
METROPOLITAN STATE UNIVERSITY of DENVER
BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Sustained Racial Justice Committee Meeting Minutes

Thursday, March 17, 2022

I. CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order at 4:02 p.m. by Sustained Racial Justice Committee Co-Chair, Mario Carrera.

Board of Trustees Present:

Trustee Barb Grogan, Trustee Russell Noles, Trustee Marissa Molina, Trustee Albus Brooks, Trustee Mario Carrera, Trustee Emily Garnett, Trustee Kristin Hultquist, Trustee Mike Johnston, Trustee Mike Kopp, Faculty Trustee Bethany Fleck, Alumni Representative Jim Qualteri, and Student Trustee Savannah Martel.

MSU Denver Personnel Present:

Janine Davidson, President; Alfred Tatum, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs; Will Simpkins, Vice President for Student Affairs; Deputy General Counsel Nicholas Stancil; George Middlemist, Associate Vice President of Administration and CFO, Ann Murphy, Dean, College of Business; Cipriana Patterson, Deputy Budget Director; Liza Larsen, Controller; Elizabeth Hinde, Dean, School of Education; and other various staff members.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

A **motion** was made by Trustee Carrera to approve the January 27, 2022 Sustained Racial Justice Committee minutes and was seconded by Trustee Hultquist. The motion was unanimously **approved**.

III. DISCUSSION ITEMS:

- A. Diversity Strategic Plan –** Michael Benitez, Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion and Dr. Chalane Lechuga, Director of Faculty Diversity Research and Development and Associate Professor, Chicana/o Studies Department

Dr. Michael Benitez and Dr. Chalane Lechuga presented the next iteration of the Diversity Strategic Plan by way of Pillar IV.

The process of assembling the Diversity Strategic Plan involves time spent listening to assure buy-in throughout the process. Many different campus members, alongside community members worked to begin to operationalize and concretize Pillar 4 of the University's Strategic Plan through a Diversity Strategic Plan that is directly tied to the three goals of the University Strategic Plan. The plan offers areas that are eventually going to inform the ways in which we equity gaps are identified, the establishment of priorities, and the manner in which the Dashboard is focused.

Three major goals were identified in Pillar 4 as areas of focus.

Goal 1 promotes thinking intentionally about cultivation and sustainability around a culture of inclusivity, intersectional teaching, learning and practice.

Goal 2 encourages thinking about the ways in which the campus community might serve as a space of convening, for healing and mending with diverse communities but also the broader communities which MSU Denver serves.

Goal 3 is to continue to work towards becoming a model HSI institution for higher education.

In collaboration with the Bridge Program, MSU Denver secured a \$1 million NSF grant to support the STEM fields in some of the University's pipeline programs.

Three standalone focal areas include these committees:

- Campus Climate Cultivation
- Community Connections and Engagement; and
- HSI Synergy and Integration.

There are two subcommittees:

1. Recruitment and Retention of Faculty and Staff -- under the Diversity Equity and Inclusion Council, led by Dr. Lechuga with some faculty and HR personnel; and
2. Recruitment, Retention, and Success of Students which is co-led by Dr. Baron.

The HSI Synergy and Integration Committee in particular has seen quite a bit of turnover and many new faces.

The DEIC met with various constituencies, considered different data points from a variety of documents, held interviews, and met with many groups, to inform the following four cross-functional elements:

1. The first, Inclusivity and Campus Climate Cultivation, ties directly to a Pillar I, Goal 1, to intentionally foster and sustain a welcoming and diverse university community that strives for structural diversity and belongingness and cultivates, nurtures, and sustains a culture of inclusive teaching, learning, and practice.
2. The second is Recruitment, Retention and Success.
3. Third is HSI Servingness.
4. The fourth is Goal 3 on Pillar 4 of the University's Strategic Plan, Community Connections and Engagement. Ample faculty and staff are doing phenomenal work in the community, and students are also highly engaged in the community. This element really focuses on developing strength and making and mending relationships with the diverse constituencies from Denver and the broader communities. This is very important to the University's mission to continuously serve the communities in which it is anchored and situated.

