

Recommendations from the Council for Equity and Community for Our Restructuring and Moving Forward

June 10, 2011

The Council for Equity and Community (CEC) has spent this spring considering the question of how it might be restructured moving forward. After looking at a variety of potential models for accomplishing equity and community goals at both peer and aspirational institutions and based on our experiences after 3 years of doing this work at Lehigh, it has become clear to us that, in order to be optimally effective, any reorganization of the CEC should be done within the context of a more coordinated, institution-wide effort to enhance equity and community on campus.

The five recommendations we make below, therefore, extend beyond President Gast's initial request just to supply a suggested plan for restructuring the CEC and have expanded into what the CEC views as a potential start toward supporting the new Vice Provost for Academic Diversity (VPAD) and developing an "action plan" for building a more equitable community. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss in more detail any or all of the suggestions we make, below, toward helping Lehigh move forward.

Recommendation #1. Articulate the Issues and Define Terms

The CEC recommends that the first priority be to come to a broad consensus about exactly what the needs are and to clarify our language around these issues. If "equitable community" is among our core values, then how do we operationalize words like "equity" and "community" within the context of a small, private, expensive, and academically competitive institution that is physically removed from a large, urban environment? Do we have an equitable community now? If not, then what, specifically, needs to be different?

Similarly, we need to decide what other terms are appropriate and not appropriate to use within the Lehigh context. Words that have been used in the past like "tolerance" and "hospitable" carry with them fairly negative connotations and perpetuate the idea of an asymmetrical relationship between "them" versus "us." And, likewise, less controversial words like "diversity" and "inclusion" are being defined myriad ways across campus, which is impeding dialog.

Once we have identified and defined the terms we will use, then *all* communications need to use them consistently and correctly within our context in order to facilitate continued dialog and create the basis for a common understanding --in much the same way terms like "first-year student" and "pre-tenure faculty" have been redefined on campus in order to represent better who these constituencies are and our relationships to them within the Lehigh community. We need to avoid abstract language and ambiguous meaning about these needed institutional changes in order to assure clarity and consistency of the message.

The CEC would be happy to work with the VPAD this summer on drafting a document for consideration by the broader campus community during the Fall 2011 semester that articulates the needs and defines terms.

Recommendation #2. Adopt a "Principles of Our Equitable Community" Statement

With the issues articulated and language defined, the CEC recommends the next step be to create and adopt a university-wide statement that makes clear the value we place on creating "an inclusive and equitable community" as discussed in the Strategic Plan. The entire university community (students, staff, faculty, administration) should be encouraged to endorse this document in some visible way and, once adopted, this statement should be listed among the central value statements of

the University and the range of penalties for violating this statement should be made very clear. (For example, Princeton's "Statement on Diversity and Community" is listed among other principles of general conduct as part of their "Rights, Rules, and Responsibilities" <http://www.princeton.edu/pub/rrr/part1/>).

Over the summer of 2009, a subgroup of the CEC (including Henry Odi, Jennifer Swann, and Yasmin Bugaighis) worked with Dr. Leon Washington to draft a statement (see Appendix A) based on the UC Davis "Principles of Community." At the time, the CEC subgroup consulted with UC Davis' Executive Vice Chancellor for Campus and Community Relations, who was responsible for implementing the statement. The approach UC Davis took was designed to engage the entire university community in establishing the same kind of culture that we would like to have at Lehigh. The CEC endorses their process as "successful best practice" and recommends that we replicate at Lehigh the UC Davis approach (or something very similar).

The CEC would be happy to work with the VPAD this summer on revisiting this statement with others and proposing a "roll-out" campaign for the campus community to begin with the start of classes in the Fall 2011 semester.

Recommendation #3. Set Measurable Goals with Accountabilities for Reaching Them

During the Fall 2011 semester, the CEC also recommends that Lehigh decide specifically what kind of community we aspire to be, set measurable short- and long-term goals, and clearly inform all constituents about what they will be. These goals for creating a more equitable community at Lehigh should come from the University administration and be clearly aligned to all facets of the Strategic Plan, which was generated with broad-based support. It will be important to demonstrate clearly how our diversity goals are a "good fit" with --not a radical change in-- that strategic plan as they relate to our "equitable community" core value. Senior leadership, both administrative and academic, should make very clear in everything they say and do that we are about to embark on a serious attempt to enhance equity and community at Lehigh.

