

To: Senate

From: Elizabeth Clement, Chair, University Diversity Committee

We got a late start this year due first to the difficulty in appointing a chair, and then to questions related protocol, that is whether or not the Committee could take suggestions from the AVP for Diversity Kathryn Stockton. As a result, we did not have our initial meeting until January of 2015.

At our first meeting, AVP Stockton asked the Committee to consider two possible projects, the first on exit interviews for diverse faculty and staff leaving the University. The Committee agreed that for the purposes of both projects, we would define “diversity” broadly to include under-represented racial and ethnic minorities, women who are underrepresented in their areas of study, and LGBT folk. While some units on campus already use exit interviews, there is no consistent policy on this, nor do departments or programs have any guidance as to diversity related questions that might help the University make the exit interview process helpful in figuring out how to retain diverse faculty and staff. We have begun that project, and Professor Lawrence Parker has been particularly helpful in collecting sample questions and policies from other Universities as a way to establish a baseline for best practices. The committee expects to be able to offer suggestions to the AVP for diversity about exit interviews early in the Fall semester.

The Committee also took up the more complicated and difficult question of whether the University should develop a mentoring program for diverse faculty and staff, and if so, what form that program should take. Given that several members of the committee remained unsure as to whether there would be demand for such a program, the committee initially explored using focus groups to determine interest, and then what sorts of mentoring and support would be most helpful. However, the issue of focus groups and surveys turned out to be more complicated than we had first hoped, and questions of how we would structure focus groups, and who would own the data, became so complex that the committee agreed to put off designing any such data gathering tools until we have done further research into other aspects of mentoring.

As a result, at the April meeting, the committee agreed that we should pursue a three-prong approach that includes researching what the practices are at other universities (centered around but not limited to the PAC-12), finding and assessing any published research on best practices, and evaluating what is currently being done at the University Utah. The committee voted to dedicate the money available to us to hire a research assistant to help with the first two tasks. Mary Anne Berzins agreed to take on the third, as she has an interest in what the University of Utah is already doing, has already begun to explore it, and of course has an excellent network of contacts to draw on for information.

The current plan is to use the summer for research and to generate a report on the three research areas to be presented to the full committee in early September. After discussing the various findings of the report, the committee will then pursue some sort of

interviewing process of diverse faculty and staff about their opinions about what would be most helpful to them. At this point it is clear that these will not be formal “focus groups” but will probably involve some kind of group interviews with interested faculty and staff. Based on the research and the interviews, the Committee will then spend the spring drafting a series of recommendations for AVP Stockton as to what sorts of mentoring support might be most effective in retaining and promoting diverse faculty.