

Faculty Senate ad hoc DEI Committee Report Academic year 2022-23

At the conclusion of the 2021-22 academic year, the Faculty Senate passed the following resolution:

WHEREAS, the Faculty of Color Retention Efforts Faculty Senate Resolution of February 1, 2021, called for the creation of a Faculty Affairs or DEI [Diversity, Equity and Inclusion] Subcommittee to specifically address faculty concerns; and

WHEREAS, in its report to the Faculty Senate on April 25, 2022, the Faculty Senate ad hoc DEI Committee of 2021-2022 recommended the creation of a Faculty Senate Standing Committee to address DEI concerns within and on behalf of the UVM faculty; and

WHEREAS, the creation of a Standing Committee requires an Amendment to the UVM Faculty Senate Constitution and Bylaws, therefore be it

RESOLVED that the UVM Faculty Senate ad hoc DEI Committee be reappointed for the 2022-2023 academic year, with the charge of:

Drafting a proposed Amendment to the UVM Faculty Senate Constitution and Bylaws establishing a Faculty Senate DEI Committee and detailing specifics related to composition, responsibilities and scope, for consideration by the Faculty Senate no later than April 2023;

Continuing the activities of the Faculty Senate ad hoc DEI Committee 2021-2022 academic year regarding liaison with other faculty DEI-related groups and UVM leadership; policy development and support, and other DEI activities appropriate for consideration by the Faculty Senate.

The Faculty Senate ad hoc DEI Committee (“the ad hoc committee”) met approximately monthly during the 2022-23 academic year. Participants/consultants included Mildred Beltre, Jennifer Prue, Sara Solnick, Laura Webb. In addition to routine activities, such as review and support for DEI-related grant activities, members of the ad hoc Committee sought information regarding how a Faculty Senate DEI committee could best be of use to faculty from minority/minoritized groups, as well as to the UVM faculty as a whole, particularly in light of the fact that a robust UVM-wide DEI program is already underway, led by Vice Provost for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Amer F Ahmed.

The primary finding of this information-gathering effort is that faculty currently lack protection when they are the recipients of racist, anti-Semitic, misogynistic or other aggressive acts *by students*. Members of the faculty described experiences such as catching students flashing racist hand signs to each other when the instructor briefly had her back to the group. Based on the reports of faculty who had personally observed such acts, his type of behavior appears not to be rare. The Student Code of Conduct addresses student behavior when it is “disruptive” to the class, but does not directly or adequately address student behavior that produces a hostile environment for teaching faculty, nor provide sufficient remedy. Members of the ad hoc committee met with Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs, Jane Okech, who expressed strong interest in further exploring this problem and potential remedies. Additional activity in this area is planned for the coming academic year.

The ad hoc committee also reached out to the Standing Committees of the Faculty Senate and offered the opportunity to liaison with regard to faculty-related DEI concerns. Several Standing Committees expressed interest; Jennifer Prue of the Student Affairs Committee was particularly interested in the above-mentioned concern regarding student racist and other micro/not micro aggressions toward faculty, including how this relates to the student orientation and other activities. Bias in student evaluations of faculty is another area requiring attention.

Based on the findings of the ad hoc committee, we request that the committee be continued for another academic year, for the purpose of further work in addressing faculty DEI-related concerns that are within the scope of the Faculty Senate, including regarding fostering a working environment for teaching faculty that is free of bias and discrimination, along the lines described above, and developing relationships with the Faculty Senate standing committees that will serve to embed faculty DEI concerns in all aspects of the work of the Faculty Senate on an ongoing basis.

An amendment to the Faculty Senate Bylaws, such as the following *draft*, will likely be proposed in the fall.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Committee: *This committee shall have the responsibility for matters relating to diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) from the perspective of the UVM faculty, including items referred to in Sections 1.1a, 1.1b, 1.1c, 1.1h, 1.1i, 1.2a, 1.2b, 1.2d, 1.2e, 1.2h, 1.2i, 2.1j1.2k, and 1.6. It shall review, recommend and participate in the formulation of University policies that affect UVM faculty from the perspective of diversity, equity and inclusion, and shall liaise with the Vice Provost for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and other members of the UVM leadership and administrative structures on behalf of the UVM faculty. It will also liaise with the other Standing Committees to promote faculty interests with regard to diversity, equity and inclusion and will participate in short and long-term planning with regard to faculty DEI concerns.*

A Evan Eyler, MD, MPH
Vice President, UVM Faculty Senate
April 28, 2023