success of the new Center. However, there are several reasons that the Task Force recommends that the development of the new Center continue to move ahead quickly.

First, there is a strong and significant interest among the students and leadership of the University for such a Center. Second, in reviewing other successful models of campus culture centers, it was clear that many were created from times of campus or community crisis. Most of these centers are thriving. Finally, it seems clear that a new Center and its associated staff and programs will have an immediate, positive effect on the Washington University community, enhancing current programs and strengthening others. The Task Force enthusiastically recommends the creation of a new Center in 2014, and encourages University leadership and the Advisory Board to consider the recommendations of this report related to the mission of the new Center.
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