

President's Diversity Council

April 12, 2022

Plaster Student Union Club

Attendees:

President Smart	Michael Chapman	Isabelle Hernandez
Dr. Dee Siscoe	Nick Morgan	Adriana Avila
Dr. Rabekah Stewart	Vernard Farley	Stef Hall
Umutoni Sebunyenzi	Rachel Weaver	Peggy Jones
Tyler Peters	Alexander Swalley	Faith Griedd
Ira Assmann	Devin Schehrer	Diane Kingham
Michaela Lucas	Sydney Libowitz	Donicia Goheen
Teresa Frederick	Drew Minnis	Kendra Damron
Gabrielle Crafford	Katelyn Bellings	Stephen Spates
Anthony Lakin	Bre'Lyn Young	Andy Oliver
Katie Chandler	Wes Pratt	Georgia Wright
Luther Harris	Serena Whorton	Zacharias Anderson
Elliot Barber	Indigo Tran	Rachel Benson
Colin Weber	Preston Clubb	Goodnews Ehie
Chrissy Nguyen	Natosha Lancaster	
Aaron Luhm		

Two additional individuals attended on Zoom who could not be identified.

Introduction

Dr. Stewart, Assistant Vice President for Multicultural Student Services, began the meeting at 3:38 p.m. with greetings to attendees and stated that these meetings are opportunities for students and administration to come together and have dialogue regarding student engagement concerns. It is an open forum for students to discuss engagement, concerns, structure, and the future of the MRC. She followed with a poll of attendees. Undergraduate students, graduate students, Faculty, and student employees were represented.

Dr. Stewart relayed that the position of Assistant Director is posted, and the position of Director has had two interviews. She encouraged students to participate in the interview process and impressed that student voices are valued and to encourage others to get involved. Comments from the students regarding the search process included having longevity as a consideration when making a decision.

Students Rachel Weaver, Tyler Peters, and Elliot Barber led the student discussion.

Student Concerns: Diversity Training and Staff Retention

Students expressed concerns on how MSU incentivizes someone to stay and make them more comfortable?

Wes Pratt, the Vice President of Diversity and Inclusion, gave the background for the faculty affinity group Bear Bridges. This group consists of mentors and mentees. This group provides a support system and has been 100% successful in retaining faculty. Cultural awareness trainings are mandatory for new faculty and staff and the trainings have been extended to the larger surrounding community. Reports

are provided on a regular basis to the Board of Governors. These can be found on the Board of Governors website <https://www.missouristate.edu/BOG/Agendas/default.htm> The report that was given at the February Board of Governors meeting is found on page 104 at <https://www.missouristate.edu/BOG/Files/Agendas/2-18-2022-BOG-Agenda.pdf>

In response to the question of staff support he responded that his office works with HR to provide these trainings on a regular basis. All staff and faculty are required as part of their employment to complete the training.

President Smart added MSU is committed to recruiting and maintaining staff that look like our students. His direct reports are graded on diversity and inclusion in their yearly Appraisal and Development Plan. The goal is to have 20% new hires as diverse. Pre-covid we had affinity groups for staff and have had a thriving staff mentorship program for the last 5 years. It is important that new staff get connected to the area and university. Additionally, there are many advantages that staff enjoy, these include such benefits as: tuition waivers, Staff Diversity Composition initiative to assist staff in obtaining advanced degrees, a great health plan, 2 weeks leave at the end of the year in addition to regular vacation.

Students asked how MSU can incentivize diversity training for those who do not wish to participate. President Smart responded that all new faculty and department heads are required to complete the diversity training. Students asked about staff training in cultural competency, one of the three pillars of MSU's Public Affairs mission. Students asked how we can tackle social issues that afflict burdens on students, such as the use of the N-word and the refusal to use and recognize pronouns. Students asked if these trainings are effective, and if MSU could push the trainings more. Dr. Siscoe responded that Human Resources requires a list of online job trainings that must be retaken every three years. More details about these trainings will be provided at the town hall.

Students also asked how responsibilities are delegated to each job position. Vice President of Student Affairs, Dr. Siscoe, responded that every position has a job description which is reviewed and updated before a search for a new person is began. Human Resources approves all new responsibilities that are added to the position descriptions. If additional duties are added after someone has taken a position, employees are made aware of these duties. President Smart gave the example that as professionals, employees must figure out how the job can get done when staffing is reduced, taking on extra duties is common in the workplace. The issues MSU is facing in retention is a national issue.

Students asked why staff retention is low. President Smart answered that it is a national climate of low retention, there are many factors that contribute. Some solutions would be creating more connections to the campus and community, and becoming more committed to improve the community climate. The University is active in impressing students and staff to improve relationships and reviews demographics to find out where the lack of knowledge, education, and resources are needed. Addressing these issues is a constant work in progress.

Students believe that they need more support when interacting with staff and asked how MSU can be more specific when addressing issues. Wes Pratt shared that the University understands there are challenges and encouraged everyone to continue moving forward. Students asked how the student body could help support the LRP, and that we need to have a way to process student complaints that produces resolutions. Katie Chandler, recently elected Senior Class President for the 2022-2023 academic year, brought up that SGA is the forum to express concerns to administration. There is a need to explore better communication and showcasing ways to fix issues.

SGA

Chrissy Nguyen, recently elected Student Body President for the 2022-2023 school year, told students to bring their concerns to SGA. She stated that there are many committees that are able to create impactful change, and that everyone must sit down and find feasible solutions. A student asked about students who don't want to get involved, and wondered if SGA will still listen to their concerns. Students want transparency and to be treated like adults, student leaders want to work with all students. SGA will start to engage more with the MRC. Chrissy asked that they don't want to stop here, she asked that students take the information and take it to their own organizations to develop more change.

Craig Hall Accessibility

Students brought up the inaccessibility of Craig Hall. It lacks ramps and auto-doors. The University is adding a ramp and an elevator to the building.

Formal Statements from the University

Students asked what the University is doing to make LGBTQ+ students feel safe and welcome at MSU and asked if the University will release statements regarding hate crimes. President Smart responded that if any crime happens on campus the University a formal statement from the University is made. All situations are evaluated, as well as underlying circumstances, and that is how it is decided if a formal statement will be made. Other departments have their own processes for making statements. He stated that the University is committed to marginalized students including LGBTQ+ .A student also brought up that sometimes the university has to also stay neutral.

Offerings at the MRC

A Student asked if the Multicultural Programs department could have faculty in Diversity and Inclusion to help collaborate to offer trainings for the Office of Multicultural Programs. Dr. Stewart stated that Diversity and Inclusion is happy to collaborate across divisions. Wes Pratt stated that Lyle Foster addresses tough talks, and Bears Lead happens monthly.

Closing remarks

President Smart thanked students for attending and for sharing their thoughts. He stated that it is important that students are heard and offered to speak to other student organizations. President Smart stated that the University doesn't want them to be invisible, the University is on their side