UNIVERSITY STAFF ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Business Meeting Agenda
January 27, 2021
Carmen Zoom
8:30 - 10:30 a.m.

In Attendance:
Chrissy Sprouse, Steven Loborec, Shea Ryan, Steven Blalock, Randall McKenzie, Justin Lahmers, Stacey Houser, Faith Kline, Lauren Gannon-Evans, Kynthia Drosch, Kate Blevins, Sherri Hall, Emily Kelley, Annie Bingman, Danielle Jennings, Ferdinand Avila-Medina, Sandy Otis, Jennifer Elliott, Courtney Gandy, Patrick Weeks, Elizabeth Hosket, Brittany Crall, Drew Miller, Tina Bogac, Katie Watkins, Brittany Savko, and Laurel Van Dromme.

Call to Order
Adoption of the Agenda
Approval of the Previous Meeting's Minutes January 13, 2021

Executive Committee Reports
Chair: Chrissy met new Deputy Chief of Staff Sarah Bohman for university president’s Chief of Staff JR Blackburn. Currently, USAC does not receive a charge from the university president, unlike PPCW, which does. USAC considers and works on a lot of ideas, and we feel spread thin. Chrissy asked for more direction from President Johnson, given that some university issues are also or better addressed by other units or leaders in the university and our work may only go so far. Steve Loborec noted that both USAC and PPCW are intended to advise the president, yet USAC is not listed on the university president’s webpage for Leadership and Committees. Chrissy has also been urging review of USAC’s all-staff email by the president’s office, so that we can send that soon. In OnCampus today, there will be two listening town halls to inform the search committee for the next University Provost. We will begin working on our annual report soon. Please share with Chrissy your work or service related to taskforces and committees by February 1st.

Chair Elect: Steven has a good group of USAC members for New Member Task Force, and he appreciates the volunteers. He also needs assistance with updating our written materials: position profile, and the review process’ application form and rubric for evaluation. General response seems to be that the applications process seemed fair. Do we want to review any language in the application or interviews based on today’s and previous conversations about racial and social justice or even COVID-19. In doing so, we may want to remove other questions to keep the application and/or interview of an appropriate. Laurel suggested sending possible feedback on the application to Steven by end of this week, so that we can make determinations and then post the position. We can look at the interview process with more time since that comes later on our calendar.

Communications:

Secretary/Treasurer:
Subcommittee Reports

Inclusive Excellence (IE): Ferdinand Avila-Medina noted that they will be presenting IE’s plan for a Pride and Ownership Conversations series at our next USAC meeting. Chrissy mentioned that this may be later in February, as the next meeting’s agenda is very full with presentations on USAC officer elections, Suicide Prevention in the Workplace, and Staff Career Development Grants overview officers.

Governance: Steven Blalock appreciates receiving subcommittee review of USAC bylaws by February 26.

Outreach & Engagement (O&E): Lauren Gannon-Evans said that outreach to local and regional SACs is going well, and several new ones have asked for the USAC presentation, which is only 10 minutes and PowerPoint presentation is already created. The new invitations came from OSU Mansfield, University Libraries, OSU Lima, and OSU Marion (February 3 is the next one). There is real interest for winter recess (i.e., 3 additional paid days off to all employees) across local and regional SACs. College of Vet Med SAC asked about establishing a university-wide mentorship program.

Staff Affairs (SA): Sandy Otis announced that USAC has 7 nominations for the inaugural Staff in the Spotlight. First month’s deadline is February 7, and the Subcommittee will review and make decisions by February 12. SA has sent updates on flex toolkit to PPCW and received their feedback, so will update USAC on that soon. Stacey Houser noted the discussion of winter recess with Office of Legal Affairs (OLA) led to a recommendation that we may need to draft a policy for winter recess. OLA will examine any state rules that may preclude this plan, although Stacey noted that Ohio University already offers this. SA will be meeting with OHR soon, too, and other Big Ten schools will be contacted to ask if they have policies on this matter. Or perhaps a clarification via FAQs maybe enough, and we should ask Brandon Gibbs his thought on this. Steven Loborec asked if Winter Recess can be considered 3 more university holidays, and therefore fall within current university policies. Lauren Gannon-Evans suggested the Ohio Staff Council of Higher Education, which Annie Bingman sits on now, as they may have data collected on the topic already from Ohio public institutions.

Task Forces

Wellness: Randall McKenzie reported that they haven’t met this month yet. In reflecting on earlier comments made about the call to diversify wellness efforts, he thinks that talking further with IE and SA about incorporating his taskforce work with their work on equity. Steven Loborec added that this may be a way for USAC to differentiate its work in wellness from other activities at the university.

OHR Liaison Report

Items for Informational Purposes

From Equity Talk to Equity Walk – Continued book discussion moderated by Dr. Jacquelyn Meshelemiah, PhD, LSW, Associate VP for Diversity and Inclusion, and Director, Leadership Initiatives for Women of Color (8:30 – 9:30 a.m.)

