Faculty of Education

Diversity, Equity and Respect Committee

Annual Report
2016-17

The Diversity, Equity and Respect (DER) committee is an elected committee within the Faculty of Education. Our mandate has two main components: (1) to encourage the practice and principles of diversity, equity, respect and inclusiveness in the Faculty; and (2) to collaborate with Faculty stakeholder groups in the area of diversity, equity and respect.

1. Membership

First and foremost, I would like to thank the DER committee members for their remarkable commitment this past year. The DER committee met for a total of 9 meetings this past year including September 30th, November 4th, December 2nd, January 13th, February 10th, March 10th, April 13th, May 11th, and June 9th.

This year, the membership included the following individuals:

**Elected Academic Members**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Department/Program</th>
<th>Email</th>
<th>Term</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diane Conrad</td>
<td>Secondary Education</td>
<td><a href="mailto:dhconrad@ualberta.ca">dhconrad@ualberta.ca</a></td>
<td>2016-2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maria Cutumisu</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:cutumisu@ualberta.ca">cutumisu@ualberta.ca</a></td>
<td>2016-2018</td>
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<td>Mijung Kim</td>
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<td>2015-2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dangzhi Zhao</td>
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<td>2016-2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kris Wells</td>
<td>Educational Policy Studies</td>
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<td>2015-2017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Appointed / Elected Representatives**

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<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Email</th>
<th>Term</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>APO Representative</td>
<td>Kevin Wallace (Committee Chair)</td>
<td><a href="mailto:kevin.wallace@ualberta.ca">kevin.wallace@ualberta.ca</a></td>
<td>2015-2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESA Rep</td>
<td>Kortney Griffin</td>
<td><a href="mailto:griffin@ualberta.ca">griffin@ualberta.ca</a></td>
<td>2016-2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GSA Rep</td>
<td>Patricia Jagger</td>
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<td>2016-2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HT Coutts Library Rep</td>
<td>Allison Sivak</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Allison.sivak@ualberta.ca">Allison.sivak@ualberta.ca</a></td>
<td>2016-2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Resources Rep (Advisor)</td>
<td>Catherine Anley / Candy Khan</td>
<td><a href="mailto:catherine.anley@ualberta.ca">catherine.anley@ualberta.ca</a></td>
<td>continual</td>
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2. Activities and Accomplishments

During the 2016-17 academic year, the DER committee met often and discussed a variety of matters related to advocating for greater diversity, equity and respect within the Faculty of Education. The dedication of our committee members to regular meetings was truly an accomplishment. In my view, these frequent meetings renewed interest and excitement in what the DER committee can accomplish. This led to a new initiative and generated a variety of ideas about how the committee can support diversity, equity and respect in the Faculty in the coming year.

The DER committee had two major focal points this year. This included reviewing the previous DER Faculty of Education Climate Survey findings and addressing diversity related space usage in the Faculty. These initiatives will be detailed in turn below. The committee also spent some time learning about diversity on campus via a presentation provided by the Employment Equity Advisor (Catherine Anley) on the topic of Workforce Equity Data. As well, the committee discussed the terms of reference and considered the possibility of changes, yet at this time no specific changes are recommended for the terms of reference.

**Faculty of Education Climate Survey**

The DER Faculty of Education Climate Survey was concluded this year. This was a survey of students regarding the unique needs of culturally diverse students in the Faculty. The survey was conducted in 2014 and the data was subsequently analyzed and summarized in 2015-16. Ms. Justine Ulan completed this project with direction from DER and Dr. William Hanson. Significant support was also offered by the Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. Ms. Ulan presented her findings to the committee in early 2017 and subsequently prepared a summary report. The summary report has been attached to this Annual Report.