The identified short- and long-term goals should also make very clear who will be accountable for each outcome and state the metrics/criteria that will be used for measuring success. Regular accountability reports should be required so that administrative leaders can become more aware of the core diversity challenges they confront. Specific University leaders should also be assigned to closely monitor the campus climate as it affects underrepresented groups. Once or twice a semester, they should hold a breakfast or luncheon meeting with one underrepresented group or engage in structured surveys or focus groups with them.

Recommendation #4. "Sell" the Plan and Build Consensus

Finally, in order to benefit everyone involved and preclude any potential objections, the CEC further suggests that it will be important to "sell" the need for an action plan and reach a broad consensus about the importance of any new diversity programs before trying to carry them out. That approach will significantly enhance the speed and effectiveness of any new programs.

To facilitate consensus building, communications about the goals we set must involve both the *what* ("We're about to do X...") and the *why* ("We need to do X because..."). Why does achieving an equitable community or increasing diversity on campus matter? The CEC believes there are many *well-meaning* people on campus who cannot really answer this question beyond the fact that it is somehow "politically correct." Communications about our goals should be written to help educate these people about the importance of making progress in this area.

Additionally, more subtle messages about the importance being placed on reaching these goals should be conveyed in much the same way the campus community was “taught” about the importance of instructional technology integration (early 2000s) and becoming more globally aware (2005-present). For example, the Provost’s Office might develop and disseminate a public document that describes the value of linking diversity to academic excellence and the curricular and extra-curricular mission of Lehigh. That document might describe the programs, courses, and services that demonstrate our success in creating and sustaining a diverse community. The Provost’s Office and other units might also convene a regular series of academic-affairs-sponsored forums on diversity, on topics like “scrutinizing the academic policies and structures that enhance diversity,” “diversity and successful learning communities,” and “diversity as a research agenda.”

Finally, consensus building around the action plan might be further facilitated by appealing to the “treasured values” of influential groups across campus. For instance, reminding alumni that Asa Packer’s vision for Lehigh was that it be a place where diverse people might come together to solve complex problems in the world.

Recommendation #5. Create a More Functional Infrastructure for Systemic and Sustainable Change

Over the last few months, we have considered several possible revised structures for the CEC based on its potential role and function. From those conversations, several key “design features” emerged that we feel are important to build into any new CEC structure. A revised CEC structure should:

- Be representative but also informed by expertise (including the wide range of experts on campus who might not actually be members of the CEC).
- Include decision makers who are accountable to the University’s equitable community goals.
- Improve and expand 2-way communication between the CEC and University leadership.
- Enhance the CEC’s ability to execute multiple tasks more effectively while still being responsive to immediate needs when they arise.

Additionally, the CEC has observed that there are already many entities doing related equity and community work across campus, but that these efforts have not been highly coordinated toward achieving concrete goals for the institution. Consequently, as noted in Jackie Matthew’s *Proposal for Promoting and Reinforcing Synergy for Campus Equity and Inclusion Activities* (see Appendix B) “What results is a fractured approach that does not maximize the value of each area’s work, as well as creating a lack of cohesive awareness in the campus community of all the activities and progress that are occurring.” We concur with the Matthew’s proposal that “What is lacking is a mechanism to bring together all the offices and groups across campus focusing on varied aspects of Lehigh’s broader equity and inclusion mission.” However, unlike the Matthew’s proposal, we do not believe this void calls for the creation of a separate “Campus Equity and Inclusion Coalition.” In our view, the creation of this coalition creates an unnecessary additional organizational “layer.” Further, it is unclear to us what discrete role the CEC would then play within this model.

Instead, we recommend restructuring the CEC so that *it* becomes the mechanism or “infrastructure” that coordinates Lehigh’s broader equity and inclusion mission, in much the same way that SPIG has become the mechanism for coordinating our strategic plan implementation. The newly formulated purpose for the CEC in this next phase of its evolution would be to sustain and advance the institutionalization of diversity and inclusion through integration, broader engagement, and connectivity across the University.

