

COMMITTEE FOR EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION (EDI)

**Monday, September 9, 2024
12:00PM – 1:30PM
MINUTES OF MEETING**

Pursuant to call, the Committee for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion met at 12:00pm on September 9, 2024. Chair Clarissa Nobile presiding.

I. Welcome and Introductions

Chair Nobile introduced herself and welcomed members to the committee. Members then introduced themselves and provided their previous experience with diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI).

II. Consent Calendar

- A. Today's Agenda
- B. [Conflict of Interest Policy](#)¹

Actions:

- Today's agenda and EDI's Conflict of Interest Policy were approved as presented.
- The EDI Analyst updated the Senate website accordingly.
- The EDI Analyst notified Executive Director Paul and the Senate Chair that EDI did not have any concerns with its COI Policy.

III. Informational: EDI Resources

Members are encouraged to read the information described below prior to the meeting.

A. Duties of EDI

The Committee for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) acts for the Division in all matters of equality and diversity in general and in particular in reference to underrepresented faculty populations. This includes initiating studies and reports on campus diversity and equity, and evaluating institutional policies and procedures as they relate to equity and diversity. D&E maintains liaison with the [University Committee on Affirmative Action, Diversity and Equity \(UCAADE\)](#).

EDI Chair Clarissa Nobile serves as the Merced representative on the UCAADE and will update EDI members regularly.

- B. [EDI's Bylaws](#)
- C. [Membership](#)
 - Clarissa Nobile, Chair, SNS
 - Whitney Pirtle, Vice Chair, SSHA
 - Marcos García-Ojeda, SNS
 - Marcus Lee, SOE

¹ All Senate Committees are encouraged to review their respective COI policy at their first meeting in the Fall. All Senate Committees COI policies are available on the Senate website: <https://senate.ucmerced.edu/conflict-interest>

- Dalia Magaña, SSHA
- Ex-Officio (non-voting):
- Kevin Mitchell, Senate Chair, SNS
 - Courtenay Monroe, Senate Vice Chair, SSHA
 - Delia Saenz, Vice Chancellor and Chief Diversity Officer (alternate: Zulema Valdez, Associate Vice Chancellor and Professor of Sociology)
 - Tom Hansford, Vice Provost for Academic Personnel (alternate: Anna Song, Associate Vice Provost for Academic Personnel)
- D. [Meeting Schedule](#) (Mondays, 12:00-1:30pm via Zoom):
- September 9
 - October 14
 - November 4
 - December 9
- E. [EDI's Box Site](#) (all internal committee documents will be posted on this site)
- F. [EDI AY 23-24 Annual Report](#)
- G. Committee Confidentiality
- H. [Guide to Committee Membership & the Practice of Executive Session](#)
- I. [Consultation Guide](#) (also refer to the [2010 memo](#) from Academic Council to President Yudof)
- J. Senate Digest (distributed to all Senate faculty every Friday)
- K. [UCM Bylaws and Regulations](#)
- L. [Systemwide Bylaws and Regulations](#)
- M. [CoC's Guide to Populating Academic Senate Committees: Leadership and Membership Commitments](#)
- N. Distribution of Work on the Committee
All campus and systemwide review items will be posted on the Senate website [here](#).
Some review items may be assigned to one or more EDI reviewers before each scheduled meeting.

Chair Nobile reviewed the above informational items and specifically highlighted EDI's duties, the importance of confidentiality within the committee, and the distribution of work on the committee.

Action: Chair Nobile encouraged members to be responsive to committee communications via email in order for committee business to be handled efficiently.

IV. Chair's Report – Clarissa Nobile

- A. Updates from the [Divisional Council](#) Meeting (September 9)
EVC/Provost Dumont joined the meeting and reported that the administration has been convening in various ways to set priorities and goals for this academic year. EVC/Provost Dumont then stated that the TAS budget is a priority for the administration this year and they are hoping to implement a new TAS budget allocation model by AY 25-26.

Chair Mitchell reported that one of Divisional Council's priorities this academic year is to improve the function of the Senate, specifically to have a stronger voice when in communication with the administration.

Former Co-Chair of the Financial Management & Reporting Task Force, Shilpa Khatri, reported on the Task Force's work and the forthcoming administrative report from the previous academic year. Chair Mitchell added that Divisional Council is being tasked with creating a Faculty Advisory Board charge in an effort to maintain accountability surrounding the financial issues affecting faculty.

FWAF Chair Jayson Beaster-Jones introduced a proposal to Divisional Council members to split FWAF into two committees: The Faculty Welfare Committee and the Academic Freedom Committee. A proposal from FWAF regarding this matter is forthcoming.

Divisional Council members discussed alternative methods for delivering Senate updates to the faculty in addition to the weekly Senate Digest. One suggestion was to distribute a briefer email highlighting three of the Senate's current or ongoing initiatives.

B. Upcoming Event: Annual Governance Retreat

Chair Nobile announced that the Annual Governance Retreat will take place on October 30, 2024. The location has not yet been confirmed.

V. **EDI Representatives/Liaisons**

A. [UCM Black Alliance \(UCMBA\)](#)

Chair Nobile provided a brief description of the charge of UCMBA.

