



COMMISSION<sub>ON</sub>  
DIVERSITY<sub>AND</sub>  
INCLUSION

# Honors & Recognition Report

Submitted to:  
Chancellor Mark S. Wrighton  
Provost Holden Thorp

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May 4, 2016

# Recommendations for University-Wide Honors & Recognition

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Last year the Chancellor and Provost charged the Commission on Diversity & Inclusion with making recommendations to implement a twelve-point action plan designed to make Washington University in St. Louis a more diverse and inclusive community. The Commission in turn requested a working group explore and consider how to best implement action item number 10: “The university will recognize and honor individuals and/or groups who have advanced diversity and inclusion...” In consultation with this working group, the Commission on Diversity & Inclusion makes the following recommendations. In addition, please refer to Report 10: Academy for Diversity and Inclusion, which the Commission recommends will house the Honor and Recognition initiatives.

## BACKGROUND

Transforming a culture and climate is among the most challenging work there is. It does not and cannot happen without the vision, energy, and commitment of many individuals. University awards and recognition offer opportunities to honor members of our community who do the hard-daily work of moving the university closer to the community we aspire to be. In the case of diversity and inclusion, formal and regular recognition of individuals and groups honors the work itself while reinforcing the institutional value. It offers important moments to reflect on progress in equity and inclusion, while also soberly assessing ongoing challenges and obstacles.

In addition to recognizing the efforts and value of individuals, awards and recognition also offer opportunities to seed the future. In the instance of diversity and inclusion work, this need to invest in the university’s future is especially acute. Often awards and

their accompanying ceremonies are associated with a sense of finality, i.e., culmination of effort. Diversity and inclusion awards in particular can risk the appearance of institutions’ being self-congratulatory and rewarding themselves, rather than being self-reflective and actually investing in the hard work of becoming fully inclusive.

When crafted intentionally and strategically, awards and recognition offer a significant institutional opportunity to honor transformative work while creating a continuing infrastructure and investing in the future. For instance, awards need not be limited to recognizing the individual recipient. Rather, they can be structured to acknowledge and reward the networks and institutions that sponsored the person and their diversity and inclusion work.

Relatedly, awards can be structured to invest in the future, with an eye toward not only what the individual has done

but what they will do. We understand this is a balance. On the one hand, people often have distinct moments to shine, and awards should honor those. At the same time, receiving an award may be only the beginning, and not the culmination or end, of individuals’ work in diversity and inclusion. We encourage the awards to be designed to flexibly provide support to some whose work will continue at the university. In this sense, we conceive of the awards as akin to the Rhodes Scholarships—not only do they honor what individuals have accomplished, they express faith in and invest in the recipients’ future.

Finally, recognition can be designed in such a way that it builds community; inspires energy; and sparks new networking and collaborations. We encourage that the awards be active and interactive. We elaborate how to facilitate this “active” understanding of recognition through a recommendation for summits to accompany awards ceremonies every 2-3 years.

## RECOMMENDATION #1

- We recommend that the university create annual awards to recognize those who have made significant contributions to diversity and inclusion, broadly conceived.
- We recommend that the recognition include a cash prize of \$3,000 and that all awardees, students, staff, and faculty members receive the same prize amount.
- We recommend that the university also invest in the networks and institutions that nourished the individual and made their work possible through a supplemental \$2,000 prize. This supplemental prize is a crucial way of using awards and recognition to invest in the future networks and infrastructure that will support the work.
  - There are different models of conceiving such a supplemental prize, including the selection committee making the determination; empowering the awardees to select the group they want to receive the prize money; or some hybrid model. We encourage the group charged with administering the awards consider and clarify this.
  - We also recommend that groups that receive a supplemental prize report on outcomes at future “summits,” explained below.
- We recommend that, in addition to individuals, groups also be considered for awards. These could be student groups; staff or faculty affinity or other groups; or academic or other university units. (We note as an example that the university’s Office of Supplier Diversity, within Resource Management, has won awards for its work in St. Louis and the region.)
- We recommend that every 2-3 years a summit be convened to coincide with the awards. The summit should function as a kind of Reunion, which invites the current awardees as well as all past award recipients to build community and celebrate their collective accomplishments. Equally importantly, the summit can provide a place of critical, focused reflection on both individual and institutional work and challenges. In particular, previous awardees can report back on new achievements and ongoing efforts and groups that received supplemental prize money can report on outcomes. We conceive it as a place of celebration, reflection and meditation, and reenergizing of efforts and spirit. To facilitate these goals, the university should consider empowering the former awardees to select a keynote speaker for the summit.
- We recommend the awards be designed creatively, expansively, and flexibly. For instance, in lieu of a stable set of “static” annual awards, the selection committee might be charged in any given year to determine what kinds of work and individuals to honor. The goal is to recognize and honor different ways of doing diversity work.
  - A possibility is to conceive the awards as a “portfolio,” akin to NIH grants. In this vision, some diversity and inclusion awards would recognize significant accomplishments (akin to an NIH R01) while others might recognize high-risk/high yield work (akin to an NIH R21).
- We recommend inviting award recipients to join a “bureau.” Another way of investing in the future is to create an institutional knowledge base. The university can publicize awardees’ work and showcase them as resources for others engaged in diversity and inclusion work and the campus community as a whole, as well as interested stakeholders beyond the university.
  - The “bureau” list can be housed on the university’s diversity website.
- We recommend that the awards come from the Chancellor’s Office. This reinforces diversity and inclusion as an institutional value, commitment, and priority.
  - The recipients will represent a significant base of knowledge about the university and our challenges and opportunities. Accordingly, we should explore a breakfast or luncheon with the awardees and the Chancellor and potentially the Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor for Administration, as well. The goals of the breakfast/luncheon should be not only celebratory and commemorative, but also to actively learn from the diversity and inclusion work undergirding the recognition.
  - We recommend that the Chancellor appoint a selection committee to recommend the award recipients.
  - We stress that the selection committee should include broad participation by staff; undergraduate, graduate, and professional students; and faculty members. In particular, we encourage that staff who do not work in student-facing roles or academic units be given the opportunity to participate as part of the selection process.

