



AUBURN UNIVERSITY

Presidential Task Force *for Opportunity and Equity*

July 28, 2022

Minutes

Attendees: Angela Cannon, Astin Cole, Kevin Coonrod, Brian Cornish, George Flowers, Bridgett King, Melody Russell, Cheryl Seals, JoEllen Sefton, Bruce Smith, Gretel Thornton, Alan Wilson, Jennifer Adams and Amy Weaver.

- **President's briefing document** – Dr. JoEllen Sefton
 - Dr. Sefton announced that the Graduate Student Subcommittee will work on developing a briefing report for President 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

Input from Institute Subcommittee PowerPoint Presentation from the June meeting

- Notes from comments during the presentation:
 - This was not a part of the feedback, but I noticed that the phrase “scholarly research” is used twice in the Overview slide.
 - Application of research into the community – this is the heart of the institute
 - “Money on the table brings people to the table.”

Feedback made after presentation concluded.

- One of our leaders stated that we have put a proposal together that really makes sense and that relates to Auburn University.

- Our other leader stated that we have presented an exciting proposal and that we have gone full circle since some of our earlier stages, and that we have put together a focused concept.
- A member of the subcommittee stated that we will need a million dollars per year for 5 years, minimum.
 - That is what we are going to need for an operating budget, and we will need that from the university.
- We need a target that is solvable and that will solve a constituent's problem 100%, not just 90%.
- A task force member asked if we have thought about talking to the Cities of Opelika and Auburn. The response given was that we are waiting for solid support before speaking with external entities.
- Another member related that there is an MPA program with a graduate certificate in economic development. The MPA program also has a graduate certificate in economic development with GEDI.
- A member asked when we will transfer the work from the Subcommittee to the faculty researchers who are going to do the real work of the institute.
- One of our leaders stated that a conversation with General Burgess should be held for his review and to discuss next steps. The Provost was very receptive to the Graduate subcommittee proposal and we will ask for her guidance after meeting with Ron Burgess.
- A committee member spoke about our emphasis on health disparity. He said there is already an organization on campus that works with health disparity. How do we differ from that, he asked. The reply from the Subcommittee leader was that we want to collaborate and bring folks together. The member stated that the other organization is not looking at cultural factors that connect the person with the disparity. He is pleased to see that our proposed institute is going to be a driving force behind a core network that will be working with the cultural aspect in our community.
- Another task force member noted that our institute as proposed has three prongs: We can start working already with portions of those prongs, with some of the low hanging fruit, before we get a director on board. This can get our university members on board with the institute so they can begin sharing knowledge and skills.
- A task force member stated that the institute can attract students whom other schools are competing to enroll. When our researchers become invested, they can be part of the solution.
- One of our leaders cautioned us not to engage in mission creep. We don't want to be "everything for everybody." Instead, we need to stick to mission.
- A member stated that we should have more frequent focus groups and more frequent data collection, especially with the black students we currently have at Auburn. The same person indicated that surveillance and reporting, community building, and policy and program suggestions could provide a great start.
- Another repeated that we need to stick to mission and that we should keep in line with our 3 key areas. We want to outline a FEW initiatives that can happen 1-3-5 years. Those would result in small, positive wins.
- Today, we presented a PowerPoint presentation of the Subcommittee's proposal. The proposal itself is more detailed and has been sent to the Task Force members for their review. We will send a request for feedback on the proposal itself with a return deadline of next Friday, August 5. The request for feedback will include a direction to send directly via email to Melody Russell.

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

- The previous meeting minutes were reviewed and approved.
- Feedback from Provost Nathan was reviewed and discussed.
- Planning was made for the next step of presenting the Subcommittee's work and recommendation to General Burgess and incoming President Roberts.
- Needed edits to the presentation were identified, with corrections to be made for review at our next meeting.