

President's Task Force on Diversity Education Progress Report and Preliminary Recommendations

The President's Task Force on Diversity Education was formed to consider the underlying issues that led to the protest events in Ferguson, Missouri and the aftermath of protests nationwide; and to make recommendations to improve diversity education at Southeast.

This report contains several attachments:

- Attachment 1 References to Diversity and Inclusion in the University's Strategic Plan
- Attachment 2 Task Force Membership
- Attachment 3 Task Force Statements of Desired Outcomes
- Attachment 4 Continuing Task Force Agenda, June to December 2015

The 34-member Task Force held six meetings from March to May 2015 and will continue to meet through December 2015.

Charge and Objectives

The Task Force was asked to identify initiatives to advance the awareness and understanding of issues related to race, ethnicity and national origin in a university setting. This Task Force has been formed to foster positive professional and social interactions among the university's diverse population of students, faculty and staff; and to provide the President with recommendations in response to the objectives listed below.

Objectives:

1. Provide a venue to discuss the underlying issues that may lead to public protests (contemporary issues in Civil Rights, racial profiling, harm reduction, restorative justice and drug policies, community policing, socioeconomic mobility, social and cultural diversity and/or others to be identified by the task force).
2. Assess student learning relative to University Studies objectives and expand directed learning opportunities (course offerings, program requirements).

Related University Studies Objectives:

- a. Demonstrate an understanding of human experiences and the ability to relate them to the present.
 - b. Demonstrate an understanding of various cultures and their interrelationships.
 - c. Demonstrate the ability to function responsibly in one's natural, social and political environment.
3. Encourage and strengthen collaborative co-curricular programming (i.e. Academic Support Centers, Athletics, Black Student Union, EMSS Division, Student Government Association, Greek Life).
 4. Consider the University's Strategic Plan, with specified values related to access, diversity and community, and determine the steps that are needed to integrate assessment of diversity education into the campus' continuous planning process.

Additionally, Task Force members offered individual goals by responding to the statement, "I will be satisfied with the outcome of this Task Force, if..." See attachment 3.

President's Task Force on Diversity Education Preliminary Recommendations

To progress in our thoughts and actions as a campus community, the Task Force emphasizes the importance of increasing cultural competence as a University community. Cultural competence refers to an ability to interact effectively with people of different cultures and socioeconomic backgrounds. Above all, the Task Force believes that embracing this work as a practical skill building opportunity in place of a discussion of “diversity” as a broad term, will help the campus realize the goals and objectives of the University’s strategic plan.

The following initiatives are recommended as preliminary recommendations of the Task Force:

1. *Develop College-Level Diversity Action Plans.* With support from the Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity, the college deans should develop actionable plans addressing the following areas:
 - a. Recruit and retain a diverse faculty who are knowledgeable in their content area and prepared to support the academic success of a diverse student body.
 - b. Establish measurable student learning objectives at the course and academic program levels, where appropriate, that support the cultural competency development of students.
 - c. Provide training opportunities that support faculty development and advance one’s ability to encourage and manage cross-cultural classroom discussions.
2. *Adopt Culturally Responsive Teaching Methods.* Such methods are already used by some faculty as a responsible way to prepare all students to meet the needs of the population they will work with and serve after college. Through training and development, faculty can learn to adopt these student-focused teaching methods.
3. *Improve Career Development, Mentorship and Networking Opportunities for Underserved Student Populations.* Develop business relationships that foster an awareness of today’s college student population. Such relationships would increase access to real world experiences (e.g. job shadowing, internships) and entry-level careers. Likewise, develop programs that expose underserved student populations to a variety of career opportunities.
4. *Increase Awareness and Encourage Participation in Undergraduate Research Opportunities Among Underserved Student Populations.* These opportunities create relevant educational experiences and on-campus work opportunities for students; and at the same time, improve faculty-student relationships.
5. *Use Existing Programs to Build the Cultural Competence of New Students.* Assess the co-curricular events that are attended by new students and create opportunities to expose attendees to culturally diverse experiences (e.g. Show Me Day, First Step, Camp Redhawk, Opening Week, and *Engage in 8* events).
6. *Use Existing Organizations and Diversity Initiatives to Raise the Cultural Competence of the Campus Community.* Progress on this initiative is already in progress. The Student Government Association, the Academic Support Centers, Campus Life and Event Services, the Office of Residence Life and several student organizations, have hosted diversity-related discussions.

