



Presidential Task Force *for Opportunity and Equity*

February 3, 2022

Minutes

Attendees: Cori Akins, Jordan Branchman, Chacolby Burns-Johnson, Angela Cannon, Taffye Clayton, Kevin Coonrod, Brian Cornish, George Flowers, Joffery Gaymon, Norman Godwin, Kimberly Mulligan, Alexicia Richardson, Ebony Robinson, Melody Russell, JoEllen Sefton, Bruce Smith, Amy Weaver, and Alan Wilson

- **Committee Members – Dr. JoEllen Sefton**
 - Dr. Sefton reported that she and Dr. Joffery Gaymon will be reviewing the member list to see who wants to rotate off and to ensure that the requisite student groups are represented on the task force.
- **Preparation for New President**
 - Dr. Sefton reported that the task force will be looking at relevant climate studies and task force suggested priorities for inclusion in a briefing document for incoming president, Dr. Chris Roberts.

Institute for African American and Black Studies Subcommittee

Chair: Dr. Melody Russell

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

- We discussed aspects of the excellent meeting we had last week with Senior VP for Advancement John Morris.
 - We need to develop our elevator speech to reflect how the proposed institute specifically addresses the points he made during our meeting.
 - We need to have principal investigators become involved directly because the institute will be what they want it to be and not what we want it to be.
 - We need institutional and leadership buy-in. How can we attain the new president's and provost's buy-in for this project?
 - What do we want to accomplish with the money we will be seeking from donors?
 - What are we communicating in our elevator statement?
 - Investors look for substance over case. How can we best convey the substance of the institute's work? How will that bring about positive change?

- We can take advantage of the rich history of our area; specifically, the civil rights history in Montgomery.
- We asked ourselves again, is our hook STEM or STEAM?
- We need to communicate the ways in which our institute will be helping the people of Alabama, rather than being concerned with erecting a building at this point.
- We need to have achievable goals with talent we have already, as well as with new talent that we can fund. We need to play off our strengths as a land grant university with strong features in engineering, agriculture, and health care through our veterinary and human sciences resources, e.g.
- We have placed an emphasis on rural health disparities.
 - There are many southern universities that have institutes for health disparities. We have a good list of those institutions and perhaps we can learn from them.

We will have a new provost, but we don't know how long the hiring search will take. It may take a year or longer. Perhaps our interim provost will be sympathetic to our goal. Dean Roberts may also be sympathetic. Should we wait until our new provost is seated before we make a pitch for assistance in establishing the institute, or should we go forward before then?

Dr. Roberts will likely assume his presidential duties towards the end of May.

- We had a strategy session during our meeting, regarding how we should approach our new president with the concept of the institute.
 - We may want to seek input from the chairs as to how we can introduce the concept of the institute to President-in-waiting Chris Roberts, so he is aware of that concept before he formally commences work as president.
 - Is it time to ask our focus group participants to become involved with the institute business and formation?

Graduate Students Subcommittee

Chairs: Dr. George Flowers and Dr. Jared Russell

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

- Reviewed previous meeting notes and recapped next steps.
- A detailed review and discussion was had of the sections of the draft report. At present, an introduction, a detailed review of the focus group feedback has been made along with associated recommendations, and a detailed review of the survey results and associated recommendations has been written. The three documents were reviewed and recommendations made for revision. It was suggested that a summary section that succinctly described the data collection process along with all recommendations be crafted.
 - The authors agreed to revise the documents for a near final review at the next meeting.
- A meeting with appropriate university leadership was requested at some date after the next meeting so that the committee could present the report and discuss the recommendations.