

SPECIAL TELEPHONE MEETING

UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT BOARD OF TRUSTEES COMMITTEE FOR DIVERSITY, EQUITY and INCLUSION

MINUTES

Meeting held by Telephone

December 7, 2021

Committee Trustees: Andrea Dennis-LaVigne, Andy Besette, Charles Bunnell, Shari Cantor, Sanford Cloud, Jr., Marilda Gandara, Rebecca Lobo, and Bryan Pollard

University Senate Representative: Dr. Maria-Luz Fernandez

University Staff: Andy Agwunobi, Eleanor Daugherty, Michael Gilbert, Gerald Lewis, Jr., Letissa Reid, Hans Rhyhart, Jonelle Reynolds, Rachel Rubin, Patrick Russell, Frank Tuitt, Michael Vidal, and Daniel Weiner

Vice-Chair Dennis-LaVigne convened the joint meeting of the Committee for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion at 11:00 a.m.

- **Public Participation**

There were no members of the public who wished to address the Committee.

APPROVAL ITEM:

- Approval of the Minutes of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee Meeting on May 17, 2021

On a motion by Mr. Pollard, seconded by Ms. Cantor, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the May 17, 2021, Joint Meeting of the Committees for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and Student Life.

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION ITEMS:

- Welcome and Introductions of Committee Members – Dr. Andrea Dennis-LaVigne, Vice-Chair

Vice-Chair Dennis-LaVigne welcomed the members of the Committee and University staff. She discussed the Committee's decision to establish a regular schedule of three meetings per year.

- Office for Diversity and Inclusion (ODI) Updates – Dr. Frank Tuitt

Dr. Tuitt provided a brief overview of ODI’s 2021-2022 efforts to improve the diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ) climate at UConn. He outlined ODI’s mission, initiatives, programs resources, trainings, and consultations. Dr. Tuitt talked about the new University-wide DEIJ website that will bring together siloed efforts from across the University to provide easier access to DEIJ resources.

Dr. Tuitt also provided an update on ODI’s proposal to elevate the Native American Cultural Programs (NACP) and Middle Eastern Cultural Programs (MECP) to cultural center status. ODI has acquired space in the student union building to create an ODI Commons space, which will host these two programs while also providing space to meet the needs of UConn’s increasingly intersectional population. ODI is in the early stages of developing the space and will update the Board next meeting.

Dr. Tuitt and Letissa Reid, AVP of the Office of Institutional Equity (OIE), addressed common misunderstandings between the roles of ODI and OIE. Dr. Tuitt explained that ODI advocates for access and equity across all units, focusing on strategic planning and programming to frame and meet diversity and inclusion initiatives. Ms. Reid explained that OIE is the “equity” part of DEIJ. OIE has oversight regarding the accountability for discriminatory conduct. OIE’s primary areas of responsibilities are investigations, Title IX, training, and Affirmative Action. A goal is to increase OIE’s visibility and approachability.

Dr. Tuitt commented on the challenges, including the climate of fatigue and security concerns for those enacting DEI efforts. He emphasized increased demand related to the pandemic with the need to respond to numerous bias incidents. In response to these challenges, Dr. Tuitt has planned for a reinforced DEI infrastructure with more faculty and staff taking on DEI-focused roles.

AVP Rhyhart updated the Board on rebranding the “Office of Public Safety” to the “Office of University Safety.” He outlined the new mission statement and detailed the partnership with ODI to hire DEI professionals embedded within the Office of University Safety. He then discussed University Safety’s work with Student Affairs and the Mental Health Task Force to adopt different protocols to best respond to student needs and to provide resources.

- Campus Policing and Priorities Update – Chief of Police Gerald Lewis, Jr.

Chief Lewis provided updates on UConn PD initiatives, including the LiveSafe application, which will allow direct communication between the community and the police, and the Facility Dog Program for emotional support animals, pedestrian safety, and a public safety campaign for undergraduates. Chief Lewis also detailed efforts to recruit and retain police of color.

- Executive Session (as needed)

- Adjournment

On a motion by Ms. Lobo, seconded by Ms. Cantor, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting.

There being no further business appearing, the Committee meeting adjourned at 12:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Jonelle Reynolds, Ph.D.
Committee Secretary