- Distinct from the selection committee, we recommend that a small group be charged with primary responsibility for overseeing the awards, including their finalized design (including name), implementation, and annual logistics and planning. This oversight group would also convene the summits.
  - This oversight group could logically include the Center for Diversity & Inclusion, the Diversity Affairs Council of the Student Union, the Danforth Staff Council, and a new institutional unit housing and coordinating campus-wide diversity and inclusion efforts, currently being conceptualized by Human Resources and the Commission.
  - Other key partners include Public Affairs, Human Resources, and potentially a representative from the Office of the Provost.
  - We urge the oversight committee to think creatively and expansively about how to design the awards process to catalyze maximum participation by the campus community and maximum impact at the university and beyond.
  - We strongly encourage the oversight and planning committees to find creative ways to engage the campus community in the selection process.
  - We strongly encourage the senior administration identify and eliminate barriers preventing staff from participating on the selection committee, with especial attention to both exempt and non-exempt employees.
- We recommend the oversight committee consider whether the awards should be named. Naming has the advantage of honoring pioneers and heroes in our community. At the same time, naming sometimes limits our vision about the future, unintentionally foreclosing new modes of envisioning, doing, and recognizing diversity and inclusion work. Not naming the awards also leaves open the possibility of their being endowed in the

future.

## OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

- The oversight group should explore whether the awards will recognize diversity and inclusion work within the university community, or also work done in the St. Louis community and beyond.
- The oversight group should be charged with finding the right name for the annual awards and recognition event and intermittent summits.
- We encourage the oversight group to focus on how to best structure the selection committee. One possibility is to invite staff and faculty members to serve three-year terms, staggered to preserve institutional and administrative knowledge expertise. The group should give thought as to whether students should be invited for one or two-year terms.
- The oversight committee should consider whether, once nominated, people can be invited to remain on a nomination list for a period of years, should they not receive a reward after their initial nomination.
- The university should explore other opportunities to honor the awardees, e.g., by recognizing them during Staff Day, MLK Day, or student orientations.
- We encourage the oversight committee to explore creative ways to learn from nominees who do not receive awards. Engaging with their work and its impact can help the university learn more about our challenges, what we should be supporting, and what we can do better.
- The oversight committee should explore and make transparent any impact the prizemoney might have on student financial aid or graduate student stipends.
- The university should take appropriate steps to vet all recipients, including their academic or employment good standing and that they are not in violation of any of the Washington University Codes of Conduct.

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## RECOMMENDATION #2

Most members of our community will not receive a formal award for their work in diversity and inclusion. Yet, many will do small acts of advocacy, service, or what our students call “allyship,” e.g., when members of majority groups question or reject privilege or oppression. This daily diversity work and advocacy can be the most powerful in transforming institutional culture. And for those who feel marginalized or

are victims of bias or harassment, allyship and activism can be especially meaningful.

- We recommend that the university explore ways to recognize this daily work that is essential to transforming our culture. Key partners in this consideration include the Center for Diversity & Inclusion, the Danforth Staff Council, Human Resources, and Public Affairs.

### RECOMMENDATION #3

Since launching [The Source](#) in February 2016, Public Affairs has intentionally and consistently showcased diversity and inclusion at the Washington University in St. Louis. We commend this effort and encourage Public Affairs to continue this work and, in particular, to find ways to showcase allyship and advocacy, in keeping with Recommendation #2.

#### HONORS AND RECOGNITION WORKING GROUP

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To view the full report click [here](#);  
to view the Executive Summary of the report, click [here](#).