Under Goal 1 are the objectives to collaborate with administrative and academic units to assure that inclusion and access are practices that are being integrated into everyone's goals and align with the University's priorities; that we actively engage in the ongoing assessment of campus climate and culture to identify and address areas for improvement, dissemination, and communication by way of the findings. Results of the Campus Climate Survey will be released

soon. Faculty Fellows are working on a qualitative analysis and should have a draft that will accompany it.

To analyze data-driven and evidence-based recommendations and truly develop and implement appropriate actions with campus stakeholders.

Dr. Benitez attends meetings of the National Association for Diversity Officers in Higher Ed. He said to be mindful of institutions claiming they are evidence-based and data-based and data-driven, and that it is important for this University to ask, as an aspiring anti-racist institution, What does it mean for institutions to actually lean on the data that claims what works, what doesn't work, and what needs to happen in order to keep things going, and what does practicing that look like?

The role of ACUE is to engage and prepare our faculty for inclusive teaching and teaching excellence. This is incredibly important, given that MSU Denver is an institution that purports to meet its students where they're at. Dr. Benitez asked what that looks like and what does it mean? The ACUE collaboration has been going very well. In the first cohort, 27 faculty members participated: 18 women and nine men. Race and ethnicity were not specified. There were 11 members from CLAS, three faculty members from the College of Business, nine members from CHAS, two members from the School of Hospitality, and one member from the School of Ed, indicating that faculty across all the disciplines, colleges, and schools are engaged in this process.

The Teacher Assistants Program is underway. Most institutions already have a Teacher Assistants Program. MSU Denver is had an opportunity to actually implement this program with an equity lens. After one or two years of data, when you use an equity lens, it works. The total TA Course student percentage by race and ethnicity indicates that 50% of the students benefiting from taking a course with a TA are students of color. Nearly 46% of the Teacher Assistants are students of color. Experience shows that this opens many opportunities for academic excellence, for students pursuing education beyond their bachelor's degree into a master's or doctoral program, and that this better prepares them to enter the workforce with the skillsets required by industry.

Dr. Lechuga is a faculty member who is in the ACUE cohort. She said that she can attest to the benefits directly and personally, of each of the elements enumerated by Dr. Benitez.

Some of the work being done under Objective 3, Goal 1 is around acknowledging and addressing equity and accountability gaps in policy and practice. Dr. Lechuga is a member of the Faculty Diversity Resolution Task Force, along with Faculty Trustee Bethany Fleck. This Task Force is investigating ways to create programs that address these issues, as well as policies and practices. It is still very much in the origination phase of the work.

The Wilton Flemon Postdoctoral Fellowship was born out of the vision of Dr. Wilton Flemon many years ago and is a program designed to bring promising recent Ph.D.'s into MSU Denver to provide an opportunity to gain experience in teaching and advising students, as well as time to build out their scholarship portfolio so that they can be competitive for tenure-track positions.

This program includes a set of comprehensive detailed guidelines written on equity and is on its way to being considered under the Faculty Handbook process and ultimately instituted into the institution via the Faculty Handbook.

Five Faculty Fellows have been brought on to help extend the reach of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion. They are embedded in the five colleges and schools across campus, doing equity work and informing equity work in a liaison role. Two specific Fellows are working on the analysis of the Campus Climate Survey. Another is doing faculty development work, and two other faculty members are looking at promising practices for the recruitment of diverse faculty in the Schools of Business and Hospitality.

Goal 2 has five objectives:

1. Develop comprehensive recruitment and retention strategies to diversify MSU Denver faculty and staff; create opportunities for retention and success so that the cultivation element of equity work is not lost.
2. Utilize data tracking in respect to diversity and understand the data across Classified and Non-Classified staff, employees, and faculty at all Category Levels 1, 2, and 3.
3. Provide institutional resources and support for the retention and promotion of diverse faculty and staff.
4. Provide opportunities for professional development to faculty and staff.
5. Provide the resources necessary to develop the academic and support services to address issues of access, persistence, and success among students of color.

