



COMMISSION_{ON}
DIVERSITY_{AND}
INCLUSION

Recommendations for University- Wide Diversity & Inclusion Events

Submitted to:
Chancellor Mark S. Wrighton
Provost Holden Thorp

April 28, 2016

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Last year the Chancellor and Provost charged the Commission on Diversity & Inclusion with making recommendations to implement a twelve-point action plan designed to make Washington University in St. Louis a more diverse and inclusive community. The Commission in turn requested a working group explore and consider how to best implement action item number 7: “The university will host university-wide diversity and inclusion events (perhaps similar to the February 2015 event “Race and Ethnicity: A Day of Discovery and Dialogue”) with students playing a key planning role...” In consultation with this working group, the Commission on Diversity & Inclusion makes the following recommendations. In addition, please refer to Report 10: Academy for Diversity and Inclusion, which the Commission recommends will house the Honor and Recognition initiatives.

BACKGROUND

Events offer opportunities for building community around shared institutional values and priorities. With regard to diversity and inclusion in particular, events can provide spaces for critical engagement; institutional critique; breaking down silos; and enticing new stakeholders in the work. When used intentionally and strategically, events can help transform diversity from an institutional value into an institutional culture and active priority.

As a research university and a liberal arts institution, the university hosts manifold events, many of which incorporate diversity and inclusion in meaningful ways. The annual Martin Luther King, Jr. commemoration, celebrated on MLK Day, is one long-standing example. In February 2015, following the regional and campus unrest sparked by the death of Michael Brown, the university held its first Day of Discovery & Dialogue, designed to create a space for the community to come together, heal, and critically

engage one another. Over 700 people participated in the symposium. This past February, in 2016, the campus convened a second Day of Discovery & Dialogue, this time called ‘A Focus on Inclusion’. Over 500 people participated in this last symposium, with many stating it was one of the most meaningful and productively provocative events they had seen at the university.

- <https://voices.wustl.edu/race-ethnicity-2015/>
- <https://voices.wustl.edu/day-discovery-dialogue-2016/>

We note that the contexts for the Days of Discovery & Dialogue were significantly and meaningfully different. The first came six months after Michael Brown’s death and was sparked by a need and desire to bring together a campus in distress. Its success highlighted the potentially transformative power of community dialogue and discussion in the

challenging arena of diversity and inclusion. The second Day of Discovery & Dialogue was designed to move the institution forward in making institutional investments in this work. Again, taken together, the two symposia demonstrate the power of events to build a community and culture of inclusion.

Other opportunities for transformative events include The First Year Reading Program, which has been a key part of the undergraduate first-year experience for 13 years, and a new, recently launched event, the Trailblazers Awards, which is in search of an institutional home. After meeting to assess the existing institutional landscape, need, and opportunity, our working group makes the following recommendations to the Commission regarding how the university can make strategic and intentional use of signature events to bring our community together around the value and priority of diversity and inclusion.

