VI. SNRE DEI Draft Plan Review and Listening Sessions

SNRE’s Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee hosted four sessions to review and gather feedback on the draft DEI strategic plan on March 23 and 25, 2016. Two were scheduled for staff and two for faculty. SNRE’s Human Resources Director facilitated the two staff sessions and two faculty members from the school’s DEI committee hosted the two faculty sessions. The DEI Program Manager served as note taker for each session. Commentary was recorded anonymously.

Staff, faculty, research scientists, and postdoctoral fellows were invited to attend the sessions. Online sign-up sheets were generated for staff and faculty separately, and each provided space for anonymous comments on the draft plan and the current DEI process. A discussion prompt covering similar topics was prepared for each constituent group and used at each session.

The first staff session had seven participants while only two staff attended the second (see table 17). A total of five faculty members attended the listening sessions. The first meeting followed the prompt while the second meeting was much more open ended. Participants were asked each question, outlined below, but were not pressed to find a solution to each.

Because of the timeline set by the Provost’s office and SNRE’s busy academic calendar, the DEI Committee was unable to organize review and listening sessions for students before classes ended. Consequently, the will wait till fall to solicit student input.

<table>
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<th>Date held</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Number signed up</th>
<th>Number in attendance</th>
<th>Stakeholder Group</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
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<td>9</td>
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To guide the discussion, the listening sessions were focused on the following topics:

1. Diversity benchmarks and metrics for success
2. Evaluation of DEI participation and processes for handling complaints
3. Intercultural exchanges between domestic and international students
4. Resources needed for implementation and engagement, and
5. Recruitment and retention.
Staff

- SNRE should look at what other natural resources and environment schools and programs are doing to successfully increase diversity.
  - Private institutions have funding opportunities that the University of Michigan does not have.

- Highlight the benefits that may arise from a more diverse SNRE community in the report. Such benefits could include:
  - Greater awareness and practice of inclusiveness in the school
  - The SNRE community members having access to DEI training, or developing marketable DEI skills
  - The availability of more resources, and
  - The development of a more robust support structure for DEI activities.

- Increase the amount of funding available for application fee waivers.

- Have a contact person or ombuds within SNRE who can work with staff, students, and faculty on DEI concerns.
  - However, multiple contacts can be helpful because such a structure can disrupt potentially challenging power dynamics between staff and faculty or students.
  - It is challenging for students to discuss discrimination by faculty members because they don’t always know who to speak with.
    - Moreover, a faculty member may not want to take action against another colleague on the student’s behalf.
  - The Human Resources Office may be a reasonable choice for staff members.
  - The DEI Committee was suggested as an appropriate venue to handle complaints.

- Adopt the “expect respect” model, where staff and faculty can go through leadership advancement training and receive a placard or sign to display in their office, representing themselves as an ally.

- Staff members suggested the use of a “DEI scorecard” like the one already in use on the University of Michigan’s Dearborn campus.
  - Staff members will be asked to report their engagement with DEI activities as part of their annual performance reviews.
  - This will be factored into considerations for merit increases and promotions.

- Staff participation in DEI activities should be considered as a part of their regular work functions.
  - It is important for staff members to be able to participate in these events without having to work additional hours in the evening.

- Staff members supported the suggestion of an international-domestic student coffee and tea mixer, similar to the events held by the Ford School of Public Policy.
  - The beverage mixers could feature beverages from around the world as well as various
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student groups or themes that would encourage broad participation from international and domestic students.

- SNRE can solicit current students to bring their affinity groups to these events.

- International students also need funding opportunities.

- Staff members could pursue and obtain DEI certification.
  - Not only would this motivate more staff to incorporate diversity, equity, and inclusion in their work, it could facilitate professional development and job advancement.
  - Staff noted that SNRE should focus on retention as much as recruitment.
    - They argue that staff currently leave the school as the opportunities for promotion are limited.

- Staff pointed out that it is important to build a staff community if we want to encourage staff members to participate in this kind of programming.
  - This would include opportunities for staff to socialize during lunch hour or during staff-specific events.
  - Staff should be explicitly invited to SNRE events and encouraged to participate and mingle with one another as well as with other community members.

- SNRE can use an application activity report to evaluate the inclusiveness of the application process when hires are being made.
  - Staff members said hiring managers may not be aware of this procedure and suggested more be done by SNRE’s Human Resources Office to inform faculty and staff conducting hires.
  - Candidates’ qualifications can also be reviewed without the name of the candidates attached. A staff member suggested this may reduce unconscious biases in hiring and result in a more diverse interview pool and workforce.
  - A longer application period may ensure a more diverse candidate pool, as this allows for the job posting to be shared on the Listservs accessed through DirectEmployers.

- SNRE should create a DEI award to recognize outstanding effort and dedication to increasing diversity in the school.

