



# MINUTES

## Diversity & Inclusion Advisory Committee

7/20/2020 11:30 AM | *Meeting called to order by* Chancellor Coreil

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### In Attendance

Dr. Paul Coreil, Dr. John Rowan, Dr. Abbey Bain, Dr. Haywood Joiner, Dr. Shonu Nangia, Dr. Jessica Ringo, Dr. Cynthia Thomas, Deron Thaxton, Sheila Hudson, Daniel Manual, Monica Aguilera, Brandon Ellis, Destiny Harrison

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### Chancellor's Welcome:

Thanks to everyone for agreeing to serve on this committee formed specifically to help our campus improve inclusion and better appreciate the value of diversity across the board. We want to do a lot of listening today and we want the heartfelt agreement and feeling that we can work together to improve our campus and community. We want to join hands to improve our campus, community, state, and nation. We hope to continue meeting through 2021 and maybe beyond that. We hope that you all bring together ideas and opportunities for us to improve our campus. You are representing the entire bodies of the students, faculty, staff and administration. This is an opportunity for you all to serve and make this campus the best that it can be. It is your responsibility to seek input from everyone that you can so that you can bring ideas, information and input forward to this committee. Today, we would like to implement and establish the committee and a chair to run and establish discussions. Chancey Slider will take minutes for publishing. We plan to meet once a month for at least the next 12-18 months and we plan to have future meeting dates set before we leave this meeting today. Our goal is to come up with a roadmap that will be used to guide our actions geared towards the improvement of diversity and inclusion on our campus.

### Introductions:

All present made a brief introduction.

### Dr. Abbey Bain's Welcome:

We are very excited to be here with you all today. The formation of this committee is something that we have been talking about for a long time so that we can get input from all areas of campus in order to improve our diversity and inclusion efforts. We are coming together to talk about what is happening on campus and in our community now and to plan for improving the future. This is a safe space and we want everyone to feel comfortable and to respect each other. We listen first here. LSU's roadmap is very comprehensive and it has provided a lot of insight, but we need to discuss creating our own roadmap that is tailored to be a good fit for our campus. A big point of today's discussion is to come up with our headings, main objectives, and goals. We need to consider academic programs and courses offered as well as campus events and initiatives. We want to communicate with each other in order to dive deeper into what is currently going on and planning for the years to come. We want to strive to make LSUA more inclusive and have a focus on diversity

and respect for every member of campus. We want you to share your experiences and the experiences of others so that we can identify our strengths and weaknesses in order to improve. It is imperative that we get feedback and solicit other students, faculty, and staff who are not here so that we get as much information and input as possible.

We recently had a great conversation with the Black Organization for Leadership and Development (BOLD) student organization. Monica was present along with about 10-12 other students and the meeting lasted for about two hours. Administration attended, listened, and gave everyone a chance to share. It was a very heartfelt and informative meeting. The administration really enjoyed the opportunity to listen to and talk with our students. The meeting was overwhelmingly positive and students voiced that they felt very comfortable on our campus and with our campus safety officers. Students shared overall positive experiences, but we need to dig deeper and continue to look for ways that we can become even more inclusive and diverse. Some topics of discussion were regarding ways to share different cultures more often across campus. Some students shared experiences where they felt uncomfortable in our community, but on campus experiences were overwhelmingly positive.

### **The Roadmap:**

We would like for the roadmap to be completed by the end of 2021 and we need help from you to gather input from the aspects of campus that you are representing. Demographics of campus were distributed to the committee to give a breakdown of the different ethnic backgrounds and nationalities of individuals currently on our campus. Louisiana has a total population of about 32% African Americans. The number of African Americans on our campus is also about 32%. The demographics of campus also include Asian, Hispanic, White, and many other ethnicities and nationalities. We need to take all members of campus into consideration as we beginning creating our roadmap.

### **Diversity & Inclusion Staff Position**

Dr. Bain: Some students have mentioned that faculty members have made comments that made them feel uncomfortable and they did not know where to go or who to talk to about their concerns. They also shared that they did not think that the comments were meant to come across as negative, but we want students to have a safe place to voice their concerns if they are ever made to feel uncomfortable. Most universities have a diversity and inclusion office or staff member to report to, but we do not and this is something that we need to consider. We also need to consider including training opportunities regarding diversity and inclusion for all members of campus.

Sheila: When I attended school here, we had a Director of Multi-Cultural Affairs who was very helpful to me personally and many other students. When this position was no longer funded due to budget cuts, there was a void left on our campus. When I worked in admissions, many students would come to me and ask for support and advice since they did not have anyone else to go to. I am always happy to help and

support our students, but there is definitely a need for a staff member who can offer diversity and inclusion support on our campus.

