Recommendations to Departments from the Dietrich School Faculty Diversity Committee for Developing an Effective Departmental Diversity Committee

Although the work of supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) should be a part of everything we do, the best outcomes will be attained if individual commitment and action are combined with the organization and oversight of a departmental diversity committee (DDC). To support departments who are just forming a diversity committee for the first time and for those who are interested in new ideas and best practices, the Dietrich School Faculty Diversity Committee offers this set of recommendations. While many details of diversity committees will vary between departments there are some principles and activities that we believe are essential to an effective DDC. This guide consists of three sections:

  I.   Introduction and potential benefits of a Departmental Diversity Committee
  II. Guidance for establishing and maintaining a successful DDC
  III. Suggested initiatives that can be adopted and/or tailored to your department's needs
  IV. Appendices:
      1) Recommendations for departmental bylaws
      2) Table of "Recommendations for Successful Diversity Committees" from Williams, Damon A., *Strategic Diversity Leadership: Activating Change and Transformation in Higher Education*
      3) Dietrich School Diversity Definition

I. Introduction and potential benefits of a Departmental Diversity Committee

Acronym definitions:
DEI: Diversity, equity, belonging, and inclusion
DDC: Departmental diversity committee
DS: Dietrich School
AS: Appointment stream
T/TS: Tenured/Tenure stream

An active diversity committee can benefit a department by:
- Creating a forum for regular discussion of issues related to diversity so that problems can be addressed and opportunities harnessed.
- Ensuring that information and training is available to department members in this constantly evolving area.
- Helping to improve the climate and sense of belonging for all individuals in the department, undergraduates, graduate students, AS and T/TS faculty, and staff.
- Supporting the Department Chair by identifying challenges and proposing solutions
- Ensuring that data relating to diversity, inclusion, and belonging is collected and used in decision making.
- Consulting with other committees who are working to ensure that their initiatives and processes support diversity, e.g., hiring, curricula, recruiting and admissions, etc.

II. Guidance for establishing and maintaining a successful DDC

1. Define diversity, equity, and inclusion for your department. While there are fundamental diversity issues that must be addressed campus-wide, we respect that our Departments themselves may have distinct diversity needs and challenges. The process of creating this definition should involve all voices within the department (see Appendix 3 for the DS definition)
2. The DDC should ideally be a standing committee with bylaws that clearly delineate the role and expectations for this committee. Important considerations about what to include are found in Appendix 1.
   a. The committee chair should be appointed by, and report to, the department chair. The chair of the committee should be a well-established faculty member (AS or TS), who has a strong record of engagement with diversity issues and who has the full support of the Department Chair. The Department Chair is encouraged to consult with the prior year's committee for nominations. The committee should ideally include representation from all constituencies of students, staff and faculty although care should be exercised so that no one is overburdened.
   b. The bylaws should establish the charge of the DDC. In constructing this charge, the department should carefully consider responsibilities, scope, and overall purpose of the committee in the context of a department-wide shared responsibility for DEI.
   c. The committee should ensure that the department chair and department members are involved with and informed of their activities. This reporting could include an annual report and/or an assessment matrix.
3. Each DDC should set an annual agenda that includes priorities and metrics in collaboration with the Chair and other committees or groups.
   a. Assessment strategies for measuring success or failure should be delineated and be transparent.
   b. Critical steps toward diversity should be monitored. The department may want to consider two classes of initiatives, low-hanging fruit and aspirational.
   c. Priorities should be aligned with those expressed in the Plan for Pitt 2025 to optimize access to resources and acknowledgement of your efforts.
4. The DDC may want to identify, inform, and possibly sponsor training, workshops, experiences that will increase the committee's and the department's understanding of current challenges, resources and practices.
5. The Diversity Committee may also offer consultation, information and help in identifying resources to other committees within the department.
6. The DDC Chair, or an appointed representative, is expected to attend an annual round table event where best practices will be shared amongst all departmental diversity committees. This event will be attended by representatives of all DDCs and organized by the Dietrich School Faculty Diversity Committee.
7. See Appendix 2 for a helpful list of additional recommendations from a book that many have found valuable, *Strategic Diversity Leadership: Activating Change and Transformation in Higher Education*

Dos and Don'ts. A successful DDC…

1) <u>should</u>:
   - o Develop ways to ensure service balance within the committee
   - o Engage with all stakeholders in the department including students, staff, and faculty.
   - o Provide DEI consulting for other committees
   - o Identify problems and issues
   - o Provide a safe space for voicing ideas and concerns
   - o Have an annual budget to support diversity activities
   - o Work with committee members from the staff to balance their participation against their other responsibilities. Staff members may want the option to skip meetings whose agenda focus on issues that are not relevant to them.