In this model, “key units” on campus (department, college, office) that are instrumental to advancing the University’s equitable community mission would be identified and charged by the President/Provost with appointing a representative to serve on the CEC. Each of these key units would also be charged with devising an “Equitable Community Plan” based on the University’s stated needs and goals (see items 1-3 above). Each unit’s plan would have specific metrics and a time line that are informed by research completed by the unit. For example, the targeted percentage of women or minorities in the unit would be determined by the percentage available nationwide or locally for that unit.

The new CEC would meet on a monthly basis in order to help each unit form its plan, monitor progress, find ways to capitalize on existing strengths/resources, and assist in overcoming barriers toward achieving the stated goals (e.g. advocate for additional resources, pursue policy updates, facilitate organizational changes). The CEC would also periodically engage in discussions with the President and Provost about progress toward our larger institutional goals (item # 3 above) and other items on the institution’s broader Strategic Plan as they pertain to building equitable community.

CEC membership would be made up of the key unit representatives and the VPAD as an *ex-officio* member. Also, for as long as the SPIG Campus Climate Subgroup continues to function, we further recommend the chair of that group serve as an *ex-officio* member of the CEC. Leadership of the CEC would continue to be facilitated by co-chairs (one faculty, one staff), appointed by the President/Provost. The CEC co-chairs would also represent the CEC as members of SPIG and attend meetings of the Board of Trustees Subcommittee on Diversity and Inclusion.

While we do not feel we are in a position to specify exactly which units are “key” to making the new CEC optimally effective, we do suggest that the list be relatively inclusive and at least incorporate areas responsible for recruitment/hiring, retention, education, student life, advocacy, outreach (community, alumni, other external constituencies), communications, research/scholarship, development, and facilities. Units should also include strong representation from among the faculty and students, such as the Faculty Standing Committee on Student Life, a new faculty diversity committee, each of the four colleges, the undergraduate Student Senate, Greek life, and the Graduate Student Council (which are not currently on the Matthews proposal list). Additionally, it will be important for key unit representatives to be in a position to lead their unit’s diversity/inclusion initiative, assess progress, and authoritatively report back to the larger group on progress toward meeting those unit goals.

Because the new CEC’s revised purpose will be action oriented, it should be divided into subgroups and assigned with tasks from the identified institutional goals (see item #3, above) to accomplish within a specific timeline. A “CEC Executive Committee” should be formed to oversee the management and direction of the CEC. This oversight group might include the CEC Co-chairs, President and Provost, Chair of the Board of Trustees Subcommittee on Diversity and Inclusion, Chair of the Department Chairs’ Group, Chair of the Faculty Diversity Committee (proposed), a representative from University Communications, the college liaisons, the undergraduate Student Senate president, the Graduate Student Council president, and the VPAD.

Once a new structure for the CEC has been identified, we recommend that it be codified in the University’s “Rules and Procedures.” Further, there should be a campus-wide announcement that clearly states the CEC’s specific role on campus and specifies exactly what it is, what it does, what type of resource the CEC will be to the campus community moving forward, and how it fits into the

overall university structure (position among other University standing committees, connection to President's/Provost's Offices and Board of Trustees).

And, finally, while the larger issues of "campus climate" and assessing Lehigh's progress toward achieving the other core values stated in the strategic plan are also clearly an important part of creating a more equitable community, the CEC suggests this broader charge remain with the SPIG Campus Climate subgroup. It is important that the new CEC's focus be more narrowly defined in the ways described above in order for it to make substantive and sustainable change at Lehigh.

Respectfully submitted,

The Council for Equity and Community

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Appendix A

The Principles of our Equitable Community

Lehigh University is first and foremost an educational institution, committed to developing the future leaders of our changing global society. Every member of our community has a personal responsibility to acknowledge and practice the following basic principles:

We **affirm the inherent dignity** in all of us, and we maintain an inclusive and equitable community.

We **recognize and celebrate** the richness contributed to our lives by our diverse community.

We acknowledge that our society carries within it historical and deep-rooted misunderstandings and biases, and therefore we will work together to **engage mutual understanding** among the members of our community.

We **confront and reject discrimination**, including that based on race, ethnicity, gender, religion, age, disability, sexual orientation, political beliefs, or any differences that have been excuses for misunderstanding, dissension, or hatred.

We **affirm freedom of expression** within our community and uphold our commitment to the highest standards of **respect, civility, courtesy** and **sensitivity** towards every individual.