Dr. Thomas: I wholeheartedly agree with that. It is difficult for people who are not from here to have success here. We need to create an avenue where minds are open and people are willing to listen and accept others. I think that we need to create a position and avenue for reporting diversity and inclusion issues for students to utilize if someone on campus makes them feel uncomfortable. Several students have come to me in tears over negative experiences that they have had on our campus and they don't know who to talk to or where to go.

Dr. Coreil: We need someone on campus that focuses on diversity, inclusion and equal opportunity including the provision of diversity training for faculty and staff. Some training programs are available online. There are often institutionalized biases that we may not directly recognize but we need to address. We need a safe place for students to be able to talk and report concerns related to equality. We don't need slogans.....we need action!

#### **Campus-Wide Diversity & Inclusion Training:**

Destiny: Asked the group if we provide faculty and staff with diversity trainings.

Dr. Coreil: Trainings were offered in the past, but have not been recently. This is something that I inquired about when I returned to the position of Interim Chancellor a little over a year ago. I think that we need to implement some diversity and inclusion as well as bias training for all faculty, staff, and students.

Destiny: I think it could be beneficial to offer these trainings for all members of campus to attend together so that it is an area where everyone can learn and train together instead of offering separate sessions.

Dr. Coreil: That is an excellent idea! Faculty must respect the differences in students. Some transgender students are often not recognized by their identified gender and this is hurtful and disrespectful. We should all be more mindful and respectful of gender diversity within our student population.

Dr. Nangia: We could create a training similar to ethics trainings that we take every year.

Dr. Ringo: There is an online test developed by Harvard University for bias testing in many areas. I took the test and found it to be incredibly eye-opening. It helps to point out areas of bias for testers that they may not realize that they have. Maybe we could use this tool or a similar one and encourage members of campus to use it.

Dr. Coreil: Those are great ideas. This committee is also charged to look at gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, accents, nationalities, and ways that we can all improve

perspectives so that everyone is welcomed and respected. Discriminations and biases of all kinds need to be considered.

**Academics:**

Sheila: I am putting courses into the system and getting requests to add courses for African American literature due to what's happening now in our country and we need to make sure that we are offering these classes every semester and encouraging students to attend. I want to know why don't we have more African American studies courses. We need to offer courses like African American History and Literature to help others learn more about the history and background of African Americans so that they can be more accepting of different cultures. I believe that we should also offer Latino American History, Hindi, Indian history courses, etc. We should not just have annual events or celebrate a culture for one day or month of the year, but we need to teach and immerse ourselves in the history of other cultures. Tulane offers great presentations concerning what they are offering on diversity/inclusion for their campus. We do a good job, but we still have a lot of work to do. We also need to teach faculty and staff to be more careful with how they address and communicate with people and the importance of making all people feel comfortable regardless of their background or lifestyle.

Daniel: As an advisor, it is a frustration that students have to take American History to take African American History which I do not see necessary. We should offer more specific focused courses to get people interested. We want students to learn about the world that they live in and get excited about these subjects. I also do not think that these types of courses should only be offered online because it is not conducive for mentoring and growing relationships.

Dr. Coreil: LSUA should offer an African American History Course to help everyone better understand the and appreciate the many contributions of African Americans in our lives and in our history.

Dr. Joiner: We also need to focus on not only offering more of these courses, but getting students interested in learning about cultures different from their own.

**Agreement to Form Permanent Committee:**

Sheila: I think that this committee needs to be made permanent because we are a community melting pot and problems are always likely to arise. This is an opportunity for people of different cultures and backgrounds to come together and communicate so that we can be proactive with what we can do on campus for the betterment of diversity and inclusion efforts.

The committee unanimously agreed and the committee is officially a permanent committee.

