

Diversity Council, February 19 2019 meeting minutes

In attendance: Ruby Alhajar, Lisa Cunard, Helen Halt, Jerry Jondreau, Ann Kitalong-Will, Beth Lunde-Stockero, Audrey Mayer, Logan McMillan, Harley Merkaj, Mike Meyer, Faith Morrison, Kellie Raffaelli, Brenda Rudiger

The main focus of our meeting today was to determine what we wanted to prioritize during this spring semester. We decided that we should develop a mechanism to increase opportunities for dialogue across campus, such as through a regularly-held series of open forums.

We can use this semester to develop this series, with the goal of hosting at least one open forum at the end of the semester as a pilot, and to maintain momentum going into the fall 2019 semester.

Things we will need to decide or work on:

1. *How often these should take place:* the consensus was solidifying around having them weekly or bi-weekly. Some forums could have pre-programmed topics, and some could be “free” to allow for the attendees to discuss current issues. If anything major happens on campus during a week with a pre-programmed theme, we could shift that theme to the next free forum. (This allows for some flexibility.)
2. *Support staff for the forums:* given that some of these topics are likely to be controversial, we should run them with someone who has facilitation training (Institutional Equity has several programs for this). These people should not have to donate their time, but should be paid, and part of their job should include reporting out on their forum to the community, such as a short paragraph or two in Tech Today.
3. *Which groups should champion the series:* While we did not come to a firm decision, we thought that having the ROTC and the Institutional Equity Office co-champion the series might work to make the forums welcoming to a wide variety of people on campus. Institutional Equity (Beth Lunde-Stockero) is already supportive of this idea. I will approach ROTC and talk to them to gauge interest. I will also invite them to come to a near-future Diversity Council meeting to teach us about the programs that the US Military uses to address diversity and unit cohesion issues.
4. *Which groups should be approached to “host” forums (the facilitator is not the “host”):* We can invite groups to plan a forum topic around their diversity/inclusion-related issues. Hosts could be: USG, GSG, University Senate, student affinity groups, fraternities and sororities, athletics, etc.
5. *How to publicize the open forums:* We need to work hard to ensure that a) people know when and where these forums are, and b) what happens at these forums that encourages future participation. We should involve journalist/UMC staff from the start.
6. *How to close the feedback loop:* Given the importance of normalizing these crosscampus conversations, we will need to develop a clear process for making sure that the “lessons learned” from each forum are reported out and, if areas of attention are identified, that these get passed onto the proper people for action.

Other issues/information from the meeting:

- Institutional Equity will be offering a training program for facilitators in restorative justice in Summer 2019. Please contact Beth Lunde-Stockero for more information. Also, the Department of Cognitive Learning is developing a “restorative justice” 3-credit course, potentially to be taught already in Fall 2019 or the next year.
- If needed, we already have trained facilitators on campus (e.g., Susanna Peters, Institutional Equity staff)
- Kellie Raffaelli has been working with the President to develop and promote an institutionalized diversity and inclusion framework at Michigan Tech. We viewed these campus open forums as a good opportunity to build support for institution-level changes to come.