Actions in Progress, Goal 2, Develop comprehensive recruitment and retention strategies to diversify MSU faculty and staff; create opportunities for retention and success

Meeting with academic departments in preparation for searches and to discuss ways to increase diversity in their hiring pools, which can come from identifying promising practices, as well as reviewing their job descriptions and making recommendations to them for revising them to increase the diversity in hiring pools.

Working with them to think about what it means to bring in candidates, but also how to ensure that they are retained.

Even at the point of thinking about putting together a search, also considering what the work looks like, how to put supports in place to support them when they come in the door, and a reminder that the search starts long before the job description is written by building relationships with institutions that produce large numbers of Ph.D.'s of color.

There is an emerging partnership with the College of Letters, Arts and Sciences and Dean Masserini. Meetings are scheduled with their CLAS DEI Committee, to work with them to help them think strategically about diverse faculty recruitment and retention.

In terms of utilizing data tracking, faculty demographic trends continue to be monitored. Tenure-track success rates are being monitored on an annual basis, and third-year review across the institution, going back to the cohort of faculty that came in in 2013, in partnership with the Office of the Provost and Bill Henry. Continuing to follow the data and review the trends and patterns to identify opportunities to increase retention of all faculty, specifically diverse faculty.

The Tenure Track Supper Club is a twice-a-semester professional development opportunity. Tenure-track faculty gain information on teaching practices and navigating the tenure track. This year, a BIPOC faculty affinity group has been added, and conversations with HR to support BIPOC affinity groups, to build community with one another and find opportunities to network.

The National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity is an annual membership which provides access to a 12-month curriculum designed to help faculty navigate the tenure track. They gain information such as learning to plan for a semester, strategically navigating service, organizing their calendars toward the department guidelines by which they will be assessed when it comes time for tenure consideration. Six faculty, two from the College of Business and one from each of the other colleges, are participating in a 12-month boot camp with individualized coaching, mentoring, peer reviewing, accountability, and software allowing them to track their scholarship, all in support of enhancing their scholarly production while allowing them concerted time to work on their scholarly production. The entire campus has access to the National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity curriculum.

Goal 3, related to HSI Servingness, has four objectives under the goal.

1. Inform policymakers and other stakeholders about HSI issues and advocate for enhanced funding, new initiatives, programs and services.

During HSI Week the good work that's being done on this is highlighted.

2. Maintain expertise about laws, legality, regulations, policies, and issues pertaining to HSI funding, programs, and designation, and any others that are going to impact MSU Denver or there are implications to be mindful about.

The campus sends representatives to Washington D.C. to the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities Capital Forums to meet with members of Congress in the state of Colorado to advocate HSI support, not only for the University, but for HSI work itself across all the different HSIs across the state.

The Higher Education Diversity Summit is coming up on April 7 and 8. The focus is critically leaning into HSI Servingness. There will be two keynote speakers, Dr. Darrel Wanzer-Serrano and Dr. Marla Franco, the leading scholar/practitioner in the nation around HSI.

3. Strengthen the process and criteria for identifying, reviewing and prioritizing HSI/MSI grants and provide support for the implementation of grants awarded over the last couple of years. We've received a number of grants.

There will be workshops that are student focused, and others that will focus on HSI from the standpoint of going after funding, writing grants, bringing resources together and sharing information among the three institutions on the Auraria Campus.

The Higher Education Diversity Summit is coming up; more information is forthcoming.

4. Research and benchmark HSI and MSI promising practices for consideration.

Around criteria are the identification and review and prioritization of HSI/MSI grants. PASADA is an alliance meant to support graduate STEM education (K-12) through ESCALA. Dr. Del Real is

working with a variety of institutions and people from across the state. This grant is for \$10 million.