### **Recruitment of Minority Faculty, Staff, and Students:**

- Dr. Joiner: I agree that there are few role models for African Americans to look up to in the field of higher education. We are doing a better job today than in the past, but we have a lot more work to do. I intend to uplift my race and interact with as many people in the community as I can every day. I agree with that we need to focus on hiring more African American and minority faculty.
- Dr. Nangia: I agree that we need for activities, opportunities and fulfilling outlets for the youth in our area. All of us can work together to come up with solutions that foster a constructive social mindset that sees beyond color, appearances, etc. We also need to look at the deeper underlying issue which is a certain hardness of the heart that makes people cruel and makes them behave poorly and harshly towards others. We need to bring up the values of the heart and make the cultivation of the values of the heart a part of the educational mission.
- Dr. Rowan: The leadership here is 100% committed to bringing about the right type of change. We need everyone's help to keep us on track. I would like to know what is something that could be a mistake that you see us possibly making through our well-motivated action.
- Dr. Thomas: A few years back when we started the basketball team, many students who were brought to campus to play were minority students. We made the effort to bring a lot of minority students to campus, but there has been no effort made to hire minority faculty members. The majority of African American employees on campus work in custodial and facility service positions. We need to diversify our faculty and staff in a meaningful way. We need to make sure that our minority students have outlets and can build connections in a safe place.
- Dr. Rowan: Minorities, especially African Americans are very underrepresented when it comes to faculty. I absolutely agree on this being a goal. We need to talk and plan for how we are going to achieve the goal of hiring more African American and other minority faculty members as well as how we can improve retention. We want to get there and make progress since faculty plays such a huge role in student success and closely interacts with students.
- Dr. Bain: Faculty and staff recruitment and retention is critical and we need to brainstorm some actions and measureable goals. The next few weeks and months as we start to prepare the roadmap, we want to come up with ways to get more feedback and input from peers and colleagues. What ideas do you all have to help give shape to these ideas and issues? Please think on it for the next meeting.

### **Student Organizations:**

Dr. Rowan: Is there a group on campus among student organizations where leaders get together?

Monica: We have tried to get one started in the past, but organizational leaders change every semester and it is hard to keep the meetings going.

Dr. Thomas: We tried for years, but attendance fell. The Student Organization Council (SOC) committee would meet once a month. Events were so much better when this committee met because students and organizations would come together to support and piggyback on events and initiatives.

Dr. Bain: I am hoping that we can do something soon with multiple organizations soon.

Dr. Joiner: The BOLD soul food event was very successful. Many cultures came together. Some members on campus disagree with having an organization for African American students, but it is not just for African American students. It is open for anyone interested in leadership development to join. Thoughts?

Sheila: People also ask why we have an all-African American sorority on campus.

Dr. Joiner: Alpha Phi Alpha, the oldest African American fraternity in the world, wants to start a chapter on our campus. It is a predominately black organization. Establishing a chapter here would attract African American males to our campus, but we would want to advertise that the organization is open to all students who are interested and not just African Americans.

Destiny: I wonder if we can bridge the gap for people who feel uncomfortable with having some predominately African American organizations on campus by encouraging them to join. We can include this in our marketing plan so that that campus organizations become more diverse and everyone feels welcomed.

Dr. Rowan: I think that is good idea. I also think that we should not take "black" out of the names of organizations, but we should encourage people of all backgrounds to join. Part of the university plan for next five years includes increasing the kinds of student organizations on campus that identify as diverse organizations.

### **Scholarships, Aid, & Support for Minority Students:**

Sheila: We have the Ebony and Mary Jane Brown scholarships, but are there any other scholarships that we can offer to minority students? They typically have a hard time paying tuition and fees. Maybe we can offer more resources such as scholarships to minority students. This could be highlighted in our marketing efforts and attract more minority students to campus as well as spread the message that we welcome students from all backgrounds.

- Dr. Bain We will get a list of scholarships and explore our options. Maybe this is an area that we can improve upon.
- Monica: Students would like to see our scholarships being promoted. The Mulder Scholarship is one of the only scholarships that we promote. It would be good for all students to know their options upfront
- Dr. Coreil: LSUA should seek to provide more minority student scholarships to help provide opportunity. Dual Enrollment opportunities are often an excellent way to offer minority students opportunities to take college classes while in high school...and then continue their pursuit of a college degree after high school.

### **Community Efforts & Support:**

- Destiny: Do we have FASFA or informational nights for surrounding schools?
- Dr. Bain: Yes, Jeff Massey hosts FASFA nights, but our recruitment plan does not include specific minority plans. We go to every school in Rapides and Avoyelles to recruit and we would love ideas on specific approaches. We are partnering more with our city so that we can reach students who may not have available parents and we offer to meet them where they are. We have done a few events at the old boys and girls club and donated computers to the second floor computer lab. We partnered with CLTCC to do a program regarding how to apply, what to expect for college and FASFA information. We also did one specific event for ACT test taking strategies led by Dr. Rowan. We may need to look at how we can focus on diversity/minority recruitment at these events.
- Dr. Rowan: Many minorities graduate high school and college is not on their radar. We want to introduce the idea that college could be a good option for them and beneficial in the long run.
- Monica: In some cases, parents are illegal immigrants and students have to pay out of pocket for college expenses because they cannot not apply for FASFA and cannot receive aid. Many cannot afford to pay out of pocket and they don't see college as an option in some cases. This is something that we need to consider for minority recruiting. Maybe we can create some scholarships that they could use as a resource.
- Dr. Rowan: If possible, we may be able to use a private fund to help students like this. We will look into it.
- Dr. Thomas: Recruiters could go to eighth grade classrooms and do LSUA events so that they can go to their school's computer labs for career testing to motivate them to attend college or at least put it in their minds that college is an option. This could be very beneficial for students from outer parishes who don't travel and don't have many ways to get information about college. We need to focus on getting young students

ready for the next levels of their education and stay connected with them throughout their high school experiences to promote our university.

