



COMMISSION_{ON}
DIVERSITY_{AND}
INCLUSION

Chief Diversity Officer Report

Submitted to:
Chancellor Mark S. Wrighton
Provost Holden Thorp

February 12, 2017

Recommendations for Chief Diversity Officer

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“Diversity strengthens our sense of community, and is vital to our knowledge creation, problem solving and productivity — all of which are essential to our mission as a world-class university. Enhancing our diversity, while making Washington University a more inclusive place, is not an option. It is an imperative. This is one of our deepest values and highest priorities.”

Chancellor Mark Wrighton

BACKGROUND

Several key factors are integral in the successful execution of Washington University in St. Louis strategic initiatives on diversity and inclusion. Foremost among them is creating an administrative structure that ensures assessment and evaluation of the

strategic initiatives, with accountability that diversity and inclusion goals are being achieved. The Commission explored several options that could achieve those aims, including hiring a Chief Diversity Officer (CDO). Over the past year the Commission met with several leading Chief Diversity

Officers in academia and industry. They included the CDOs at University of Wisconsin, Vanderbilt, University of California, Los Angeles, and Edward Jones. While these institutions varied in size, mission, and, among the universities, as public or private, they shared common themes:

1. Chief diversity officers will only succeed in environments that actively embrace diversity, inclusion, and equity. That engagement should be at the highest level of management down to line-level staff.
2. Periodic assessments of the campus cultural climate are needed to inform and guide the CDO.
3. Chief Diversity Officers should be granted the authority and the requisite staff and financial resources to conduct their work. They should be change agents and effective leaders who can inspire our community and lead it through change.
4. Infrastructure for evaluation and assessment should be built into the office functions and should guide the allocation and deployment of office resources.

Diversity and inclusion efforts at the University have benefitted from a period of both renewed excitement and high expectations. The events in Ferguson, Missouri in 2014 served as a catalyst for increased diversity hiring and retention programs throughout the University, as well as school-wide cultural awareness training. The University was uniquely positioned to build on the successful efforts of the Vice Provost for Faculty Advancement and Institutional Diversity, as well as increased high-level strategic planning

to advance diversity and inclusion on the medical campus and Danforth campus. While there is remarkable energy, activity, and accomplishments on all campuses, the organic nature of diversity and inclusion activities has resulted in some replication in practices across the University. For instance, many units offer diversity and inclusion training or are negotiating ads with the same publications. Coordination of diversity efforts across schools, divisions and central fiscal units, consolidation of some practices to

reduce financial outlay, and a need for centralization to promote assessment and evaluation of diversity efforts: these are vital elements of diversity strategic planning and are in need of improvement on our campus. The Commission subsequently decided to explore the benefits and limitations of hiring a Chief Diversity Officer, in comparison to allowing diversity and inclusion efforts to continue in the currently decentralized manner.

ANALYSIS

A Chief Diversity Officer is the personification of an institution's mission, vision, values, priorities, and commitment to diversity and inclusion. The Chief Diversity Officer is responsible for the leadership, coordination and execution of the University's strategic diversity initiatives and multi-disciplinary diversity programs. The CDO articulates the core beliefs of the institution, embodies the diversity of voices on campus, and adds value to the institution by leveraging the breadth of diversity to create a cohesive and coherent approach to problem solving and institutional advancement. The CDO works assiduously with internal and external community stakeholders, including students, faculty and staff members, to ensure that diversity and inclusion organizational priorities and goals are institutionalized, evaluated and sustained. The CDO is able to identify structural barriers that impede creation of a culturally diverse academic environment while providing the creativity and innovation needed to facilitate institutional and structural change.

A CDO's role should transcend the role of campus enforcer of diversity and inclusion policies. Instead, the CDO should serve as a dispassionate source of support for all constituents, should actively combat all forms of discrimination, and should create and support programs that mitigate conscious and unconscious bias while creating a safe space for learners. A CDO does not stifle the creative spirit and innovation that arises from small groups taking the initiative to develop new programs and initiatives. Instead, they foster collaboration across the University, highlight the best practices that promote an inclusive environment, and institutionalize diversity practices that have been proven effective. In

the decentralized, highly-matrixed environment of most academic institutions, the CDO both respects the autonomy of constituent units and engenders an atmosphere of trust that moves units to coordinate and collaborate for the common good of the institution.