The NSF STEM BUILD Program grant was recently received. Others include the NSA Department of Defense; the Learning Assistant Transfer Pathway; Cybersecurity; Space Tech Scholars Grant. These grants were received by paying attention and putting the resources in place and offering the development for grant writing

Goal 4, objectives to uncover and actively reconcile past and present injustices perpetuated by structural racism and other systemic inequities and who they impact; identify the inequities and barriers within our social and operational structures by engaging directly with the Denver Metro area and the broader communities; invest resources in and create sustainable infrastructure for the implementation of strategies around mending and creating positive impact, such as community wealth building or investing in and supporting local communities, and recognizing and responding to local issues to identify areas of ongoing cultivation and strengthening of Community Relations and mutuality; and then to ensure that we work with Mar Comm, so that marketing and any communication, from web presence to external relations, have a more inclusive, accessible, welcoming digital environment and tone for Denver and the broader communities.

In the 41-year history of the Noel Professorship there has never been a large number of students, especially underrepresented students of color, engaging with the University in project-based learning throughout the school year, beyond campus tours. Recently Denver Public Schools collaborated with MSU Denver to involve 100 students in Grades 8 through 11 in project-based learning. There's a great opportunity to build a relationship with DPS to continue to show that MSU Denver is the place for DPS to send their students and to become the college of choice for students of color in DPS and across the state.

Another priority is to become the college of choice for Black Coloradans, to really become the metaphorical HBCU, and that's going to require an understanding of what it means to support and to lead the work for Black students and for the Black community.

There have been partnerships with the Denver Metro Chamber Leadership Foundation Racial Voices, 9News, and with Su Teatro.

The Diversity Strategic Plan is rooted in the MSU Denver community. It was a two-year-long process during which the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee articulated, drafted, and reviewed the Strategic Plan. The work is the work of the larger community.

Ms. Brough stated that Christopher Pena, Director of Strategy, is working extremely hard to choose the right measures, metrics, and the right goals so that the University can be held accountable. DEI measures will be in every single pillar, and there will be accountability around outcomes of race, around the diversity of teams, and the work being done.

President Davidson said that many of these goals and objectives are called "stars to steer by" because some will never be reached. This work is continual and will always be happening. This makes it challenging to choose metrics that will allow us to understand whether what we are doing in different parts of our system, is having a cascading effect on change without saying "Okay, we're done, pack up our bags, DEI is finished. It's never going to be finished neither are our civic and economic catalysts.

Ms. Brough said that the goals and the metrics that would be tracked regularly to be able to report out to the Board and to the public are on the website. But the important thing is that the University wants to operationalize these things so that the entire organization is thinking about what they should be doing or not doing to better achieve and track toward the goal that's being measured.

Trustee Carrera said that metrics are critical in managing and moving forward. It may seem like a line that is over at infinity, where it can't be seen, but he said that his hope is that the University reaches the point where it does not even have to measure, that it dwells in a place that this does not even arise as a question. He said he is looking forward to the level of accountability and delivering precisely on the statements that the Trustees signed on to and specifically the Trustee statement made some time ago.

Trustee Molina said that UCD is also an HSI and that perhaps MSU Denver should be considering ways of serving the community in different ways, perhaps through research opportunities. Community members may not know that there is an entrepreneurial incubator open to the community, or about the credentialing and badges available at MSU Denver.

Dr. Benitez responded that the University has recently begun using HSI/MSI as opposed to just HSI so that we can the sort of minority-serving institution identity of who this institution is can be amplified. MSU Denver is very connected to community engagement. The intersection between that goal and the HSI goal is exactly what As Trustee Molina highlighted, not only with regard to credentialing and research opportunities, but the program with DPS: a door was opened for everyone in the community to come and see themselves here at MSU Denver and to truly create those partnerships. The next step is to determine how MSU Denver can envision an open border beyond the institution, taking its programming and resources out into the community.

Chair Noles reminded the group that it was only a year ago when this work began with a resolution from the Board of Trustees. It's important to stop and look at the progress made since then. The University now has a Diversity Strategic Plan that aligns with the University's Strategic Plan, has goals, has actions, and will soon have metrics and dashboards to track accountability.

IV. ADJOURNMENT:

A **motion** was made at 4:55 p.m. by Trustee Carrera to adjourn. The motion was **unanimously approved**.