We **recognize each person's right to think and speak** as dictated by personal belief and to disagree with or counter another's point of view.

We **promote open expression of our individuality and our differences** within the bounds of university regulations.

We **acknowledge each person's obligation to the community** of which we have chosen to be a part.

We take **pride** in building and maintaining a culture that is founded on the principles of **unity** and **respect**.

Drafted by the CEC during the Summer 2009 and revised May/June 2011. Concept Adapted from The University of California, Davis' "Principles of Community" Project.

**Proposal for Promoting and Reinforcing Synergy
for Campus Equity and Inclusion Activities**

Over the past several months I have been pondering the question of how to maximize synergy among the various offices and groups that are addressing interlocking aspects of equity and inclusion on Lehigh's campus. The recent appointment of Henry Odi to the newly created role of vice provost for academic diversity provides the opportunity to evaluate our organizational structure. The associate provost for academic diversity is primarily centered on the recruitment and retention of faculty which is an important component of campus equity and inclusion. The Council on Equity and Community (CEC) is also a key player in this arena serving in an advisory capacity to the university president and senior leadership. Departments such as Human Resources, the various Student Affairs offices charged with advocacy and equity and academic life and student transitions, and now the vice provost for academic diversity are charged with providing equity and inclusion programmatic support to students, faculty and staff. More departments and groups involved in this broad effort are listed below. What is lacking is a mechanism to bring together all the offices and groups across campus focusing on varied aspects of Lehigh's broader equity and inclusion mission. What results is a fractured approach that does not maximize the value of each area's work, as well as creating a lack of cohesive awareness in the campus community of all the activities and progress that are occurring.

Lehigh University offers a wide range of resources and offices to address the extensive range of needs under the diversity and inclusion umbrella. Some of these offices and resources are listed below although this is not an all-inclusive list.

- Academic Department Chairs Group
- ADVANCE Grant Committee
- Chaplain
- Community Service Office
- Counsel on Equity and Community
- Counseling and Psychological Services
- Dean of Students
- Disabilities Services
- ERAC
- Faculty Mentoring Committee
- Harassment Officer
- Human Resources
- LGBTQQIA Services
- Office of Multicultural Affairs
- Ombuds Office
- Police Department
- President's Office
- Provost Office—Deputy Provosts and Associate Provost for Academic Diversity
- Women's Center

Some of these offices/groups have a strong programmatic focus on one or more key elements of equity and inclusion while others have a complementary relationship. Groups such as the CEC and ERAC function in an advisory capacity. The challenge is how to best leverage all the resources and

activities of these offices/groups to move Lehigh forward and provide the university community with evidence of positive and sustained momentum. While informal communication and collaboration certainly take place, a more formal structure would be helpful. A Campus Equity and Inclusion Coalition or Roundtable with representatives from key groups listed above would promote information sharing and foster collaboration. The group would include representatives from the offices and groups charged with aspects of equity and inclusion and would meet on a regular schedule such as every other month. The chair would rotate annually following an established schedule of representatives from the major offices. It would be helpful to have a staff member from University Communications and Public Affairs assigned to the group to facilitate campus communication.

Meeting agendas would include a reporting out of major anticipated and planned initiatives to encourage and facilitate opportunities for collaboration and leveraging of resources. For example, the recent work on Bias Incident Reporting would have been an opportune topic for this group. How we welcome new faculty, staff and students to our campus community has surfaced as an area of focus in a number of campus departments/groups such as the SPIG Investing in Faculty and Staff group, the SPIG Campus Culture Aspirations group, the CBE Staffing Study conducted by HR, and the First Year Experience committee, to name just a few. This would be another good topic for this proposed Coalition/Roundtable. Another possible area for collaboration is a speaker series or colloquia on topical areas of equity and inclusion. As various parts of campus focus on these and other key aspects of equity and inclusion, the Campus Equity and Inclusion Coalition/Roundtable would provide the venue for a fuller sharing of initiatives and resources.

Bringing key university players together regularly to discuss and promote the many diversity and inclusion initiatives and resources would provide more structure for enhanced cross-campus collaboration. The emerging synergy and leveraging of resources would bring greater and more lasting impact. I would be interested in your thoughts about this proposal and would be pleased to discuss it further.

Jackie Matthews
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