Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Action Planning Workgroup

January 5, 2022
9:00-10:00 am

MEETING SUMMARY

1. Welcome

Co-chairs Tom Fenske and Keahi McFadden convened the DEI Action Planning Workgroup via Zoom, together with Teresita Alvarez-Cortez from OID. Jeff Kenney, Director of Institutional Education for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion also joined to lead the team learning session.

2. Team Learning: Organizational Change

As part of the action planning process, DEI workgroup members engaged in shared learning about how to advance inclusive excellence through organizational change, and explored connections between the action planning process and successfully advancing unit, division and university-wide missions, values and strategic objectives.

Workgroup members prepared in advance by watching video lectures and reading papers provided by the Office of Institutional Diversity on the subjects of organizational change theory and practice, and adaptive diversity strategic planning. Jeff Kenny led a training session to help workgroup members apply change theory to the work of developing a change model for the Division of Finance and Administration that considers different types of changes that may occur, the contexts in which the changes will be made, and different approaches that are possible to achieve desired changes. Workgroup members discussed questions throughout the session:

What problems keep the DFA from living its values? What factors are slowing down progress?

Discussion points included:

- The need to help people overcome discomfort around discussing issues of diversity, equity and inclusion. People can be hesitant to contribute if they don’t feel knowledgeable enough. We need to build capacity for conflict and difficult conversations.
- DFA employees hold a wide range of personal values and individual perspectives. There is a need to establish a collective (division-wide) perspective about what we are trying to achieve, the need for and value of DEI-related efforts, and how each of us can contribute to advancing a positive vision.
- The DFA consists of multiple units and subcultures, which currently makes it hard to have a set of shared values and experiences. We need to build a more collective division identity for employees, rather than focus just our individual units and roles. We lack bottom up collaboration. There is a lot of individualism culture in DFA.
- The culture of DFA is highly business- and task-oriented, with little space or time in people’s workday for contemplation of big-picture engagement. DFA is generally risk averse.
• There is faith in the VPFA and it is clear he is committed to this work; however, this has not translated through the organization. There seems to be little accountability on this work down the line.
• People feel isolated/siloed from colleagues or removed from problems, and are unsure about how they can contribute to advancing DEI matters.
• DFA employees are not expected to be experts in DEI vs. on the academic side, where that is expected. People underestimate our capacity. We should be expected to have expertise and capabilities.
• Some members of our division seem apathetic and some may be antagonistic toward DEI efforts.
• There’s no clear connection between DFA units and scarce resources, making for few opportunities for meaningful collaboration.
• The current lack of representation within the division makes it hard to attract and retain diverse employees, and can make the workplace harder to navigate for underrepresented people.
• Change fatigue. DFA employees have been working to make progress on multiple significant priorities; they are tired and don’t want to invest energy into something that they are not sure will end with real results.
• There is a lack of direction or focus and employees feel pulling in many directions at once.
• Lack of understanding by many white employees about people of colors’ lived experiences with DFA and other university policies and practices.
• Some position classifications are overly prescriptive and prevent us from hiring a more diverse workforce.
• We engage in training and learning, but we need to translate that into more meaningful actions. We have not prepared people to confront and dismantle structural inequities. Our next step is to understand how to implement our learning to transform us; to learn how to translate learning into sustainable, integrated practices.

3. Next steps for the workgroup

The workgroup will continue its discussion about a DEI change model for the division. Members will engage in another shared learning session about equity literacy. The workgroup will finalize its team agreements, and recommend final edits to the vice president’s charge document.

DFA DEI Action Planning Workgroup Members

Teresita Alvarez-Cortez, Acting Assistant Vice President, Strategic Diversity Initiatives, Office of Institutional Diversity (workgroup advisor)
Christine Atwood, Administrative & Diversity Manager; Procurement, Contracts & Materials Management
Machelle Bamberger, Hazardous Waste Safety Officer, Environmental Health & Safety
Kirsten Bradley, Project Manager, Enterprise Project Portfolio Management Office
Jonathan Champney, Buyer 2, Facilities Services
Kim Cholewinski, Academic Human Resources Officer, University Human Resources
Todd Cross, Trades Maintenance Coordinator, Facilities Services
Tracy Elmshaeuser, Executive Assistant to the Senior Associate Vice President for Administration
Tom Fenske, Business Center Manager (HSBC, BEBC), Controller’s Unit (workgroup co-chair)
Keith Foster, Insurance Contract Specialist, Insurance & Risk Management
Anne Gillies, Search Advocate Program Director, University Human Resources
Jessica King, Travel & Expense Support Specialist, Controller’s Unit
Mary Macy, Fiscal Coordinator 1 (HSBC), Controller’s Unit
Daniel Mahoney, Academic Liaison, University Human Resources
Melissa Medina, Retirement Officer, University Human Resources
Keahi McFadden, Executive Assistant to AVP of University Facilities, Infrastructure & Operations (workgroup co-chair)
Christina McKnight, Director, Insurance & Risk Management
Stephen Nelson, Chief Procurement Officer; Procurement, Contracts & Materials Management
Bob Richardson, University Land Use Planning Manager, Capital Planning & Development
Aviva Rivera, Business Center Manager (FOBC, CEOAS), Controller’s Unit
Melanie Rose, Manager of DFA Strategic Initiatives (workgroup administrator)
Justin Schaffer, Accountant 2 (FOBC), Controller’s Unit
Stephanie Smith, Fiscal Coordinator 2 / Travel Administrator, Controller’s Unit
Sudie Swader, Fiscal Coordinator 1 (AMBC), Controller’s Unit
Jane Waite, Social Justice Education Initiative Director, University Human Resources
Ben Wessel, Director, DFA Information Technology