

EMU

PRESIDENT'S COMMISSION ON
DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Preliminary Recommendations

**In Response to the
Commission Charge Issued by
Dr. James M. Smith, President,
Eastern Michigan University**

**Submitted
November 27, 2017**

President's Commission on Diversity and Inclusion

Preliminary Recommendations Executive Summary

In December 2016, Eastern Michigan University President James M. Smith appointed a thirteen member President's Commission on Diversity and Inclusion. The creation of the Commission came in the immediate aftermath of several recent stress points in EMU's path toward becoming an institution of inclusion and excellence. These include incidents of racial hate messaging on campus, protests over the pace of resolution regarding these instances, longer standing unresolved racial grievances, and the issuance of the *Black Student Ten Point Plan* in 2015. The Commission on Diversity and Inclusion is the most recent of multiple institution-wide efforts, dating back nearly fifty years, to address EMU's engagement with the challenge of racial equality imprinted on the nation's agenda by the Modern Civil Rights Movement of the 1950's and 1960's.

President Smith charged the Commission to:

- Provide recommendations to undertake systematic campus climate assessment, including a study on the campus racial climate;
- Identify existing programs and resources that have succeeded in strengthening a climate of respect and inclusiveness on our campus and other campuses; and
- Provide input, and make specific recommendations, to the President and to the campus community about campus climate and the means of creating a more inclusive culture.

The President's Commission on Diversity and Inclusion issues the following eight *Preliminary Recommendations* in response to this charge.

1. Biennial Campus Climate Assessment
2. Periodic Institutional Diversity Audit
3. Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion led by a Chief Diversity Officer Reporting Directly to the President
4. Comprehensive University Strategic Action Plan for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
4. Diversity Impact Analysis
6. Accountability Driven Performance Evaluation System

7. Curricular Improvement and Development

- Masters degree in Africology and African American Studies.
- General Education assessment of student learning outcomes for DEI.
- Inclusion of student representation in General Education Assessment.
- Required team-taught, interdisciplinary, interdepartmental undergraduate course on systemic and structural inequity.

8. Community Engagement and Transformation Study Group

In presenting these *Preliminary Recommendations*, the Commission addresses the components of the Black *Student Ten Point Plan* (See Appendix 1) through protocol and process recommendations, and as stand-alone propositions.

The President's Commission on Diversity and Inclusion presents below a more detailed delineation of the *Preliminary Recommendations*, and a process for receiving input from the campus and broader community on each of the eight recommendations.

President's Commission on Diversity and Inclusion Charge

President Smith tasked the Commission to:

- Provide recommendations to undertake systematic campus climate assessment, including a study on the campus racial climate;
- Identify existing programs and resources that have succeeded in strengthening a climate of respect and inclusiveness on our campus and other campuses; and
- Provide input, and make specific recommendations, to the President and to the campus community about campus climate and the means of creating a more inclusive culture.

Vision Statement – President's Commission on Diversity and Inclusion

In recommending a template to address this charge, and to achieve institutional excellence based upon diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) at Eastern Michigan University, the CDI envisions a university that:

- Ensures the well-being and empowers the voice of all members of the university community;
- Integrates diversity, equity and inclusion as a threaded strategic imperative of all dimensions of institutional excellence;
- Aligns policies, procedures and outcomes with official expressions of mission, goals and values;
- Eliminates process, structural and systemic barriers to achieving institutional diversity, equity and inclusion;
- Integrates the creative talents of the entire university community into university programming, decision-making, and operations;
- Implements a coordinated accountability driven, continuous improvement model of programming, staffing and operations; and
- Leverages its historical legacy, its geographic location in southeastern Michigan, and its institutional strengths to position itself for 21st Century leadership in transforming the region and the nation.

Definitions

For the purposes of these recommendations, the President's Commission on Diversity and Inclusion adopts the following operational definitions of diversity, equity and inclusion:

Diversity: Addresses and acknowledges individual differences such as personality and life experiences as well as group identities of race and ethnicity, gender and gender identity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, language, culture, national origin, religious beliefs and identity, age, disability status, and political perspective.

Equity: The purposeful creation of opportunities and resources to remediate the differential impact of policies, practices, and structures on diverse persons, promote justice, impartiality and fairness within the procedures, processes, and distribution of resources by the institution, and actively challenge and respond to bias, discrimination, and harassment.

Inclusion: Deliberate and intentional efforts to ensure a community where diverse individuals are able to participate fully in the decision-making processes, different perspectives are heard respectfully, and members have a sense of belonging.