2) <u>should not</u>:
   - o Overburden those that are already burdened
   - o Be solely responsible for creating initiatives, sustaining DEI engagement, and monitoring compliance with DEI policies and goals across the department

Ideas for generating buy-in
   - o Survey your faculty, staff, and students as to what the Departmental Diversity Committee should be doing.
   - o Discuss initiatives with stakeholders prior to open meetings to ensure that everyone has a chance to give early input
   - o Have open conversations about individual topics about what is important to them
   - o Provide plentiful communication and opportunities for engagement.

III. Example initiatives that could be part of a Diversity Committee's plans (adapted to the needs and priorities of the department):

1) Research
   - o Foster collaboration
   - o Consider University's Diversity Supplier Program when making purchases
   - o Assess who is performing promotable and non-promotable service
2) Departmental climate
   - o "Belonging" interventions
   - o Create a welcoming environment
   - o Examining Departmental Policies, Procedures, and Practices
   - o Practice transparency
   - o Offer and attend Professional Development Workshops
   - o Examine Seminar Speaker Slate and Programming for Diversity
   - o External DEI consultant
   - o Implement mandatory rotations for non-promotable service
3) Teaching and curriculum
   - o Include Diversity Statement in Syllabi
   - o Develop Diversity General Education course.
   - o Support undergraduate outreach to promote engagement in experiential learning

4) Faculty and staff hiring
   o Require implicit bias training for all involved in the interview process
   o Develop a rubric for evaluation prior to review of applications
   o Require diversity statements from all applicants
   o Raise awareness to bias associated with short timelines
5) Graduate student admission
   o Publicize Affinity Groups on Website
   o Apply to the DS Hot-Metal Bridge Post Bac program if eligible
     https://www.asgraduate.pitt.edu/hot-metal-bridge-post-bac-program
   o Partner with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)
6) Mentoring
   o Professional Development workshops
   o Know about and take advantage of existing resources
     https://www.as.pitt.edu/sites/default/files/2015%203%20-
     %20Rev%204%2020%20Handbook%20for%20Dietrich%20School%20Faculty%20Me
     ntoring.pdf
7) Retention
   o Partnering with other committees and/or the Chair as appropriate, collect, publicize,
     and propose additional support mechanisms and work-life balance initiatives for
     faculty, students and staff
   o Partnering with other committees and/or the Chair as appropriate, examine
     intradepartmental mechanisms for identifying and addressing diversity issues before
     they become serious problems
   o Establishing office hours, staffed by committee members, for anyone who would like
     to discuss issues or ideas related to DEI
8) Diversity Page on departmental website
   o Publicize affinity groups
   o Post diversity statement/definition

Appendix 1: Diversity Committee Bylaws Guidance

Committee bylaws are usually brief statements (1-2 paragraphs) included within Departmental Bylaws. Below are suggestions for aspects of the committee's formation, activities, and responsibilities that may be adopted. These are suggestions only. Each department should create a structure that best suits their unit. In particular, the level of detail will be expected to vary by department as some will choose to define the committee in more general terms in their bylaws (leaving the details to be decided and optimized in practice) while others will find it most helpful to specify the details and expectations at the outset.

Overall:
The committee should be charged with helping to organize, promote, and/or oversee efforts in the department to promote diversity, equity, belonging, and inclusion.