Actions:

- Vice Chair Pirtle volunteered to serve as the UCMBA representative.
- The EDI Analyst notified Executive Director Paul.

B. [Periodic Review Oversight Committee \(PROC\)](#)

Chair Nobile provided a brief description of the charge of PROC.

Actions:

- Member Lee volunteered to serve as the PROC representative.
- Member García-Ojeda volunteered to serve as the alternate PROC representative.
- The EDI Analyst notified Executive Director Paul.

C. [Chancellor's Council on Climate, Culture, Antiracism and Equity \(CCCAE\)](#)

Chair Nobile provided a brief description of the charge of CCCAE.

Actions:

- Member Magaña volunteered to serve as the CCCAE representative.
- The EDI Analyst notified Executive Director Paul.
- The EDI Analyst requested the meeting schedule for CCCAE.

VI. Consultation with AVPAP Song**A. Student Evaluations and Bias/Hate Speech**

AVPAP Song informed members that there is a growing concern with student evaluations becoming increasingly hostile and containing hate speech. She noted that there are a few important considerations when addressing this topic including balancing the anonymity of evaluations while still protecting the faculty. She added that addressing this issue will require a lot of partnership because it is an indication of climate and civility. AVPAP Song has met with AVC Valdez, VC/CDO Saenz, VPAP Hansford, and OPHD Director Overdyke to address this issue. The administration would now like to seek support from Senate committees, including EDI.

One suggestion was to include a preamble before the evaluation to encourage the students to keep their comments about the instructor in terms of the content that was delivered and to also remind students about UC Merced's Principles of Community. The second suggestion was to include an open-ended section at the end of the evaluation where students would be given the opportunity to comment on their experience within the classroom. This would not only allow students to provide feedback on how the classroom climate could be improved, but it would also remind students to provide feedback in an appropriate manner. AVPAP Song added that the other challenge with this issue is that there is currently no mechanism to gauge how extensive this problem is. If data containing the frequency and severity of the issue could be gathered, then it would be easier to see what an intervention may look like.

Members discussed the idea of including a preamble in the student evaluations. Some members noted that they already do include a preamble in their student evaluations, and added that they believed it to be useful, however it does not completely prevent students from providing hostile feedback. Other members noted that they already include a preamble, and it appears to be ineffective. Overall, members agreed that a preamble may dissuade students but will not prevent the comments from occurring.

Members discussed how this is an even bigger issue, because student evaluations affect Senate faculty's merit and promotion reviews. Because of this it would be worthwhile to explore ways to expunge such data and to also not have those comments included in faculty's evaluations.

Some suggestions that members proposed were the application of AI, scaling of evaluations, or the use of other tools that can filter out comments containing hate speech. Members further discussed the possibility of using AI to flag comments containing hate speech. The use of AI would also allow data to be collected on the frequency of such comments occurring. AVPAP Song agreed that AI could be

effective, but pointed out the challenges involved such as finding the appropriate AI, finding someone to employ it, and finding the resources to support it. She added that it could be done with the proper justification. It was then suggested that a survey to faculty, seeking data on how extensive the problem is, would be a good start in justifying funding an AI strategy.

Another suggestion was to deploy a training for students on the proper code of conduct. A code of conduct is already provided to students; however it does not appear to be effective enough. Perhaps something more extensive such as a training would be more effective. AVPAP Song agreed that a campus wide intervention is necessary, however different divisions across campus will need to be aware and agree to a partnership for it to be of value.

Actions:

- EDI will provide feedback to AVPAP Song regarding their thoughts on the proposed ways to address bias and hate speech in student evaluations.
- AVPAP Song will continue to provide updates to EDI regarding this topic.

VII. Discussion: EDI Priorities AY 24-25

A preliminary list of priorities can be found [here](#).

Chair Nobile introduced the list of EDI's priorities for AY 24-25. She noted that some of the items were new items submitted to her via email and some of the items were carryover items from the last academic year.

Members discussed a carryover item from last year, creating guidelines for faculty to reference when drafting their DEI statements in promotion and tenure cases. Chair Nobile noted that she would also like to create guidelines for CAP when evaluating the DEI statements. She stated that the committee will continue to update and work on the guidelines in an effort to finalize them this year.

Action: The EDI Analyst will request the guidelines that CAP currently uses to assess DEI statements when reviewing cases.

A new item that Chair Nobile would like the committee to consider is reevaluating step promotions, more specifically the idea of a fraction or half step plus promotion program. Some UC campuses use similar acceleration programs to reward exemplary efforts. Chair Nobile noted that it would be a valuable issue for EDI to address as the data from other UC campuses has shown discrepancies in the equity of the rates of promotion in underrepresented groups. The step plus promotion programs allow for a nuance in the evaluation process and appear to have closed the equity gap in promotions on other UC campuses. Chair Nobile added that EDI would need to partner with CAP and the Vice Provost for the Faculty in order to move this forward. Executive Director Paul added that this would also require a revision to the MAPP.

Members discussed the different promotion programs that are used on other campuses, and which one would be best for UC Merced. They also discussed the potential pushback that may be received with such a program in its relation to the pushback of DEI statements in promotion and tenure.