Timetable and Mechanism for Providing Input on the President's Commission on Diversity and Inclusion Preliminary Recommendations

The Commission on Diversity and Inclusion will issue a final set of first year recommendations, together with a first year report, early in 2018. To inform its deliberations toward that final product, the President's Commission seeks the input of the campus community regarding its Preliminary Recommendations. It invites comment on this preliminary release through:

- Completing the CDI Preliminary Recommendations Survey Form at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Z5GKPPC>
- Attending one or more of the two face-to-face listening sessions, dates and times TBD.

The CDI also plans sessions with various groups on campus. To schedule a presentation by the Commission on Diversity and Inclusion, please contact CDI Vice Chair, Professor Dibya Choudhuri at dchoudhur@emich.edu

Preliminary Recommendations

The President's Commission on Diversity and Inclusion recommends that the Eastern Michigan University institute the following:

1. **A Biennial Campus Climate Assessment** developed by an external agency according to specified criteria and implemented through appropriate university offices as designated by the President. Administered on an ongoing basis, this assessment will use mixed methods to measure:

The atmosphere or ambience of Eastern Michigan University as perceived by the campus community, and as reflected in institutional structures, policies, and practices;

The attitudes and values of the campus community members and its leaders; and

The personal interactions and experiences, regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion, that reflect the level of personal safety, value, fairness and respect perceived by all sectors of the university community, i.e., students, faculty, staff, and administrators.

2. **A Periodic Institutional Diversity Audit**, administered by appropriate offices as designated by the President, to gather data on the diversity, equity and inclusion profile of all university programs, protocols, policies, facilities, students, and personnel. This data will be a first step in determining the impact of institutional inequity on all phases of university operations, and in developing a path forward toward comprehensive institutional excellence.

3. **The Creation of an Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion** led by a chief diversity officer reporting directly to the President and sitting as a member of the Executive Council. The office will have responsibility for coordinating diversity, equity and inclusion at Eastern Michigan University. This includes oversight of development and implementation of the *Comprehensive University Strategic Action Plan for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion*, per Preliminary Recommendation # 4.

DEI is a core plank of institutional excellence in higher education, as in any other complex organization. However, EMU has historically lacked an administrative structure to steward this overarching, cross-divisional strategic imperative.

The CDI recommends the immediate convening of a critical mass of university in-house expertise, to define the scope, responsibilities and operating parameters, and available resources of an Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, and its administrative head.

4. **A Comprehensive University Strategic Action Plan for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion**, informed by the data secured from the *Biennial Campus Climate Assessment* and the

Institutional Diversity Audit. The *Strategic Action Plan for DEI* will be developed through a process coordinated by the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in conjunction with appropriate administrative offices as designated by the President. The plan will include metrics by which to evaluate success in achieving designated DEI goals, as reflected in periodic audits and assessments.

5. Diversity Impact Analysis will demonstrate how proposed recommendations regarding programming, re-organization, personnel, and budget will affect the pursuit of DEI within the unit in question. Its goal is to address the operation of implicit bias and systemic inequities by creating purposeful pro-active awareness of and integration of the impact on DEI of routine university decision-making. Appropriate offices, as designated by the President, will develop the Diversity Impact Analysis.

6. An Accountability Driven Performance Evaluation System that includes DEI metrics for all hiring authorities. This will be synchronized with unit or divisional metrics identified in the *Comprehensive University Strategic Action Plan for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion*. These metrics will be linked to DEI focused themes of the *University Strategic Plan*. A tie-barred component of the Performance Evaluation System will be DEI training applicable to university staff with hiring or supervisory authority

7. Curricular Improvement and Development.

The curriculum focused items of the *Black Student Ten Point Plan* implies a critique of the effectiveness of EMU's curricular requirements: that the current requirements do not address, in full academic capacity, the unresolved issues of inequity, marginality and exclusion at EMU or in the greater society. Curricular improvements, scaled to this potential, requires the initiation, support, and leadership of the Office of the Provost, in collaboration with Faculty Senate, appropriate bargaining units, and other appropriate faculty input committees. The process of programmatic improvements should include:

