

## **PRESIDENT'S COMMISSION FOR INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE ANNUAL REPORT**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The President's Commission for Inclusive Excellence focused their work during the 2017-2018 academic year on developing an annual plan for their work and listening to Governance Bodies and key stakeholders to identify topics for focused efforts in the next academic year. This report focuses on sharing information gathered during this year's stakeholder meetings.

*The following recommendations are respectfully submitted to President Tom Sullivan by the President's Commission for Inclusive Excellence:*

#### ***Diversity and Inclusion Professional Development***

- Engage with campus leaders to ensure the most urgent and effective types of trainings are available at times accessible to most constituents
- Engage with campus leaders to implement effective incentive models for diversity and inclusion professional development by campus members
- Improve the range of communications about available trainings to reach all constituents

#### ***Effective Communication and Engagement***

- Engage in conversations with campus leaders to inform development of a robust communication strategy for all vital information with the goal of reaching a broad range of community members
- Increase the visibility of campus leaders by encouraging attendance at more events on campus, particularly those organized by student groups

#### ***Campus Climate Study***

- Conduct a campus climate study no later than the 2018-2019 academic year that produces actionable data to drive strategic investment(s) for inclusive excellence

#### ***ADA Compliance Capacity Building***

- Provide resources and support for the work of the recently formed ADA Committee, including but not limited to involvement by Senior Leaders (e.g. Vice Presidents)

#### ***Structure and Function of the Commission***

- Determine if the Commission's primary functions and responsibilities are adequate to address diversity and inclusion efforts across the university
- Make any necessary adjustments to the structure and function of the Commission prior to the start the 2018-2019 academic year
- Monitor and align diversity and inclusion work across all Colleges and Divisions

## ANNUAL REPORT

### **Stakeholder Meeting Information and Themes (Chronological order)**

#### **Provost Academic Leadership Council (PALC+)**

Upon completion of the overview presentation regarding the Commission's charge and current work, the Commission representatives asked PALC+ members for input on focus items for the 2018-19 academic year. Members asked the Commission for the following information: an overview of best practices from the Inclusive Excellence Framework reporting and planning from across unit action plans; development of a "Common Talking Points" sheet to streamline communication with students; increased accessibility of the "Advancing Diversity" website; more opportunities from the Commission to provide open forums, to meet with graduate students, "No Names for Justice", SGA, University Communications, and leadership groups such as PSL and Dean's Council.

#### **Faculty Senate Executive Committee (FSEC)**

Upon completion of the overview presentation regarding the Commission's charge and current work, the Commission representatives asked PALC+ members for input on focus items for the 2018-19 academic year. FSEC members asked how the Commission measures progress. Commissioners responded that the Framework for Inclusive Excellence, and unit-level action plans are most currently being implemented to allow progress to be measured within each unit. Another question was posed about how the Commission responds to student concerns. Information was shared that the FSEC views D1/D2 courses as a topic of specific interest. Discussion circulated around concerns related to faculty capacity to teach these courses, and in relation to the faculty's perceived need and interest in more professional development opportunities specific to content within D1/D2 courses. Integrating student voices into discussions around curriculum was identified as a necessary component, along with further ability to measure the outcomes associated with general education requirements.

#### **SGA Committee on Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity (Chairperson, Reginah Mako)**

Ms. Mako met with the Commission's leadership team and shared the work her committee has undertaken. While they engaged with the No Names for Justice students and concerns, the main initiative from her committee was a resolution to increase the comprehensive student fee to directly support the identity centers on campus.

#### **Staff Council Executive Committee (SCEC)**

The SCEC discussion centered on a general theme of 'disparity' among units in terms of their levels of interest, funding and actions in support of diversity and inclusion opportunities. For example, the Larner College of Medicine has an Office of Diversity & Inclusion and a 3-year plan while the Division of University Relations and Administration has few training options. After employees' initial orientation and training, no consistent or continued diversity and inclusion training is required of employees. SCEC raised the concern that even the trainings and information that is available is not accessible to many staff members due to language, poverty, workforce readiness, and the training available on campus is not sufficient. Students receive more attention around diversity and equity issues than staff.

**Student Government Association Executive Committee Meeting**

The SGA Executive Committee had a spirited conversation about student activism on campus and how the group might be operating in the summer and the fall of 2018. Alan Maynard and Paul Yoon acknowledge the value of the student voices on campus to the work of the Commission, which helps the Commission understand how to collaborate with the SGA in the future.

**ADA Committee (Amber Fulcher and Sharon Mone)**

Ms. Fulcher and Ms. Mone met with the Commission's leadership team and shared their concerns about a lack of attention to facility-based ADA assessment and oversight at UVM. They explained that the breadth and depth of accessibility related issues on campus were persistent and inadequate staffing limits the capacity for meaningful responses to shortcomings.