RECOMMENDATION #1

- We recommend the Day of Discovery & Dialogue continue as an annual, university-wide event, taking place on both campuses, for the next three years, Spring 2017, Spring 2018, and Spring 2019.
 - The annual commitment yields several institutional benefits. First, an annual event will allow the university to regularly and tangibly recommit to diversity and inclusion as a core university value and priority. Second, an annual event will establish diversity and inclusion as a crucial part of the student experience, ensuring that all students will be able to participate in the Day of Discovery & Dialogue during their first year. Indeed, we envision that the Day of Discovery & Dialogue can become a spring semester parallel to fall semester's orientation, a time when we engage our students in core values of not only campus citizenship but also global citizenship, encouraging them to begin to think about their future roles as leaders of their communities. For employees, diversity and inclusion training can be a foundation for faculty and staff members to bring knowledge and perspective for a more engaging event, and interactive discussion;
 - After three years, there should be reconsideration whether to continue the Day of Discovery and Dialogue as an annual event or shift it to a biannual format to create institutional space for other sorts of engagements and interactions during the "off year," perhaps as build ups to and/or follow ups to the "on year."
- We recommend the Day of Discovery & Dialogue continue in approximately the same format it followed in 2015 and 2016, i.e., an evening session on the medical campus followed by a day or half day symposium on the Danforth campus.
 - This enables both campuses to participate (we note that several hundred people attended the evening events at the medical campus);
 - The opening evening includes those who cannot take time from work to participate during the day and may especially appeal to members of the St. Louis community.
- We also recommend the event be live streamed for campus community members who cannot physically participate and also for alumni and other interested people.
 - We also encourage finding ways to make the live-streaming/satellite viewing locations more interactive, exploring alumni gatherings and also facilitated remote viewings.
- We recommend the event retain the name Day of Discovery & Dialogue, changing the subtitle before or after the colon each year to reflect annual themes and emphases.
 - Maintaining the same title preserves the symposium's history and connotations, provides institutional continuity, and enables the community to follow its progress and evolution;
 - Changing the subtitle before or after the colon enables the event to evolve, demonstrating progress and shifts in breadth and emphasis;
 - Regardless of the Day of Discovery & Dialogue's emphasis in any given year, it should be reinforced that it is inclusive of the entire university community. As one member of the working group said, "We are all responsible for what happens after the colon." Leadership and key diversity and inclusion ambassadors can help promote the message and engage departments and units across campuses.
- We recommend that a small group be charged with primary responsibility for overseeing the Day of Discovery & Dialogue and other signature events. This oversight group could logically include the Center for Diversity & Inclusion; the Gephardt Institute; Public Affairs; and a new institutional unit housing and coordinating campus-wide diversity and inclusion efforts, being conceptualized by Human Resources and the Commission;
 - Other key partners include the Diversity Affairs Council of the undergraduate Student Union; The Graduate School¹; and the University Libraries. (Steps should also be taken to involve professional school students.) It will also be important that there be academic leadership and stakeholders. In the first two Days of Discovery & Dialogue deans of the schools, the Vice Provost for Graduate Education, and the Dean of

¹ Possibilities include The Graduate Professional Council or the Diversity and Inclusiveness Committee of the Graduate Student Senate.

the College were all key parts of the planning process. We urge the oversight committee to think creatively about how to ensure the continued involvement and investment of the academic units. One possibility is to invite school deans to rotate serving ex officio on the planning committee during the first three years.

- We envision the oversight group convening an annual planning committee that will actively envision, design, and implement the annual event. We stress that the planning committee should include broad participation by undergraduate, graduate, and professional students, and staff and faculty members. In particular, we encourage that staff who do not work in student-facing roles be given the opportunity to participate as part of the planning process.
 - We strongly encourage the oversight and planning committees to find creative ways to engage the campus community in the Days of Discovery & Dialogue from the beginning of the planning process. One possibility is to invite proposals for the annual theme from groups who might then join the planning committee, should their proposal be selected.
- We recommend the oversight group give thought to where the content from the Days of Discovery & Dialogue should land and how to do so in a way that makes the content an active interactive space and source of community and individual energy. We suggest the oversight group partner closely with the University Libraries to create digital and other archives of the events that are highly engaging and accessible.
- We recommend that the university's senior leadership, including the Provost, Executive Vice Chancellor for Administration, and Vice Chancellor for Human Resources identify and eliminate barriers to attendance and participation. Potential barriers include the timing of events; communication and advance notice of events; and reinforcing this as something all members of the community should be able to attend. For those who cannot attend, streaming and digital archives can offer alternate ways to engage.

- We recommend the oversight group be charged with developing metrics and assessments to measure the outcomes and effectiveness of the Day of Discovery & Dialogue. This assessment can inform the determination as to whether and how often to continue the Day after three years.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

- Many found the short-form sessions in the second Day of Discovery & Dialogue especially powerful and productive. We strongly encourage the oversight group in tandem with the planning committees find ways to incorporate this format and also experiment with other creative formats and experiences.
 - We recommend exploring a more produced video version of the short-form sessions to be shared online, in addition to their being live streamed. (This would entail a second camera to get close up shots of the stage.)
- We also encourage the oversight group to consider a version of short-form sessions as an option for continuing diversity and inclusion dialogue “small events” throughout the year. The interaction in small, diverse groups from all departments are invaluable, and a simple way to generate ongoing discussion. One possibility is to expand Human Resources Perspectives events to become a way to facilitate ongoing dialogue, as an extension of the Day of Discovery & Dialogue. Another option would be to have the small groups from Day of Discovery & Dialogue plan to meet again after the event, as a way to reflect on the symposium and bring new perspective to their original discussion.
- To showcase the wide array of thought leaders on our campus, we also encourage finding ways to ensure more student and staff involvement in the symposium itself.
- We recommend considering university-wide training around Day of Discovery & Dialogue, perhaps modeled on the Harkness Discussion format currently being used by the Gephardt Institute.

