

Academic Affairs Advisory Committee (AAAC) Minutes

January 20, 2021
8:00 am – 9:30 am
Zoom

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Attending: Kanakadurga Singer (Chair), John Pasquale, Mark Rosentraub, Annalisa Manera, Rachel Goldman, Rebekah Modrak, Michael Hess, William Schultz, Lola Eniola-Adefeso, Sergio Villalbos Rminott

Absent: Chitra Subramanian, Priti Shah

Guests: Provost Susan Collins, Christine Gerdes, Special Counsel to the Provost, Sara Blair, Vice Provost for Academic and Faculty Affairs

8:03 Chair Singer called the meeting to order.

Provost Collins welcomed the group.

Sara Blair introduced herself. She would like to hear from faculty throughout the university.

Anti-Racism Initiatives

2 things to update the group on

1. launched task force on advancing public safety
2. faculty cluster hire – Sara Blair is the lead

Initiatives began over the summer focused on anti-racism.

Concerns around policing nationally – first week in January she and Schlissel charged the task force They are getting started in their work – This is a large committee with members recommended from SACUA and other recommendations. About 20 people are on this committee.

Intent is to be transparent and inclusive.

The committee is diverse in race/ethnicity and members are from students, faculty, staff, and parents.

The focus currently – trying to understand what is going well in terms of public safety on campus and what can be improved.

Evaluating the history of public safety on campus is in process. Updates won't be available until February.

Sergio – question – are graduate students included? Collins responded - Yes group is charged with gathering as much input as possible. They reached out to a variety of constituents with a variety of opinions and concerns.

Durga – what is the timeline? Report is due by the end of the semester. The first phase is discovery – gathering information. They will share what is going well and what is not.

The charge includes the timeline: link provided in chat

<https://www.provost.umich.edu/anti-racism/CampusSafetyTaskforce-1.4.2021.pdf>

They just started two weeks ago and should be ready to reach out to people in February.

8:14 Cluster Hires Discussion

Provost Collins introduced this topic. This initiative is to bring together at least 20 faculty who work on anti-racism and connect with existing faculty to build synergies and strength. There is a wide range of potential topics. Sara is chairing the selection committee. The med school is also a part of this with hiring additional slots.

Broader goal – a lot of faculty are already doing impactful work in this space. They want to shine a light on those people as well.

Sara Blair 8:16

This is in process and she would welcome thoughts and observations. Selection committee – of 12 members from across the university representing many schools and colleges They bring different and interdisciplinary expertise to the work. A description of the hiring criteria and the guidelines for submitting a proposal are available. They are working to be very transparent.

The kind of areas they might expect health and equities, and educational disparities, environmental justice, though there are examples the scope is not limited.

Energy and attention of deans will be needed as well as some financial support. The work of faculty who are engaged as scholars with these matters is fundamental to the success of the hires.

<https://www.provost.umich.edu/nav/anti-racism.html>

8:25 Questions:

AAAC members brought up the importance of using the faculty network that already exists and engaging them as a community so that the new scholars can join this community. It was also brought up that there have been previous cluster hires and that it would be important to look at lessons learned from this and how faculty were able to engage with senior faculty.

Provost Collins mentioned that they are looking at recent cluster hires. This is the first round, and they are expecting to learn a lot. The second round will build on lessons learned from the first round.

Modrak – brought up an essay by a dean at UICC – they had a cluster hire to show investment in anti-racist activities. The faculty hires fell apart and many hires left because the university showed in other ways that they were not ready to bring the faculty on board. Discussed that targeted hires may experience bias.

Provost Collins agreed that retention is very important and faculty need to feel like part of the community.

Lola – climate experience and behaviors are still important to address

Provost Collins mentioned that ODEI is working enhancing training with faculty and staff to address bias issues. All schools and colleges are also asked to look at curriculum

8:43 Faculty Experience During COVID

Provost Collins brought up challenges faculty are having in the COVID context. The University has been working to support families with care.com membership but there is also a need to think about how we review faculty, and particularly jr faculty and faculty with annual reviews.

8:44 Sara – Sarah presented slides -

General Principle - How do we ensure we don't forget COVID impact in future review.

Impact statements – should they be offered to external reviewers? They should be objective

Comments from AAAC included discussion of the extra burdens of faculty in teaching and responsibility of students. Administration needs to acknowledge these extra efforts. There was also a discussion about who these statements should come from in terms of provost, chair, or individual faculty.

Lola – there may need to be two or three layers of statements – there could be a statement in a college that does not have individual names in it. There may need to be standard language from the provost's office. Not all institutions had the same impacts. She noted that impacts that women have faced in COVID. A female candidate may not feel comfortable putting this in a statement.

Provost left at 9:00

WilmerHale

David Potter introduced the members of the WilmerHale Task Force.

David Potter

Elizabeth Armstrong

Deirdre Spencer

Rachel Goldman

Kentaro – introduced himself

Discussion focused on structural issues connected with how Martin Philbert became provost. They are looking at alternative structures could be used to address the systemic failure that allowed Philbert to be appointed as provost. They have noted the absence of any external group – so that a person who feels that they cannot make a report can. They have looked at the uneven application of rules across units. This bears on OIE cases which seems to be handled different depending on who is in charge. An external body may be able to play a role in this situation.

Durga and John Pasquale discussed that at a recent COAA meeting they met with the chair of the Administration Evaluation committee, Keith Riles.

9:59 Guest left the meeting.