Additionally, the Task Force is considering a wide variety of lecturers, learning experiences and assessment tools that may be used to meet these objectives.

A Summary of the Discussions of Underlying Issues, To-Date

This Task Force was charged with discussing the underlying issues that led to the protests in Ferguson, Missouri and that are continuing to occur across the country. There are groups with similar objectives forming on many college campuses with the purpose of encouraging dialogue and planning efforts to promote progress toward a more inclusive and supportive environment for all students, faculty and staff.

The Task Force dedicated a portion of each meeting to an educational topic, as a means of developing a better understanding of the wide variety of historical, cultural and societal influences on this movement.

Educational topics have included:

Race as a Social Construct. Tiffany Parker, Instructor of Social Work.

Race categories in the United States have been constructed through legal, social, and political processes. We now know that humans are more genetically alike than any other species on the planet and the small amount of genetic differences tell us more about the geographical location of our ancestors than it does about distinct racial categories.

Afrocentric Theory. Morris Jenkins, Dean of College of Health and Human Services and Kimisha Robinson, Student.

A discussion of Afrocentric Theory afforded the group an opportunity to consider how history and socialization agents influence our perspectives on the law and justice. No one perspective is right or wrong, but an understanding of these theories can assist with race relations. In addition, these theories and perspectives can be the catalyst for positive changes in the law.

Inequality: How Bad Is It and Does It Matter? Hamner Hill, Chair of Political Science, Philosophy and Religion.

This presentation offered a look at the extent of income and wealth inequality in America and the impacts of that inequality on American society.

Culturally Responsive Teaching: How to Bridge the Cultural Disconnect. Shonta M. Smith, Assistant Professor of Elementary, Early and Special Education.

Task Force members engaged in cooperative learning activities where they reflected, discussed and analyzed the impact of culture conflict. The facilitator shared that if time allowed, this exercise could be used to develop action plans to build a campus wide climate of education that is multicultural.

Poor is the New Black. Kevin Windham, Student.

This presentation exposed the Task Force to an awareness of the role socioeconomic background and exposure to unsafe living environments (e.g. lead paint, unsafe housing) can have on an individual's adult life (e.g. access to education, physical health, cognitive development).

Attachment 1

References to Diversity and Inclusion in the University's Strategic Plan

PRIORITY 1: THE ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

Southeast prepares students by providing comprehensive and diverse experiences including experiential and service learning opportunities, cutting-edge technology, and exceptional instruction that prepares students for civic responsibility and professional careers or advanced graduate education.

Objective I: Continue to serve as a judicious model by regularly evaluating the success of current undergraduate and graduate programs through internal program review, performance-funding measurements, and external demand. The Academic Visionary Committee will continue to seek out new programs, such as cybersecurity and healthcare administration, that will meet the current and future needs of our multi-state region.

Objective IV: Continue to globalize the campus by expanding study-abroad experiences, engaging international students, and encouraging students on campus and abroad to explore cultural interaction.

PRIORITY II: THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Southeast challenges students to expand their education both in and beyond the classroom by providing diverse, valuable experiential-learning and community-service opportunities that cultivate a commitment to the growth and success of students as well as the surrounding community. Students benefit from both Southeast's engaging co-curricular experiences and highly personalized attention from student-centered faculty, advisors, and staff who help shape their future professions.

Objective II: Encourage student engagement in Southeast's many cultural activities, such as the University Speakers Series and River Campus performances, that promote awareness, understanding, and unity among the student population.

Objective III: Enrich the Southeast experience and develop an even stronger sense of community and pride among all students.

Objective IV: Update and implement the Strategic Enrollment Management Plan to establish the optimal size, quality, and diversity of the student body; strengthen student transitions and retention; increase graduation rates for students at each campus; and support recruitment and marketing efforts.

PRIORITY III: FACULTY AND STAFF EXPERIENCE

Southeast is an engaged learning community that recognizes and values the people who make it possible—our students, faculty, staff, benefactors, and the employers of our graduates. These essential individuals actively participate in the pursuit of our core mission surrounding student learning and success, scholarship and creative activity, and service to the multi-state region, nation, and world.