RECOMMENDATION #2

The First Year Reading Program selects a book for all university undergraduate first-year students to read together. When we can, we distribute a special edition of the book with our campus seal and a foreword from the Provost and also invite the author to campus as part of the Assembly Series. For at least the next two years, the First Year Reading Program will be part of the pilot first-year Identity Literacy course, which means it will align well with the goals of promoting campus inclusivity as a key value. Because the Program already offers an opportunity for cross-campus engagement and ongoing conversation around diversity and inclusion, our working group recommends that the university further leverage it to include more members of our community, especially our graduate and professional students and our staff.

- We recommend that the university create meaningful opportunities for graduate and professional school students, and staff and faculty members to participate in the First Year Reading Program. This will create regular opportunities for members of our community to both formally and informally discuss difficult topics and issues and grow together, as our first-year undergraduate students do.
 - We are hopeful that we can continue to maximize staff participation by continuing the program begun by a Diversity & Inclusion Grant that bought the First Year book for groups of staff and arranged facilitated reading groups <http://diversity.wustl.edu/signature-programs/diversity-inclusion-grants/>
 - Recognizing that we should meet people where they are on their personal journeys, we encourage a mix of seminars and other group formats, both formal and informal, to discuss the book, including staff-only groups and “vertical seminars” that enable students,
- We recommend the expansion of the program be overseen by the new institutional unit housing and coordinating campus-wide diversity and inclusion, in conjunction with the First Year Reading Program, the Center for Diversity & Inclusion, the University Libraries, and Human Resources.
 - Expansion can entail designating staff facilitators, parallel to the existing primarily faculty facilitator, who will be available to facilitate staff reading groups and vertical seminars. These facilitators might attend the same summer discussions as preparation for their work.
 - Expansion can also entail creating annual toolkits for those who cannot participate in a formal reading group or seminar and who would like to create their own, informal reading group.

staff and faculty members to interact. Vertical seminars in particular will facilitate networking and community building across the campuses and may provide opportunities for students to find staff and faculty mentors and interlocutors interested in diversity and inclusion.

facilitating intergenerational connections between the large number of alumni, faculty, staff, and current students who attended the event. A key part of moving the university forward in diversity and inclusion work is by honoring and preserving the past. Accordingly, we recommend that the university find a permanent home for Trailblazers as well as other, similar diversity and inclusion events. We recommend this home be the anticipated diversity and inclusion unit, which will be charged with coordinating and institutional portfolio of events and ensuring their adequate support.

RECOMMENDATION #3

The Commission also recommends that the university find a home for diversity and inclusion events sponsored by staff and faculty members, including by affinity groups. We offer one example of such an event. Recently, a group of staff launched an event, Trailblazers, created to acknowledge, commemorate, and celebrate the contributions that Black alumni, faculty members, and staff have made to the institution and broader communities. The inaugural event was timed to coincide with the university’s Reunion Weekend,

RECOMMENDATION #4

The university currently hosts many events that regularly engage different members of the community. We recommend that the university seek ways to align some of the many smaller events that already exist with opportunities to facilitate diversity and inclusion values. Examples of campus groups that already address these values include Human Resources' "Perspectives," informal and safe forums for dialogue, which facilitate faculty and staff discussions on creating a more inclusive and welcoming environment for our

institution; Journey of Empowerment and Transformation (JET); Buder Center Pow Wow; African Film Festival; Diwali Celebrations; Holi Celebrations; Brown School International Festival; Lunar New Year. Other campus groups include DIFFS (Diversity and Inclusion Forum for Faculty and Staff), CDC (Campus Diversity Collaborative), and the Diversity Group Leaders Forum. The anticipated institutional diversity and inclusion unit can partner with these regular events on this work.

SUMMARY

In sum, the Commission recommends that the Washington University in St. Louis make strategic and intentional use of events and do the following:

1. Continue the Day of Discovery & Dialogue as an annual, university-wide event for the next three years;
2. Create meaningful opportunities for staff and graduate and professional students to participate in the First Year Reading Program;
3. House these events in the Academy for Diversity and Inclusion (see Report 10) and charge the Academy with housing smaller, signature diversity and inclusion events, e.g., Trailblazers, and also finding ways to align some of the many smaller campus events with our diversity and inclusion values.

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To view the full report click [here](#);
to view the Executive Summary of the report, click [here](#).