Briefly, 7% of the student population participated in the survey. Findings were categorized into four factors: Positive Student Experiences, Negative Student Experiences, Dynamic Feedback and Student Engagement. Key findings included:

- Faculty Strengths:
  - 79.9% agreed or strongly agreed they are respected and included in the Faculty
  - 78.8% consider the Faculty climate positive
- Faculty Weaknesses:
  - 72.5% of students would recommend the Faculty
  - 81.4% of students have not experienced discrimination or harassment
  - Faculty Weaknesses:
    - 20.4% of students never receive feedback
    - 63.9% of students rarely or occasionally attended events
    - 21.2% of students were aware of the University of Alberta’s Office of Safe Disclosure and Human Rights
    - 28% of students feel their report of misconduct would be given consideration
    - 58.9% of students state they do not have or are uncertain if they have someone to confide in.

Recommendations from this survey include the creation of focus groups to gain a deeper understanding of some of the issues raised in the survey. The DER committee would like to work with the Faculty this coming year to develop focus groups for this purpose. As well, once focus groups are completed, we believe it is worth considering how and when another climate survey could be conducted with the understanding that positive changes have occurred within the Faculty since 2014 that address some of the concerns raised and other issues may have been identified to further build on what was learned. We also would like to disseminate the report to the Faculty at Faculty Council and perhaps at department councils. Perhaps our knowledge dissemination plans could be discussed with the Dean’s office early in the 2017-18 academic year.

**Diversity Spaces**

Early in our year, committee members brought up concerns that some groups of individuals struggle in the Faculty to access space related to their unique needs. For example, Carley Christianson (USS) noted that there are few if any private locations suitable for students who wish to breastfeed or pump breastmilk. Several students had inquired with their office about such space. Carley reported that students had been advised to use the public washrooms, which would not be ideal for a number of reasons. This concern led to an initiative by the committee to learn more about how diverse groups could be better included in the Faculty through dedicated spaces for use meeting unique needs.

To find out more about concerns people within the Faculty have regarding space usage for diverse needs, our committee surveyed members of the Faculty. We prepared a simple survey that was sent to students and academic staff. We asked them to comment on space usage and suggest how diversity group needs might be better met with dedicated spaces. We received 50 responses to our informal survey across all roles: undergraduate/graduate students, faculty and academic staff members. We learned that 39% of individuals in our survey suggested they would like to see more all-gender washrooms; 36% indicated they would like to see a dedicated prayer room in the Faculty, 34% suggested they would like to see a dedicated nursing space, and 7% suggested they would like to see a dedicated smudging space.

In this past year, we believe we learned a fair bit about some ways in which the use of space could be more respectful of the dignity of persons and peoples. Our committee remains dedicated to working with the Faculty in any way possible to enhance the experience of all students in the Faculty. Thus, our hope is that in the coming year we will have an opportunity to continue the conversations we started within the Faculty regarding the use of space and ultimately move towards simple actions that could meet diverse needs. For example, our committee discussed recommendations related to some of these
concerns such as designating some small washrooms as all-gender washrooms. We believe it may be possible to identify some smaller washrooms that could be redesignated without significant renovation costs. Another example relates to smudging in the Faculty. We also spent a fair bit of time discussing the issue of smudging and we believe further discussion is warranted related to space for smudging in the Faculty.

**Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRI)**

An important issue noted by our committee this past year relates to the USRI forms used in the Faculty. Several members of the committee expressed their concern that some of the items on the USRI are worded in a way that might discriminate based on how a person speaks versus evaluating how well an instructor communicates. This was a significant concern of several committee members. We discussed this concern as a committee several times so that we may better understand the matter. Our hope is that we may have an opportunity to examine the matter more closely in the coming year and perhaps make some suggestions to limit the possibility of discrimination.

**Intercampus Committee Interactions**

One of our members, Ms. Candy Khan of Human Resource Services at the University of Alberta advised the committee that there are currently similar committees across campus. She has advised us that it may be possible to further collaborate with these other committees in the coming year. This past year, the committee considered this possibility and fully supported the idea. Thus, our plan for the coming year is to connect with other similar committees on campus such that we may better understand common issues and learn from each other.

Finally, I would like to thank each and every committee member for their generous contributions of time. I believe it was very rewarding for all of us in the committee to see such a commitment to regular meetings and to careful consideration of Diversity, Equity and Respect issues in the Faculty of Education. We look forward to the opportunity to build upon some of our activities from 2016-17 in the coming year.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kevin Wallace, PhD
Chair, DER Committee