Objective I: Continue to recruit high quality faculty and staff to reflect our diverse student population while creating a responsive succession plan.

Objective III: Nurture a campus culture that promotes open communication, shared governance, and active collaboration to continue to build trust and mutual respect among faculty, administrators, staff, students, and the public.

Attachment 2

President's Task Force on Diversity Education Membership

1. Brady Barke	Executive Staff
2. Debbie Below	Executive Staff
3. Trent Ball	Administrative Council
4. Bruce Skinner	Administrative Council
5. Morris Jenkins	Deans' Council
6. Hamner Hill	Chairpersons' Forum
7. Tameka Kyles	Academic Support Centers
8. Valdis Zalite	Academic Support Centers
9. Mark Alnutt	Athletics
10. Cindy Gannon	Athletics
11. Jim Cook	Human Resources
12. Sonia Rucker	Coordinator of Institutional Equity and Diversity
13. Kumar Kashyap	Certified Technical Staff
14. Christy Mershon	Professional Staff Council
15. Michele Kilburn	Criminal Justice Department Representative

College Representatives

16. Toni Alexander	College of Liberal Arts
17. Fazel Keshtkar	College of Science, Technology & Agriculture
18. Tiffany Parker	College of Health and Human Services
19. Emily Smart	Kent Library
20. Shonta Smith	College of Education
21. Jill Young	Harrison College of Business

Student Representatives

22. Amber Cason	Senior	Multimedia Journalism	Student Government
23. Andrea Cox	Senior	Elementary Education	National Pan-Hellenic Council
24. Alexander Dunn	Junior	Biology	Student Government
25. Peter Jacobsen	Junior	Economics	Student Government
26. Nia Jeffrey	Junior	Sec. Education-Math	National Pan-Hellenic Council
27. Shaibriel Mack	Junior	Journalism	Black Student Union
28. Ikeshia Miller	Sophomore	Social Work	Student Alumni Association
29. Joshua Price	Senior	Sport Management	National Pan-Hellenic Council
30. Kimisha Robinson	Junior	Public Relations	National Pan-Hellenic Council
31. Tony Rushing	Junior	Sport Management	Academic Support Centers
32. Saleeha Syed	Graduate St.	Higher Education	EMSS Division Intern
33. Michael Valadez	Junior	Public Relations	Academic Support Centers
34. Kevin Windham	Senior	Corporate Comm.	EMSS Division Appointment

Reports to: President

Co-Chairs: Dean of Students and Dean of the College of Health and Human Services

Attachment 3

Task Force Statements of Desired Outcomes

Each Task Force member was invited to finish the statement, *“I will be satisfied with the outcome of this Task Force, if ...”* Their responses are categorized below.

Curriculum

1. *Conversations about diversity are increased and supported by SEMO faculty and staff; curriculum is changed to better incorporate African American Heritage & Culture (i.e. African American History course, African American literature course, and Contemporary issues course).*
2. *If a class on AA History is required.*
3. *The institution identifies additional opportunities to incorporate diversity into the student curriculum so that diversity at Southeast is more than student numbers, and graduates are better prepared to make positive contributions to society.*
4. *I will be satisfied if we are able to identify and change racist mindsets in such a way that the curriculum and campus climate change for the better. I want Southeast to be a place where people fight effectively for equality and progress and where racist actions are completely eliminated or made extremely rare.*

Cultural Diversity Training/Education/Event Coordination

5. *We can identify what cultural challenges individuals face on campus and in the community, develop a strategic plan to educate, challenge and change that culture to provide a safe and welcoming campus and community.*
6. *Each one of us learn how to improve culturally responsive practices in all that we do, working together to do what is in the best interest of really making this the university of First Choice, not just say it.*
7. *The university requires diversity training for faculty and staff on a regular basis.*
8. *We coordinate or promote events and ideas to improve race relations (communication, education, and comfortability).*

What it Means to be a “Diverse person at Southeast”

