



Presidential Task Force  
*for Opportunity and Equity*

October 14, 2021

**Minutes**

**Attendees:** Cori Akins, Olasubomi Akintola, Scott Bishop, Jordan Branchman, Michael Brown, Chacolby Burns-Johnson, Taffye Benson Clayton, Kevin Coonrod, George Flowers, Joffery Gaymon, Alexicia Richardson, Jared Russell, Melody Russell, JoEllen Sefton, Bruce Smith, Alan Wilson, Jennifer Adams and Amy Weaver

**Stakeholders Update - Dr. Joffery Gaymon**

- Dr. Gaymon announced the task force website: <http://www.auburn.edu/equitytaskforce/>
  - She also announced that the last task force meeting for the fall semester will be Nov 18. A Quarterly Taskforce Update will be given.
- Dr. JoEllen Sefton reported that the Faculty Senate has requested a task force update. She said she will let the task force know when she has more details.
- Chalcolby Burns-Johnson invited everyone to Black Alumni Weekend Nov. 12 through 14. Details are available on the alumni website: <https://www.alumni.auburn.edu/baw/>

**Institute for African American and Black Studies Subcommittee**

**Chair:** Dr. Melody Russell

**Members:** Katrina Akande, Cori Akins, Molly Boudreaux, Michael Brown, Taffye Clayton, Kevin Coonrod, Norman Godwin, Robin Jaffe, Kimberly Mulligan, Jared Russell, Bruce Smith, Lady Frances Hamilton, Scott Bishop, Giovanna Summerfield & Gretel Thornton, and Jackson Thomas

Dr. Taffye Clayton showed us her presentation that will be given at the upcoming Feedback Sessions that are scheduled for October 29 for faculty, researchers, and ADRS who helped us reach out to others around campus.

Efforts to Date

- Listening Sessions with Faculty
- Listening Sessions with Deans and Administrators
- Proposal Draft Development
- Preliminary Meeting with Provost
- Dominant Research Clusters
- External Funding Sources
- Refining Focus
- Key Decision Points

### Previous Listening Sessions

- We conducted two sets of listening sessions, one set for roughly 40 faculty, staff, and graduate students and a second set for less than 14 Deans or designees.
- We reviewed the feedback, discussed it as a subcommittee and proceeded with developing a draft proposal.
- We shared an initial draft of the proposal with the Provost for feedback.

### Takeaways from Provost's Review

- How can we narrow our focus so that the institute will have a definite purpose that will distinguish the institute from other entities?
- What identity can we create that funders and stakeholders will exuberantly support?
- What grantors can we target for potential funding?
- What research can be done to discover what those organizations or individuals require and prefer from grant seekers?
- How can we build a comprehensive business model that will support our requests for funding and our proposal to the Board?

### Narrowing Our Focus

The dominant research clusters are:

- Health Disparities (14)
- Education Initiatives (13)
- Literature/Film/Arts (8)
- AA History/Slavery/Preservation (7)
- Civil Rights Era (7)
- Diversity Initiatives (7)
- Rural Communities (7)
- Justice System (3)

### Unique Identity to Attract Donors

#### *Highlighting Auburn's STEAM Footprint*

- Institute for African American Research in Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts and Mathematics (IAR-STEAM)
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### External Funding Sources

- NIH
- NSF
- Lumina Foundation
- Kellogg Foundation
- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
- Andrew Mellon Foundation
- Ford Foundation
- Howard Hughes Medical Institute

## Comprehensive Business Model

- Using Existing Infrastructure and Processes
  - Internal Grant Funding Process
    - Social Impact Funding
    - Space

## Institute Subcommittee Key Decision Points

- Finalizing Institute Name
- Finalizing Focus
- Ensuring External Funding Viability
- Updating Draft to Near Final Proposal
- Timeline for Proposal Submission to Provost

Discussion ensued after Dr. Clayton concluded her presentation.

- We feel that using our existing infrastructure will be a large component of making the institute viable.
- We have decided preliminarily on a different name for the institute, “Institute for African American Research in Arts and Sciences.” We decided not to use the “STEAM” designation.
- The HDRI Symposium on health disparities is being held on November 5, 12 – 3:00 PM. The Keynote speaker is Dr. Natasha Williams from the NYU Grossman School of Medicine. She will present on “Social Determinants of Sleep and Sleep Disorders among Vulnerable Populations.”
- We discussed questions we might pose to our listener audience in the upcoming listening sessions:
  - What can the institute do for you and grow your research?
  - What would you perceive as benefits to you as a member of the institute?
  - What would you like to see that the institute can do for you?
  - What do you perceive as obstacles?
- A comment was made that we need to build the institute in the image the researchers want. They are the persons who will comprise the institute.
- We should see new researchers in these upcoming listening sessions, in addition to many researchers who attended before.
- We will have worksheets for the attendees to use with which to ruminate and to respond to questions so that they can engage fully in the session.
- We will ask the participants to take notes regarding their thoughts and observations and leave them with us so that we can obtain further input.
- The listening sessions will be held on 9 – 10:00 AM and 11 – 12:00 PM at the Alumni Center’s Goodwin Room on October 29. We will have catered refreshments at the 9:00 AM session and a lunch at 11:00 AM.
- We discussed when we can expect an advanced draft of a business plan to be forwarded to the Provost. A comment was made that it might be helpful to review the business plans from other AU centers and institutes so that we could borrow from their success.

- Things are being done in sequence, however. Before we can compile the information for the business plan, we will need to complete the next round of listening sessions. We will need to have classrooms and collaborative stations for the business plan. Our researchers may have funding source contributions for us.
- At the sessions, we should let the researchers know that we will be following up with them. The persons who will be part of the institute have to give us input for the business plan. They need to take ownership of the plan. The individuals who will be in the institute should make decisions on the structure of the institute and regarding the hiring of a director.
- The question of space should be on the feedback page. Space will define how we come together and accomplish our goals.

### **Graduate Student Subcommittee**

**Chairs:** George Flowers and Jared Russell

**Members:** Olasubomi Akintola, Akilah Alwan, Mikayla Brown, Chacolby Burns-Johnson, Angela Cannon, Vinicia Biancardi, Astin Cole, Alexicia Richardson, Sedighe Zamani, Brian Cornish, Dustin Johnson, Bridgett King, Ebony Robinson, Cheryl Seals, Aariyan Tooley, Jordan Branchman and Alan Wilson

1. Reviewed previous meeting notes and recapped next steps.
2. A discussion was held regarding planning for the focus group sessions.
  - a. The management of the focus groups was discussed. At least two subcommittee members are needed at each focus group session. An email will be sent out with the scheduled times/dates requesting volunteers.
  - b. The proposed text for the email invitation to focus group participants was reviewed and discussed. Based on the feedback provided, a revised version will be prepared for distribution.
  - c. It was decided that gift cards will be provided to each focus group participant as an expression of thanks for contributing to this effort.
  - d. It was decided that 10 sessions would be scheduled for different days and times during the week. An electronic sign up tool will be configured with those dates/times to facilitate the process.
  - e. Draft questions were distributed and discussed. A revised set of questions will be developed in accordance with the feedback provided and reviewed at the next meeting.