- Dr. Jacquelyn Meshelemiah returned to continue our conversation, begun on 12.9.2020, to discuss the last 2 chapters. She resituated our conversation by posing the question: How can we create an environment at Ohio State that provides social justice for everyone, and do something different than what we have in the past? Looking at our policies, practices, and procedures is a key take away from Chapter 1. We want to be
sure we are talking about the same thing based on our words and definitions. Being attuned to where everyone is at the university as individuals and units; and as students or employees is a key take away from Chpt. 2. For Chpt. 3, we want to be sure we’re collecting the right data, and also disaggregating data to look at smaller populations-by race, geography, by class rank, etc., to make sure we’re providing all the supports that different groups need to succeed.

- Chpt. 4: Aligning Strategic Priorities. We need to think carefully on our allocation of resources. We are reviewing curricula to ensure we’re being inclusive and removing barriers. We are reviewing high impact practices elsewhere and at Ohio State, and adopting what will help us move forward. We are looking at Administration, Staff and Faculty, and also looking to our Mission and Vision for how we are conducting our affairs.

- The trends in this work at Ohio State include:
  - Health sciences colleges reviewing inter-professional education with a review of diversity and inclusion. These groups are now looking at change and are being proactive, not just celebrating certain days of the year as in the past.
  - College of Arts & Sciences is planning a retreat for key student-facing groups to enable deeper analysis and allow for safe place for conversation.
  - College of Pharmacy is hiring a DEI position to work on diversifying the hiring of faculty and staff and how we support students!
  - Regional colleges are looking to work in the community to improve relations.

- Other trends across higher education are the publication of Diversity Statements and defining specifically what diversity means, including but not limited to federally protected classes, at their institution. Some hiring processes are requiring applicants to provider their own diversity statements. Being more inclusive is considered now an asset and not a reflection of an absence of something. New words in vocabulary include Equity and Belonging. Student success involves more than just academic services, as universities are now looking at providing social support to enhance their students’ success. Climate surveys are more common now to ensure the necessary data to drive decision-making is occurring.

- Regarding climate surveys at Ohio State: there is not consistency across Ohio State about whether climate surveys are conducted, or the data shared, or impact decisions. We must be intentional with our supervisors, chairs, deans, et al, to ask that our units conduct climate surveys and be thoughtful for what is included in these surveys. Have taskforces been useful? They are often reactionary, and only sometimes lead to becoming standing committees with proactive goals and regular reporting to the unit.

- Regarding language at Ohio State, are we talking about the same things? If not, how is that problematic? Results will be fuzzy if we’re not all on the same page. Today, Ohio State does not have a current action plan on diversity, although we’re working on one now. In contrast, 11 months ago we moved very quickly to respond to COVID-19, so we know we can do great things quickly. Ohio State did not fold as an organization and most employees were kept on payroll. If we really want to be an equity-minded university, what do we need to do? We need a will. We may not have that yet. We have a responsibility to the communities around us, and we have the skill and talent to do more and share with others. Some administrators and some units don’t want to collect data, because they don’t want to know about the issues or problems that may make them look bad. We need to be comfortable taking the blame and sharing the credit. And yet change can be positive and uplifting.

- Other new trends in higher education include strategic planning that leads to diversity action plans; assessments and data-informed decision-making; scorecards and other accountability measures; and establishing a hybrid of decentralized and centralized
responsibilities. Data collection can show us where we can do more, and where we’re doing good things now. We need to engage all stakeholders to conduct a SWOT analysis of internal factors: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. This kind of review can help us determine what roles we each play for change.

• What have been some of the good things that Ohio State has done in the past 10 years?
  
  o Recently, we’ve been adding conversations about racial and social justice regularly in meetings.
  
  o We’re doing more on wellness over the past 10 years, but there is concern by some that it’s “too white.” The programs are not doing enough to address health disparities as a reason for why some populations continue to have challenges to being well. We need programs directed to more specific populations. We also need to discuss the twin pandemics of COVID-19 and racism, which can be exhausting for our black and brown populations, even those that are well-paid but are still dealing with high levels of stress tied to their race. We need to be more inclusive in our ways of addressing wellness.

• Chpt. 5: Building Capacity for Equity-Mindedness Among First-Generation Equity Practitioners is ideal for considering Ohio State’s work to become an Anti-racist institution, as it is not enough to not be racist. We have to be clear in encouraging, supporting, and sustaining our student success. For many of us, we are “First-generation Equity Practitioners.” We want to better serve our “first generation students” with a positive approach to ensure their success, while recognizing that many of us come from a position of privilege and without inherent knowledge for how best to serve first generation students at Ohio State. How can we do so?
  
  o Ask forgiveness for not knowing how best to serve these students.
  
  o Create and publicize our unit’s scorecards so that we learn what we need to do, and show progress for what we have done.
  
  o Revisit our mission statements.
  
  o Learn our university’s values of our university.

Items for Group Discussion

Adjournment 10:00 a.m.