9. *We make a meaningful recommendation that open real conversations on campus about diversity.*
10. *I can feel safe around my peers. If I know teachers will not judge me off the color of my skin but by my work ethic and the content of my character. Also, if I can join any group on campus and feel like I am not the “Token Black.”*
11. *Anybody can raise her or his voice without fear of his or her background.*
12. *We increase the diversity of the faculty and staff.*

Sustainability

13. *We move from words to action; we do as we say; we listen to students and gain from their comments; we push buttons followed up by support.*
14. *Active steps take place after the common goals established; the community is reached by ?; the task force carries on after Dr. Dobbins is no longer the president.*
15. *A year from today those of us around this table can agree that we did at least one thing to impact the campus, not a small part of the campus, around the issue of race (not diversity).*
16. *This task force will have measurable and real impact; we will be able to see specific plans put in place and impact from our discussion.*

17. *We will be successful by being completely honest and admitting that there is a problem and we are not going to let it slide anywhere. We are too advanced from where we started, and it is time to act like it. We will all be educated and get along.*

Comprehensive View of Diversity and Inclusion

18. *Issues are highlighted and brought to the attention of students; plans are made to educate students on ALL forms of diversity (by ALL I mean LGBTQ, women's rights, civil rights etc.); I will not be satisfied if the task force does not expand its reach into diversity issues in the sense that we limit ourselves to one issue; we build possible subcommittees to discuss other diversity issues.*
19. *The students, faculty, and employees of SEMO are educated to be "international minded;" if they come out of a stereotyped mindset for specific roles by people of different races at work place; if SEMO can learn to overlook issues or incidents which occur in places beyond the boundary and hold of this campus.*
20. *We are able to spread awareness of cultural, racial and overall diversity to the students of Southeast. Once we have made the campus aware of the issues, the discussion can truly begin.*

Attachment 4

Continuing Task Force Agenda, June to December 2015

Summer 2015

1. The Task Force co-chairs will work with University Communications and Marketing to create a public web page for the Task Force that is linked to the President's website. The web page will include a membership list, Task Force charge and objectives, meeting minutes and resources (i.e. presentations, papers, videos) shared during Task Force meetings; as well as the preliminary and final recommendations of the Task Force.
2. The Task Force co-chairs will meet with the Coordinator for Institutional Equity and Diversity, Human Resources, and Training and Development, to discuss opportunities to improve access to and promotion of diversity awareness educational materials for faculty and staff.
3. The Task Force co-chairs and the Coordinator for Institutional Equity and Diversity will meet with the Director of the Law Enforcement Academy, Chief of Campus Police, a judicial representative and a representative of Cape Girardeau Police Department to explore curriculum (course materials and police training curriculum) and training modifications to address the needs of encouraging racial/ethnic appreciation and acceptance.
4. The Task Force will collaborate with the Office of the President and Campus Life & Event Services to utilize the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Dinner Celebration speaker for professional development work with students, faculty and staff.

Fall 2015

1. The Task Force will continue to dedicate time to the discussion of the underlying issues fueling national demonstrations and debates related to race relations, as well as opportunities to strengthen diversity education at Southeast. Future educational discussions will be selected by the Task Force and may include, but are not limited to:
 - a. *Equity, Inclusiveness, and Diversifying the Faculty: Transforming the University in the 21st Century*. Presenter: C.P. Gause, Chair, Educational Leadership and Counseling
 - b. *The Critical Role of Access to Higher Education*. Presenter: T. Ball, Associate Dean of Students/Dir. of Student Retention/Chair of the Council for Opportunity in Education.
 - c. *The Historical Context of Ferguson, Missouri* Presenter: Consider an outside guest
 - d. *The History and Future of National Pan-Hellenic Organizations*
 - e. *A Law Enforcement Topic*
 - f. *Mentorship/Sponsorship/Internship Opportunities for Students of Color*
2. The Task Force will consider opportunities to extend efforts into the Cape Girardeau community and schools.
3. The Task Force will invite representation from University Police and the Law Enforcement Academy to attend one or more meetings in fall 2015.
4. Three student members of the Task Force, Andrea Cox, Peter Jacobsen and Kevin Windham, are also members of the Student Government Association. They have committed to including "diversity education" as one of their initiatives in the 2015-2016 academic year.
5. The Task Force subcommittees will complete their work and forward recommendations to the Task Force for consideration in the final report in December 2015.