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20 DirectEmployers Association seeks to provide employers an employment network that is cost-effective, improves labor market efficiency, and reaches a diverse national and international pool of potential applicants. “About DirectEmployers.” DirectEmployers Association (n.d.). Retrieved April 04, 2016, from http://www.directemployers.org/about/.
Faculty

- As was the case with staff, faculty participants recommended the SNRE assess how other universities have increased the diversity of their student bodies.
  - The DEI Plan should include a list of schools, universities, and programs to be reviewed.
- Faculty felt that SNRE students are most limited by income diversity. This in turn impacts racial and ethnic diversity as well as non-traditional student enrollment.
  - Investigate the possibility of an evening program that allows students to work full time during the day.
  - The faculty participants all agreed that the SNRE should consider need-based funding in order to attract and retain diverse students.
  - Increase the funding available to international students.
- SNRE should emulate the recently instituted HAIL (High Achieving Involved Leader) scholarship program model.\(^{21}\)
  - It is an outreach program that informs high school students and their families about existing scholarships that may reduce or eliminate the costs associated with attending the University of Michigan.
  - Add tuition and scholarship information to the school's website for greater transparency.
- Each field of study should set goals for admission.
- Increase sensitivity training as a way to reduce incidents of discrimination or insensitivity.
- Faculty should undergo STRIDE and ADVANCE training.
- Faculty felt that DEI work should be conducted within the parameters of current faculty time requirements, and not in addition to them.
  - They argued that increasing the amount of time faculty have to spend away from research and teaching will dampen enthusiasm for participating in DEI activities.
  - Faculty suggested that it would be best to incorporate training and discussions in the faculty retreat or dispersed in faculty meetings throughout the year.
  - Faculty participation in DEI programming should be incorporated into the existing processes of recognition for awards and promotions.
- A mentoring program would be very useful for on-boarding new and visiting faculty.
  - They suggested a “launch team,” style support program through ADVANCE, where a committee consisting of current faculty support new faculty members.\(^{22}\)

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\(^{22}\) Whitman, Chris (2014). "Launch Committees Help Assistant Professors Navigate First Year."
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- This system is currently in place in the College of Literature, Science & Arts’ Natural Sciences Division and the College of Engineering.

- They felt that the DEI assessment should include an evaluation of the faculty as advisors.
  - This should include advising the master’s projects.
    - Master’s projects are a space where native English language speakers and English as a second language speakers have had difficulty working together.
    - Hence, there should be a clear mechanism to support master’s project groups dealing with these challenges.
    - Master’s project advisors should be trained to deal with this and receive more support.
  - There is also a system for establishing expectations between thesis students and their advisors, but no evaluation or metric for success for these relationships have been established.
  - Faculty felt that advising expectations should be clarified and more evaluations should be incorporated into Ph.D. programming.

- Classroom interactions should also be evaluated. Participants thought that the course evaluations can provide a space to evaluate faculty members on their sensitivity to diversity and efforts made to incorporate inclusive teaching techniques in their courses.

- SNRE should create a teaching and advising resource guide for new faculty.

- It might benefit SNRE to employ someone who can be a “point person” for international students.

- Create a GSI position in SNRE for students to help international students as well as domestic students with their writing.

- Faculty discussed ways in which they can increase their engagement with non-traditional and underrepresented students.
  - One faculty member who identifies as a first generation college student, wished there were ways to engage more with current first generation students in the SNRE around this unique experience.
  - There was also a discussion of the OUTlist, a voluntary list of LGBTQ people and allies on campus who work to foster professional relationships and mentoring opportunities between LGBTQ faculty, staff, students, and alumni. Similar programs exist on campus to help first-generation students and faculty connect.

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More financial resources will be required to support DEI initiatives in the SNRE. This includes increased funding for recruitment, programming, and staff and faculty time spent on DEI.

- SNRE should pursue funding from foundations, corporations, and alumni to support student recruitment and retention.

The tenure and promotion committee should work with the DEI office and ADVANCE to improve the evaluation metrics for faculty and their efforts to build a more diverse and inclusive community, curriculum, and classroom.

Faculty agreed that all positions for which hires will be made should be well advertised, and suggested SNRE review ADVANCE – STRIDE recommendations and best practices.24

The Target of Opportunity process, recommended by ADVANCE, should continue to be utilized to increase the diversity of faculty applicant pools, one faculty member suggested.

In addition, there should be changes in how candidates are evaluated, faculty members said, such as which candidates in the search pool are viable and how do you determine a candidate’s potential for success.

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24 The STRIDE Committee provides resources about practices that enhance the likelihood that diverse, well-qualified candidates are identified for faculty positions, recruited, hired, retained, and promoted at the University of Michigan. Available at: advance.umich.edu/stride. Accessed April 1, 2016.