Logistical information that may be addressed in the bylaws:
o   Committee composition: The committee should reflect the department size and ideally involve representation from faculty, staff, graduate and undergraduate students.

o   Selection mechanism for members: Are members elected, appointed by the Chair, or are all those who are interested allowed to participate? For this committee, it will be important to ensure that many perspectives are present and that those who wish to serve are granted an opportunity. Any selection mechanism should satisfy these objectives.

o   Length of term and % turnover. Continuity will be helpful in maintaining ongoing efforts so it may be desirable to have faculty serve for more than one year and to stagger the turnover.

o   Target number of committee meetings, e.g., monthly, quarterly, etc.

Specific responsibilities that may be assigned in the bylaws:

o   Advising the Chair on DEI issues

o   Attendance (by the DDC or representative) at the annual Dietrich School Diversity Committee-sponsored round table

o   Initiating and or helping with the implementation of DEI initiatives started by others, e.g., selecting department suppliers, choosing external speakers, updating syllabi, etc.

o   Communication of DEI issues to the Chair and the rest of the Department, e.g., presentations at faculty meetings, annual reports, assessment matrices, etc.

o   Interactions with other committees within the department; e.g., representation on committees involved in faculty hiring and graduate student recruitment, consultation on diversity implications of initiatives in other areas, etc.

Appendix 2: Additional Recommendations

Table 9.4, Williams, Damon A. Strategic Diversity Leadership: Activating Change and Transformation in Higher Education. Stylus Publishing. Kindle Edition.

TABLE 9.4
Recommendations for Successful Diversity Committees

Recommendation	Description
Understand the limitations of your committee.	It is vital to understand the scope and limits of the committee. Can it authorize initiatives, or only recommend them? If it can recommend only, who in the organization will be the person to issue any final decisions?
Formulate the committee's definition of diversity.	Early in the process, the committee should define diversity in the context of its process as a group. Will it work on diversity issues broadly defined or through the prism of a particular issue or group?
Develop a clear understanding of current diversity capacity and levels.	The committee should begin by reviewing the institution's current data and developing a comprehensive understanding of the various diversity offices, units, and initiatives on campus. This process may include gathering data from the institution's research office as well as more dynamic data in areas like succession rates and time to promotion, graduation rates, and academic achievement levels in the critical gateway courses. Additionally, the committee should launch its work with full knowledge of current diversity programs and initiatives. Hence the committee should consider beginning its work with relevant diversity plans, reports, evaluation, assessments, and so on.
Gather feedback from the organization.	The committee should send out a survey to community members about the greatest challenges and opportunities of diversity and the overall tangible recommendations to inform the work of the group. It is important to manage community member expectations by making it clear that the committee is using the survey expressly for exploratory purposes. It is always discouraging for community members who take the time to give feedback and then feel that nothing is done with their suggestions. It is also important to interact informally with various members of the community to get individual perspectives.
Align the agenda of the committee to the institution's strategic agenda.	Develop a clear picture of the institution's top priorities for the year, and then find out how to tie the committee's goals to the goals of the institution's most senior leaders and governance groups.
Prioritize your work.	Use the information that has been gathered to prioritize and implement the work of the committee. By working this way, the committee will be able to discern which goals and initiatives are most likely to be embraced and the ideal order for implementing them.
Create a culture of accountability for committee members.	Set a regular meeting schedule for the entire year. Incorporate criteria for ongoing participation in committee and subcommittee meetings, including an attendance policy. Assign clear responsibilities and then set policies for promoting communication and creating accountability.
Establish a working budget and staffing appropriate to deliver the work.	Whether the committee is an ad-hoc or standing group, and involved in advising or implementation, it is critical that the committee have adequate staff and financial support. At a minimum this should include rooms, refreshments, audiovisual equipment, and a host of other physical supports. Institutions should also dedicate staff resources that can help facilitate the overall effort, from recording committee minutes and processing requests, to following up on correspondence and minor projects.

Appendix 3: DS Diversity Definition

Dietrich School Diversity Definition:
(As defined by the Diversity Task Force in 2019)

At the Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences and College of General Studies, diversity is a core value. We are committed to inclusivity in our culture, workplace, academic programs, research pursuits, and extracurricular activities. We seek to be a school where we as faculty, staff, and students reflect both the global society and the local community, harnessing the full spectrum of human talents while respecting and celebrating human differences