

## AAAC Meeting Minutes for March 20, 2020

AAAC members present: Michael Hess, Rebekah Modrak, William Schultz, Priti Shah, Kanakadurga Singer, Kentaro Toyama (chair).

Absent: Ketra Armstrong, Lola Eniola-Adefeso, Elena Gallo (SACUA liaison), Enrico Landi, Chris Liu, Michael Mendez (graduate student representative), Elissa Patterson, Chitra Subramanian, Hsiao Hsin Sung Hsieh, Sergio Villalobos Ruminott, Adam Zhu (CSG undergraduate representative).

This meeting was held entirely online on BlueJeans, due to COVID-19-related social distancing policies.

From 8-8:30am, the committee approved minutes of the January and February, 2020 meetings and discussed a number of issues. There was general discussion of the impact of the coronavirus on committee members and on university operations. It was noted that Zoom appeared to be better able to handle multi-party interactions online than BlueJeans.

The committee also discussed hiring policies for university Executive Officers (EO). One member noted that President Schlissel was the chair of the search committee for former Provost Philbert. Several suggestions were considered: That the hiring manager for an EO position should not be on the search committee; that the hiring manager should not be the search committee chair; that there should be restrictions on the number of EOs who are on an EO search committee; that there should be student representation on the search committees.

From 8:30-9:45am, Chief Diversity Officer Rob Sellers joined the meeting to discuss how the university's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) work was proceeding.

- Q: Has there been any coronavirus-related activity relevant to DEI?
  - RS: President Schlissel reached out to some Asian faculty and student groups.
- One AAAC member had two Chinese graduate students who experienced hate-related experiences.
  - RS: Student Life has a bias incident reporting mechanism that has been revamped recently in light of recent lawsuit. Student Life's only goal is to provide services and support to students who have experienced bias.
- CDO Sellers then gave a 45-minute update presentation on U-M's DEI efforts. Much of that content can be found on this website: <https://diversity.umich.edu/strategic-plan/>. Below are some of the notable points.
  - The Office of DEI is focused on *long-term sustainable cultural change*.
  - Every major unit/center has DEI plans – 50 plans total. And, there's a university-level central plan. Each of these plans has associated action items with measurable outcomes, all tracked publicly online.
  - There has been measurable progress on all five levers of change (e.g., raise institutional awareness, enhance capabilities). Some of it has been rapid...
    - Almost everyone on campus now knows what "DEI" stands for.
    - Student demographics improving for Latinx, Pell Grant recipients, and URM overall.
    - In surveys about climate/process, perceived commitment to DEI appears to have gone up from 2017 to 2019.

- But, still a long way to go. E.g., but African-American student enrollment has been flat.
- Q: Is university listening to Detroit community's criticism regarding planned investment in Detroit Innovation Center?
  - RS: That project is beyond scope of ODEI, but the university has heard the feedback. The project itself could have been framed better in the context of other U-M activities in Detroit, many of which work in close partnership with local communities.
- Q: What is Wolverine Pathways' (WP) connection to the Center for Educational Outreach (CEO) and School of Education (SOE)?
  - RS: CEO and WP are both projects out of ODEI. Director of WP is SOE faculty; current Dean of SOE and other faculty are involved in founding of WP. Wolverine Express is designed for faculty to go to different schools. Slightly different mission for WP. But, it is integrated with Office of Academic Multicultural Initiatives. Wolverine Pathways participants are automatically enrolled in SuccessConnects program.
- Q: To what extent is political diversity under consideration? How problematic might it be, when some political views might be against DEI efforts?
  - RS: We're not meaning to be political. It's a strategy to be the best institution we can. Lots of data demonstrate that having different perspectives leads to more and more successful solutions. We've invited panelists who didn't have a supportive view of DEI, but they have either declined or not able to attend. I'm open to that conversation, and think that should be a vibrant area of discussion. But, it should be based on our goal; not on what is believed to the goal.

From 9:45-10am, the committee met with Professor John Cheney-Lippold, who had been sanctioned first for not writing a recommendation letter for a student (for personal political reasons), and later for unprofessional conduct for speaking out about the incident. AAAC members had several concerns with the way the situation was handled by the university, including the potential chilling of academic freedom, a possible misapplication of due process, seemingly broad invocation of SPG 201.96, and the possible impinging of political or donor concerns on academic freedom.