

Moving from the University Diversity Leadership Committee: Establishing a Council for Equity and Community Lehigh University

Overview

Established in the Spring 2005, the University Leadership Committee (UDLC) was built upon a solid 20-year historical precedent of Lehigh University's interest in actively promoting an inclusive community of campus diversity, receptive of all embodiments of difference such as age, color, disability, gender, gender identity, marital status, national or ethnic origin, race, religion, sexual orientation, socio-economic background, and veteran status. In addition to the goal of promoting a welcoming campus climate, the UDLC also sought to significantly improve retention rates for students, staff, and faculty of underrepresented groups; recruit members of such underrepresented groups; and further integrate diversity with ongoing institutional operations and strategic planning.

Seeking to make the Lehigh University community a true reflection of social diversity, the UDLC commissioned an outside consultant, Dr. Sue Rankin, of Rankin and Associates, to aid in making a comprehensive internal assessment to identify Lehigh's successes and challenges in relation to underrepresented groups. The assessment took the form of several fact-finding groups and a Campus Climate Survey administered to Lehigh undergraduate and graduate students, staff, and faculty in October and November of 2006. The subsequent results of the Rankin Report lead to the creation of a Goals/Actions Grid as a tool for marking change and progress in the realm of diversity at Lehigh.

Based on the structural recommendations made in the Rankin Report and with the support of UDLC members, Lehigh University decided to disband the UDLC and its Task Forces to prepare for and sustain the next generation of diversity and equity initiatives. It is the responsibility of every member of the Lehigh community to move the university toward realizing its vision for equity and community. To help the university determine both the individual and collective roles all can play to foster this vision, The *Council for Equity and Community* (CEC) has been formed. Reporting directly to the president, the CEC will be a standing body to help implement and sustain university-wide goals and initiatives.

Working Council Members and Council Structure

- The CEC will consist of Lehigh University faculty, staff, and administrators who have demonstrated a commitment to issues of equity and community through their research, teaching, work or service.
- The Council will also include advocacy offices/units and other offices whose primary mission is serving and/or addressing the concerns of underrepresented/underserved populations.
- The Council will have access to and inform the president, senior officers, deans, and other leadership on a regular basis. Such an exchange will promote opportunities to further anchor diversity goals within institutional strategies and plans.

Mission and Duties of the Council for Equity and Community

The *Council for Equity and Community* will form action groups to accomplish goals based on those identified in the UDLC's final report of 2007:

1. **Curriculum/Pedagogy**
Enrich the curriculum by enhancing student and faculty learning about varied cultures, experiences, and perspectives; incorporate learning to foster critical, creative, and compassionate student and faculty thinking about power and privilege dynamics.
2. **Research/Scholarship/Service/Co-Curricular**
Create a campus environment that values difference by fostering and recognizing activities outside the classroom (e.g., research/scholarship, community service/experimental engagement, and co-curricular programming).
3. **Recruitment/Retention of Students**
Increase the recruitment and retention of underrepresented/underserved populations among students.
4. **Recruitment/Retention of Faculty, Staff, and Administrators**
Increase the recruitment and retention of underrepresented/underserved populations among faculty, staff, and administrators.
5. **Institutional Policies, Procedures, Practices and Awareness**
Examine and ensure the means that shape, govern and define institutional culture, actively incorporate and promote equal access, opportunity, and success for all students, faculty, staff, and administrators.
6. **Inter-group and Intra-group Relations**
Foster a safe, equitable, and respectful campus climate free from all forms of discrimination, harassment, violence, and sexual victimization.
7. **External Relations**
Strengthen and expand working relationships with external constituencies (e.g., the Bethlehem and Lehigh Valley communities, alumni, law enforcement, business, government, non-profit agencies, K-12 schools, other colleges, religious/cultural institutions, community organizations, media) building on collective strengths to promote equitable communities.

The strategies and specific tactics of each action group will be determined by the CEC with input from the larger university community. These efforts will address specific goals or combinations of goals with key implementation plans and time frames. In addition to realizing the goals identified by the final report of the UDLC, the Council will also expand on these initiatives by incorporating future measures to make "Lehigh a community of difference whose members are transformed through meaningful experiences with one another."

Process for the Creation of the Council

The council should contain 14 members: students, faculty, staff who have demonstrated a commitment to issues of equity and community through their research, teaching, work or service. It will also include advocacy offices/units and other offices whose primary mission is serving and/or addressing the concerns of underrepresented/underserved populations. It will be created by the election of nine members – three faculty, three staff and three students. Five additional members will be appointed by the President, including the co-chairs.

Co-chairs: one faculty, one staff

Members will serve for three-year terms; student members will have one- and two-year terms.

We are seeking:

- One senior (one year)
- One sophomore or junior (two years)
- One graduate student (two years)
- Three faculty members
- Three staff members

Nominations from the entire campus community will be solicited by Faculty Steering Committee and Employee Relations Advisory Committee.

Student members can be elected or appointed by the student senate and graduate senate. Those standing for election will need to make a brief statement about their participation.

Nominations and Elections for the Council for Equity and Community

- Council members will be chosen through a combination of individuals chosen for their expertise and experience and campus-wide nominations, with election of individuals from four representative groups (faculty, undergraduate students, graduate students, and staff).
- Council will have a term limit of three years for faculty and staff and one or two years for students.
- As outlined above, “action groups” will be established by the Council for Equity and Community and will include others not on the CEC.

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