## **Recommendations**

We wish to share that the Commission acknowledges the level and amount of effort focused on diversity and inclusion issues this academic year. Numerous positive changes have been initiated or implemented, and we are encouraged by the continued momentum planned for activities throughout the summer and into the next academic year. We also know that information and activities are fluid and that some of our recommendations might already have some level of action. These recommendations were generated through careful triangulation of information gathered in our stakeholder meetings, individual and group constituent meetings with the Commission's leadership team, and input from Commissioners. While we recognize these recommendations are based on limited data we have collected, we feel the information may be useful to the administration and actionable. Therefore, the Commission respectfully provides the following recommendations for your consideration.

### ***Diversity and Inclusion Professional Development***

Diversity and inclusion training continues to be the most prolific and universally agreed upon issue to address at UVM. Many stakeholders we spoke with throughout the year voiced a need for increased frequency and more accessibility of diversity and inclusion trainings from a scheduling standpoint. This is consistent with the viewpoint of the Commission and our strategic plans and priorities. It is also consistent with a number of the student concerns communicated by No Names for Justice. Our conversations show that UVM has opportunities to make available impactful training through numerous avenues on campus. We conclude that improvements should be investigated with respect to communication, availability, and incentivization of diversity and inclusion trainings on campus.

It is the recommendation of the Commission that the Office of the President:

- Engage with campus leaders to ensure the most urgent and effective types of trainings are available at times accessible to most constituents
- Engage with campus leaders to implement effective incentive models for diversity and inclusion professional development by campus members
- Improve the range of communications about available trainings to reach all constituents

### ***Effective Communication and Engagement***

The Commission has learned that communication of important information to the UVM community is not reaching all community members. For example, some community members share they have not heard of *Our Common Ground* or the Framework for Inclusive Excellence. In addition, some groups we met with felt they had a poor understanding of the work the administration was doing to address the student concerns about diversity and inclusion on campus. The inconsistent understanding of UVM's core values, strategic plan, and current actions decreases the community's ability for tangible engagement and capacity building around inclusive excellence. Although UVM has a policy that all official communication occurs via email, the Commission strongly recommends consideration of additional and perhaps alternative communication strategies.

It is the recommendation of the Commission that the Office of the President:

- Engage in conversations with campus leaders to inform development of a robust communication strategy for all vital information with the goal of reaching a broad range of community members
- Increase the visibility of campus leaders by encouraging attendance at more events on campus, particularly those organized by student groups

### ***Campus Climate Study***

A climate survey of the UVM community members will be highly valuable to understand the effectiveness of diversity efforts at UVM to date and identify areas for further action.

It is the recommendation of the Commission that the Office of the President:

- Conduct a campus climate study no later than the 2018-2019 academic year that produces actionable data to drive strategic investment(s) for inclusive excellence

### ***ADA Compliance Capacity Building***

Conversations with Commissioners directly involved in accessibility work as well as a meeting of the Commission's leadership team with Sharon Mone and Amber Fulcher identified issues with ADA compliance at UVM. In addition to the open Office of Civil Rights case, the Commission learned about a lack of sufficient resources for oversight, assessment and correction of deficiencies for community members with disabilities.

It is the recommendation of the Commission that the Office of the President:

- Provide resources and support for the work of the recently formed ADA Committee, including but not limited to involvement by Senior Leaders (e.g. Vice Presidents)

### ***Structure and Function of the Commission***

The Commission's engagement across our campus over the past few years has ranged from very active to almost non-existent. This created an identity crisis for commissioners over the past year. To provide direction, during the spring of 2017, the Commission developed the [2017-2019 Strategic Plan](#) with specific goals and tactics. In addition, this year a document was ratified that clearly stated role delineation from the UVM President to the Commissioners. With the clear mission to *advise* the president, what is unclear to some is their individual impact and/or their willingness to engage in an advisory role only. In addition, UVM has an abundance of people working on diversity and inclusion within many units on campus. Some of these efforts are ongoing and some are relatively new, given the implementation of the Framework for Inclusive Excellence throughout the campus. Given the fact that activism and diversity initiatives are moving at a rapid pace, coupled with wanting to avoid duplication of efforts:

It is the recommendation of the Commission that the Office of the President:

- Determine if the Commission's primary functions and responsibilities are adequate to address diversity and inclusion efforts across the university
- Make any necessary adjustments to the structure and function of the Commission prior to the start the 2018-2019 academic year
- Monitor and align diversity and inclusion work across all Colleges and Divisions