Monica: Many students face hardships. One that I have experienced is being encouraged to drop out of high school to help with my family's business. If dual enrollment was not an option for me in high school, I would not have graduated early and wouldn't be here now. I think that we should do more programs for high schools to make sure that students know their options.

Sheila: There are a lot of students that are very smart, but don't ever make it to college due to others expectations and lack of ability to prepare and pay for ACT prep. I think that we should have some grants/vouchers/incentives to encourage strong students in high school to take the ACT.

Daniel: I think that offering ACT prep to high school juniors and seniors at their schools over the summer is something that we can do.

Dr. Bain: An accuplacer test can help, but it will not impact their financial situation.

Dr. Coreil: What is the status of super-scoring for the ACT so that students can take each section of the test separately?

Dr. Bain: We will allow it for tests administered on our campus.

Destiny: That is great since taking all sections at once can be very stressful.

Dr. Coreil: We should consider seeking and offering ACT Scholarships to help limited resource minority students pay for ACT training and repetitive test taking costs.

Sheila: I know a recent LSUA graduate who wanted to go to graduate school, but didn't have money to get a GRE book and I gave him the money to get the book. So many of our students graduating cannot afford the GRE or resources to help them get into graduate school. We need to foster an environment about how important it is to not stop here, but to continue your education as much as possible. Is there any way that we can offer resources to them to help them get there?

Monica: Can we supply juniors and seniors with information regarding how to prepare for graduate school? For instance, I did not know that I should be preparing for the L-Sat to go into law school and now I don't have the resources to do so.

Daniel: Maybe our library can stock those resources.

Dr. Coreil: Those are great ideas that we will explore. I am also more than willing to write letters of recommendation for students who perform well to help them get into graduate school or start their careers.

Dr. Thomas: When administration sends out the anonymous surveys for bottom up evaluations, are responses good?

- Deron: Yes, there is around a 40-50% response rate which is high for a survey.
- Dr. Bain: It might be a good idea to get a survey out in order to get more input about diversity and inclusion on our campus.
- Dr. Coreil: A survey of students, faculty and staff regarding their perceptions of equality, inclusion and opportunity at LSUA may be a good way to get a pulse of our campus related to these issues. Maybe we can request that Advisory Committee members submit possible questions that could be included in an LSUA survey for use in a survey instrument. I would like to solicit questions from this group for a survey.
- Dr. Thomas: I have access to some great questions for a survey that I will send over.
- Dr. Coreil: Asked the committee to agree to developing a survey and input option like a virtual town hall meeting further down the road to address questions and maybe even a program/event in the community. The committee agreed. We want the Advisory Committee to sponsor Town Meetings to gather input from everyone on campus. The results of the survey could be used to help guide the Town Meeting discussion along with open discussion as needed.
- Destiny: There are a lot of issues that we are facing with the culture of the university. When people find out that I am from Georgia, they usually ask why and seem shocked that I want to be here. We need to continue to advocate how great this campus is and get more student-buy in so that is not the regard when someone from another area comes to this campus. I love this campus and want the people here to love it just the same. I'm not sure how we can change the culture, but we need to look at finding ways.
- Dr. Coreil: This is a hurdle since so many people who live here and around consider larger schools instead of staying near home and attending here. How do we get to where they don't consider us as the smaller school that's not as good as others? It has been engrained by their parents and grandparents, but our quality of education is outstanding and we have many successful graduates.
- Daniel: Part of this problem is that we have only been a 4-year university for a short period of time.
- Dr. Coreil: We want to do the best that we can to change this mindset and send a message to the community about the value and quality of the education that we have. Dr. Joiner's positions as Interim Chancellor and President of the Alexandria Rotary Club have made the community so proud and students of color have realized that we are welcoming to people of all backgrounds and it encouraged more cultures to come here.
- Destiny: We students are proud to see ads on social media and billboards that spotlight African Americans. We also really like the live stickers on Instagram and our Tik-Tok

account that is getting attention from students at other universities. We notice it and it gives us all pride.

Monica: LSUA is getting talked about by other students and other colleges because we are on Tik-Tok. Kudos!