- **Development of a Masters degree in Africology and African American Studies.** This is in process in the College of Arts and Sciences, and the efforts on the part of AAAS faculty and the College Advisory Council (CAC) to review and implement this proposal is commended by the President's Commission. It is recommended that the proposal, once approved by the CAC, receive full support by the Provost and President for eventual approval by the Board of Regents.
- **General Education assessment of student learning outcomes for DEI.** A widened, cross-cutting scope of GE assessment to include measurable learning outcomes pertaining to students' acquisition of conceptual and applied tools to recognize and address challenges of pervasive inequities, both on campus and in the broader world;
- **Inclusion of student representation in General Education Assessment.** The General Education Assessment Committee will

ensure the inclusion of student voices in the development of cross-cutting General Education learning outcomes, and student participation in developing the metrics devised to measure these outcomes;

- **A required team-taught, interdisciplinary, interdepartmental undergraduate course on systemic and structural inequity.** Offered by each College and supported by the Dean of each College, to foster students' acquisition of conceptual and applied tools to recognize and address challenges of pervasive inequity, both on campus and in the broader world. The President's Commission encourages the Deans, and the EMU faculty in each College to consider the feasibility and structure of such a course.

This recommendation recognizes systemic and structural inequities in American life and culture as deeply rooted, difficult to extricate, complex and layered phenomena with multiple points of entry for solutions. It further invites the Office of the Provost and Executive Vice President, working in conjunction with the Deans, Faculty Senate, appropriate bargaining units, and faculty input, to assess the operational, cost, and contractual aspects associated with these recommendations, and to provide resources and leadership in development.

8. Community Engagement and Transformation

Located in a region that is a microcosm of the challenges of racial and economic inequities in the nation, EMU has engaged these challenges for several decades through various institutes, programs and collaborations. The President's Commission on Diversity and Inclusion believes that an even more robust engagement is required. An initiative in this direction would build upon EMU's tradition in this area and would acknowledge that Eastern Michigan cannot address its DEI vision without simultaneously attending to operating inequities within the county and region.

The process should include a group, bringing together students, faculty, administrators, and community representatives, to assess the various initiatives historically and currently being offered in the community. The goal would be to leverage the university's assets with a community/regional consortium and maximize transformative impact upon the region, through grants and collaborations. The group should synchronize with the research and community transformation initiatives coming from EMU (e.g. Climate Study, Diversity Audit) Washtenaw County government, local municipalities, higher education, business and the philanthropic sector. This initiative will be led by appropriate university offices as designated by the President.

Respectfully submitted

The President's Commission for Diversity and Inclusion
November 27, 2017

Appendix I

The Black Student Ten Point Plan.

- 1: Percent of black faculty to equal that of black students at EMU (excluding AAS)
- 2: All students take a General Education course on race, ethnicity and racism
- 3: A course on black studies will be built into every major;
- 4 Mandatory cultural competency training for all faculty and staff, including DPS
5. Designated space where marginalized students can gather safely and learn about financial and academic resources available to black students.
6. Explore options for utilizing outside vendors to provide culturally appropriate food for certain student organization events;
7. Alternate meal plan options for low-income students;
8. Professional staff designated to identify by financial resources for black students;
9. Committee designated by members of BSU to serve on the homecoming Committee with the freedom to plan events for Black Homecoming;
10. Doctorate and Master's Program for Africology and African American Studies with adequate funding and no less than full time graduate assistantships

Appendix II

Eastern Michigan University President's Commission on Diversity and Inclusion Members

Ronald C Woods – Professor of Africology and African American Studies, Chair

Devika Dibya Choudhuri – Associate Professor of Leadership and Counseling, Vice Chair

Sharon Abraham – Director of Diversity and Affirmative Action

Jessica 'Decky' Alexander – Director of Engage @ EMU, Professor of CMTA

Steven Bryant – Director, Diversity & Community Involvement

Melissa Gentile – Head Coach EMU Softball

LaMarcus D. Howard – Associate Director of Disability Resource Center; President Black Faculty and Staff Association, Graduate student

Christine 'Kate' Mehuron – Chair, Women's Commission, Professor of Philosophy

Amber Morseau – Graduate Assistant, Office of Diversity & Community Involvement

Eric Reed – EMU Opportunity Coordinator; Past President Black Faculty and Staff Association, Graduate Student

Desmine Robinson – EMU Student (Psychology)

Michael Tew – Associate Provost/Academic Programs; Professor of Communication

Inaugural members no longer serving:

Adam Baraka– EMU Honors College Student (Biochemistry)

Gregory Peoples – Community Representative, Former University Ombudsman

Candace Dorsey – Crime Prevention Coordinator, Department of Public Safety,
EMU

Steven Kwasny, Student Administrative Assistant to the President's Commission on Diversity and Inclusion (Political Science)