A CDO must be recognized as an authority within the University and must be granted the requisite staff and financial support to execute the office's strategic directives. Where the CDO resides in the institution's governance structure is a major determinant of their effectiveness. In order to ensure accountability in the office, the preference is to have the CDO report directly to the Chancellor. The expectation is that there will be a strong working relationship with the Executive Vice Chancellors, which would further facilitate accountability, empowerment, and successful collaboration. Accountability within the Office of the CDO can also be assured through the rigorous and regular assessment called for by the Scorecard Report (see Report 18). Indeed, accountability should be the bedrock of an effective diversity and inclusion office – if we are to advocate for the innovation and creative disruption needed to advance the University then we need to have appropriate measures to document what works, and, equally importantly, what does not. Continuous quality improvement should be infused in all aspects of the CDO office.

In summary, the CDO should be bold and innovative, yet collaborative and supportive of ongoing diversity initiatives. At the University, a CDO could provide a critique and conduct a gap analysis of University efforts related to increasing and managing diversity and inclusion. That will include building on the success of current initiatives, facilitating discussions around areas of

need, and marshalling the resources needed to ensure diversity initiatives are moving in tandem and not at cross purposes. The key skill sets of a CDO include:

- a. **Champion and steward of inclusion efforts;**
- b. **An innovative, creative mind;**
- c. **Flexible, collaborative leadership style;**
- d. **Facilitator of institutional and structural change;**
- e. **A keen analytical mind, ability to conduct assessment and evaluation; and**
- f. **Well respected as a coordinator and convener.**

The CDO should augment and advance current diversity initiatives, thus he/she should be familiar with the operations of a complex, decentralized and highly matrixed environment. The CDO should provide a seamless interface with the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty Advancement and Institutional Diversity as well as diversity offices in schools and divisions, and central fiscal units on the Danforth and Medical campuses. The CDO should serve as the Chancellor's agent for diversity and inclusion, while maintaining a dotted line reporting relationship with the Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor for Administration. Having the CDO in the senior administration will provide the office the visibility, authority, and control needed to execute the University's strategic goals. For these and other reasons, the CDO should be afforded a title that conveys he/she is more than simply a resource on matters of diversity but represents a fundamental connection between diversity and inclusion and academic excellence.

The Diversity Commission is aware of the limitations of hiring a CDO, namely:

1. Hiring a CDO could have the adverse effect of stifling the creativity and excitement of diversity initiatives across the University as units become unclear of whether their activities will be supported.
2. The position of CDO could place the full burden of diversity and inclusion on the shoulders of one person, who would not have the power to hire faculty members but would ostensibly be considered the responsible person in the absence of progress on diversity.
3. Likewise, the institution could feel “relieved” after investing in a CDO and may move slower in securing additional resource commitments needed to advance diversity.
4. The CDO would be perceived as a campus police officer.
5. The CDO would be perceived as the campus affirmative action officer.

The Commission also noted that recent new developments, such as the Center for Diversity and Inclusion and the proposed Diversity and Inclusion Academy, will fulfill a vital role in supporting the University’s diversity initiatives and may reduce the urgency in hiring a CDO. Efforts should be made to ensure regular communication and collaboration between these offices and the Vice Provost for Faculty Advancement and Institutional Diversity.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the above analysis, the Commission believes that before a recommendation can be made on hiring a CDO, the current diversity and inclusion activities on campus should be critically evaluated to ascertain their impact on campus climate. It is entirely possible that the current and proposed infrastructure for diversity and inclusion may continue to yield gains in diversity outcomes independent of a CDO. Therefore, we recommend:

1. An external diversity and inclusion review board should be empaneled to conduct an analysis of current diversity and inclusion practices and programs, with periodic assessments every five years.
2. A diversity scorecard with agreed upon milestones should be developed to aide in benchmarking, along with marketing effective diversity initiatives.
3. There should be appropriate resource allocation to execute the above recommendations.

Irrespective of whether a CDO is hired at the Washington University in St. Louis, the Commission supports centralizing key components of our diversity efforts as statement of our values as an institution and an assurance that we will be held accountable as we advance our strategic goals for diversity and inclusion.

THE CHIEF DIVERSITY OFFICER EFFORT WAS LED BY THE FOLLOWING COMMISSION MEMBERS:

Yoon Groves

Associate Director for Advising and Student Affairs, Olin Business School

Will Ross

Associate Dean for Diversity; Professor of Medicine, School of Medicine

Anthony Tillman

Assistant Provost for Student Success, Office of the ProvostMedicine, School of Medicine

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