**Request for Ideas & Feedback:**

Dr. Bain: I am a firm believer that learning also takes place outside of the classroom and that's where mentor relationships and connections are made. What are some other ways you would like to see to us create diversity and inclusion in out of class experiences? This could be in regards to events, programs, speakers, organizations, and community connections. I want the committee to think on this for the next meeting.

Dr. Coreil: Black incarceration rates are much higher than the overall population make of in many states. We must be willing to embrace this and determine what can be done to help give hope and opportunity for success beyond the current reality. We need to encourage black young men through educational opportunities at LSUA. Positive role models are crucial. Total U may offer opportunities to bring in inspiring speakers.

Monica: I want us to get to a point where Total U is not mandatory and there aren't bonus points offered for attending, but where the events are intriguing and students want to go to them.

Dr. Joiner: I would like to see us develop a closer relationship with the AMoA and the Arna Bontemps African American Museum that has been struggling for a while now. This would help build relationships and the museums could work together to host some events/programs for the community to encourage collaboration.

Daniel: I think that's a great idea. They could also host predominately African American sororities', fraternities', and groups' programs at the museums.

Destiny: I met with Catherine Pears at the AMoA when several students went there to build luminaries and she showed us the space upstairs. We suggested having a lock in at the museum. She loved the idea and maybe we can include the African American Museum in an event like that or have an educational night. This could help us do better with community outreach, especially for minority community members.

Dr. Ringo: To the students, young people in the community look up to you. We would like for you all to help with outreach efforts and be good role models and leaders in the community.

Dr. Bain: The best way to recruit LSUA is for you all to talk about your experiences at here and represent us in a positive way.

Dr. Bain: As far as academics, what are some other classes that you all would be interested in us creating or promoting?

Destiny: Indigenous/Native History and Business Diversity are some that I think students would be interested in taking.

Brandon Ellis: Black people NEED to know that there are many successful black men and women in this world that are not playing sports or making music. They NEED to be advertised just as much as the athletes and artists. This will allow black men and women to see that there are MANY ways to be successful.

There is an absurd statistic of 13 states having over 50% of their jail population be black men. We only make up 12% of the population. Something systematically is happening and needs to be known by the masses.

Black people need to be educated on entrepreneurship. Owning their business is pivotal. That way they are not reliant on anyone, but themselves.

Redlining is really hurting our communities and schools because tax dollars are not being poured into our schools the way other schools are on the opposite side of towns. We NEED the same opportunities. This needs to be addressed. Systematic racism is what has been occurring for centuries and in order for real equality to occur, laws have to be changed.

#### **Selection of Chair and Co-Chairs:**

After post-meeting discussions regarding the need for committee workload distribution and representation from both faculty and staff in leadership of this committee, both Sheila Hudson and Dr. Cynthia Thomas have agreed to serve as co-chairs of the LSUA Diversity & Inclusion Advisory Committee. We are extremely fortunate to have two outstanding leaders of this very important committee and the work the committee will be undertaking building an LSUA Roadmap. We would all like to thank them both for stepping up and accepting co-chair positions leading the committee.

#### **Next Meeting:**

Dr. Coreil: We need to set dates for upcoming meetings soon. The committee agreed to meet on the last Tuesday of every month from 8:00am-9:00am in the Live Oaks Conference Room. The next meeting will take place on August 25<sup>th</sup>. Sheila and Cynthia will work together to develop the agenda for the next meeting. Thanks to all committee members for your commitment and dedication to improving campus diversity and inclusion.

## **Future Action Items:**

### **1. Items that can be done immediately**

- a. Make signage that contains a brief statement on diversity and how discriminatory statements will not be tolerated. This can be posted on every office/department window for view

### **2. Items to consider for Fall semester**

- a. Hosting a Total U series that discusses Black Lives Matter/ embracing diversity
- b. Establish a plan on if a student has experienced discrimination
  - a. How to report it
  - b. Who to report it to
- c. Develop a diversity training (possibly use LSU as a template)
- d. Possible Campus Voter Registration Drive

### **3. Items for Spring 2021**

- a. Consider hosting more events/ activities for:
  - a. Black History Month
  - b. Latin Heritage Month
  - c. Pride Month
  - d. Women's History Month
  - e. Indigenous People Day
  - f. Holi Festival of Colors
- b. Consider hosting Spring Cultural Festival**
  - a. This event would be styled like the past Shakespeare on the Greene festivals but be more surrounded by cultural events

### **4. Items for Fall 2021**

Respectfully submitted by Chancey Slider

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The next meeting will take place on Tuesday, August 25<sup>th</sup>.

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