Chair Nobile introduced another priority for EDI to address this year. EDI is currently charged with receiving and approving the nominations for Faculty Equity Advisors (FEAs). Chair Nobile noted that two additional FEAs would need to be appointed for SNS and SSHA for AY 25-27. She added that it has been a challenge to receive nominations for FEAs. Partially because the incentives, such as compensation, are not compelling enough to recruit FEAs. AVPAP Song noted that there is not enough funding to increase the FEA compensation. She added that she is not sure increasing the funding would even be beneficial as faculty appear to be burned out.

AVC Valdez proposed making this a more positive and effective program by dissolving the current FEA program and in its place providing STEAD Faculty Search Committee Workshops for all members of a search committee. She added that implementing something like this would help broaden the knowledge base of how to employ best practices for recruitment. Some UCs have already deployed similar trainings, and they appear to be effective. AVC Valdez explained that search committee members would complete the workshop every year and there could be faculty facilitators to liaison when search committees seek additional guidance throughout the search. Members agreed that this would be a good idea. AVPAP Song added that this would also help with accountability as there is currently no mechanism to ensure search committees are in compliance with employment law as it pertains to discrimination.

Members further discussed the different ways to increase diversity in faculty recruitment and the different nuances to consider across schools. One member noted that it is beneficial to have one or more search committee members outside of the hiring department to help eliminate bias. Another member added that a more systematic approach to targeted advertising (in addition to the typical advertising locations relevant to the department/research) could help promote diversity. Members agreed that all of this would be important to take into account while creating the STEAD Faculty Search Committee Workshops.

Actions:

- EDI will draft a memo requesting that the FEA program be dissolved and replaced with STEAD Faculty Search Committee Workshops.
- EDI will collaborate with relevant administrative leads (e.g. VPAP, AVC for Diversity) to explore ways to encourage targeted advertising in an effort to increase the diversity of candidate pools.

VIII. [UC Merced's Academic Senate Anti-Racism External Reviewer Assessment](#)

Background information and a summary of EDI's work on this in AY 23-24 can be found [here](#).

Chair Nobile provided background information on the Antiracism Work Group (ARWG) and the work that EDI completed during the previous academic year related to selecting a consultant to conduct the Academic Senate Anti-Racism External Reviewer Assessment. Chair Nobile also informed members of the goals that the consultant has been tasked with while completing the assessment.

Action: Chair Nobile, Vice Chair Pirtle, Executive Director Paul and Petra met with the consultant in order to determine the next steps.

IX. Systemwide and Campus Wide Review Items

A. [Proposed Revisions to the Policy on Vaccination Programs](#) (Systemwide)

The policy includes the following key issues:

- Students will be required to be up-to-date on their MMR, MenACWY, Tdap, and VZV vaccinations, provide proof of immunity for those diseases, or obtain a University-approved exception, as a condition of Physical Presence at a University Location or in a University Program.
- Students may request exceptions to any of these vaccination requirements premised on medical contraindications, religious objections, or disability. There are no exceptions permitted for students' mandatory completion of a tuberculosis screening questionnaire to evaluate their risk of latent tuberculosis.
- In the event that applicable law or public health orders impose stricter vaccination requirements, students would be required to comply with those stricter requirements.
- Students who are not up-to-date with the relevant vaccination requirements (which includes those who have been granted exceptions) or who have not satisfied the tuberculosis screening requirement may be subject to Non-Pharmaceutical Interventions (e.g., masks and testing) above and beyond those who have demonstrated compliance and may be excluded from the Location or site of an outbreak.
- Additionally, students who are not compliant with the vaccination programs and/or screening program must participate in any Vaccine Education required by their Location Vaccine Authority (LVA). Additional Vaccine Education may be required by the LVA in the event of an outbreak or consistent with applicable federal, state, or local laws, regulations, or accreditation standards.

Action: EDI declined to opine. The EDI Analyst notified the Senate Chair that EDI declined to opine.

B. [Anthropology and Heritage Studies Graduate Program Proposal](#) (Campus Wide)

The Graduate Council has conducted its preliminary review of the proposal and expressed its support for the program proposal to be formally presented for the Senate to review.

As the [CCGA handbook](#) now includes a diversity component, EDI has been invited to review the proposal.

Materials linked above include:

- Professor C. Torres's, Chair of the Anthropology and Heritage Studies Department, memo to former SSHA Dean Gilger, with a record of the faculty vote
- Former SSHA Interim Dean Bortfeld's Letter of Support
- The Revised Program Proposal in response to the Graduate Council's February 27, 2024, preliminary comments on the proposal
- Graduate Council's preliminary comments

EDI is a lead reviewer.

Comments are due to the Senate Chair by **Tuesday, October 1, 2024.**

Action: Vice Chair Pirtle and Member Magaña agreed to serve as lead reviewers. They will send their comments to Petra, Fatima and Chair Nobile by Tuesday, September 24, and comments will be circulated to members via email in order to be finalized and sent to the Senate Chair by Tuesday, October 1.

X. Other Business

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:30pm.

Attest: Clarissa Nobile, EDI Chair