

To: Senate Executive Committee  
From: Elizabeth Alice Clement, Chair of the University Diversity Committee  
Date: March 31, 2016

I have written this memo about the workings of the University Diversity Committee in the hopes that the Senate could establish a structure that would make it more effective voice for diversity and inclusion on campus. I am doing so as chair of the committee. Although this memo was circulated to the committee I only received feedback from six members (three over the email, and three in our most recent meeting.)

I have served on the University Diversity Committee for four years and have chaired it for two. In my two years as a committee member, I experienced it as a do-nothing committee that either had little independent work to accomplish.

Two years ago I was asked to serve as the chair the UDC. I agreed to accept the position as chair, if, and only if, we received a concrete set of tasks. I then asked AVP Stockton if there was anything she would like us to do. AVP Stockton indicated that it would be helpful if the committee investigated two issues:

- A mentoring program for diverse faculty and staff
- Develop questions for exit interviews for faculty and staff that addressed diversity

Given a clear charge, I agreed to serve as chair. For a variety of reasons, including the new faculty diversity hiring initiative introduced by VP Ruth Watkins, the committee focused first on the issue of mentoring diverse junior faculty. We approached this task from three directions: looking into what the PAC-12 was doing, researching best practices coming out of the social science literature, and assessing what resources for mentoring and diversity the University already had. We completed these tasks and made our recommendations, in the form of two long reports, and two shorter summary reports, which were submitted to the Senate Executive Committee in January. Some of the findings in these reports are being used in the development of a pilot mentoring program in the College of Humanities that will be implemented in the fall. This program will serve all new faculty, but its planning has been deeply influenced by what we have learned about effective strategies for mentoring diverse faculty. Depending on the success of that program, AVP Stockton plans to develop similar mentoring programs in all colleges at the University.

The committee also conducted a literature search on mentoring staff. The results of that research have been turned over to the PCSW (Presidential Commission on the Status of Women) as the chair of the PCSW (VP Mary Anne Berzins) indicated that her committee would like to take over those tasks.

In the course of the last two years, however, other problems related to the committee have arisen that have prompted me to suggest that we think hard about how this committee is structured, staffed, and given directives.

First, the committee is too large. There are currently 23 members, approximately a third of whom serve as ex officio. However, at meetings, we have only once had more than seven people attend, and there have been times that we have had as few as three. Staff on the committee have been far more reliable in their attendance and participation than the faculty or ex officio members. These problems with attendance occurred despite the fact that for the last two years we have had actual projects to work on that required extensive research and writing to complete. Furthermore, when I asked for help with various writing and editing tasks, I received few responses, none of which actually resulted in another committee member taking on work.

There are undoubtedly many reasons for this, but I believe some of these causes indicate how we might restructure the committee to make it more effective. I think the size of the committee makes members feel that their individual contributions don't matter, and or, that the committee will continue its work without their help. While several of the ex officio members have been faithful in their attendance and extremely helpful, many ex officio members have never attended. Most of these ex officio members serve on the committee solely because they have been assigned through their holding particular positions, and thus, may not want to be actively engaged in the committee's work, and or, are already working hard on diversity issues in their assignments. This contributes to the sense that the committee is a political entity, sponsored because it makes it look like the University cares about diversity, rather than a practical tool that should accomplish important work for the University. Although I believe that all members of the committee care deeply about diversity, the committee lacks a sense that it contributes to the important mission of furthering diversity and inclusion on campus.

The committee has also suffered from the problem of direction, and who should trigger us to consider particular questions. Not knowing that as a Senate Committee, we would take direction only from the Senate, I inadvertently triggered a small turf-war when I agreed to serve only on the condition that I take up AVP Stockton's charges. After some discussion, I was allowed pursue these charges and thus agreed to chair, but this scuffle revealed a problem with who could or should participate in directing the committee.

Finally, I am very proud of the work we have done in the past two years, but that work was only possible because the committee comes with a \$1500 yearly stipend (provided not by the Senate but by the OED). I used the money to pay two graduate students to conduct the preliminary research. I also paid them to write up their findings, which generated two "long reports." I then condensed these reports into short summaries and made recommendations, which a small portion of the committee then critiqued. I re-wrote these reports with that feedback, resulting in the documents you now have. The stipend was crucial in our carrying out our charge.

### **Options for Restructuring:**

1—Reduce the size of the committee from 23 to 6-8 people but keep it as a standing committee. Eliminate ex officio positions.

2—Convert the UDC from a standing committee into a taskforce that can be constituted when particular research or policy questions need to be investigated, but again with a reduction to 6-8 members and elimination of ex officio members. Given the number of these small and medium sized research tasks that I can think of off the top of my head, I anticipate that for then next three to five years, the committee would have significant work to do. (Among other things, we have not actually finished all of the tasks AVP Stockton set us to). However there is no point in having a committee merely for the sake of having a committee.

**Recommendations:**

1--Clarify who can task the committee with particular projects. Obviously, as a Senate Committee, the UDC must take direction from the Senate. But if the Senate has no specific tasks, the AVP for Equity and Diversity should be able to request the help of the committee. Not only does the AVP have a better sense of what work might need to be done, and who would be best to do it, but the AVP's office provides the stipend.

2--Conceptualize this committee as a research oriented group, who will use their expertise to think through and research specific problems related to the University's mission to promote and support diversity.

3--Maintain the small stipend. This money is essential to pay for work that the committee members can direct, but do not have time to do themselves. There is an impressive and growing social science literature that can be tapped for best practices related to diversity. To avail ourselves of that expertise, we must draw on graduate student labor to find, read through, and process it. This strategy also serves the important function of training our graduate students to do this sort of research and writing, and exposing them to best practices in diversity. I know that both of the graduate students I used while chairing the committee appreciated the financial support and learned a great deal about how to think through and address diversity in an academic setting. If the committee does not spend all of the money, and indeed, this year, I still have over \$500 left in the account, it can simply revert to the OED. Setting that money aside does not mean that we have to spend it, but saves us the time of having to allocate it when there are questions that a small amount of money would help us research.