President’s Diversity, Equity & Inclusion
Planning Initiative Launch
Summary of Table Discussions

Sept 30, 2015
Key words from the table facilitators describing the table discussions.
Executive Summary

The following four questions were asked of participants during the event and documented by table facilitators. This document represents a summary of the participants’ comments.

For the university’s Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Planning Initiative to be successful, foremost we need to keep our intentions pure and focused on the charge, stemming from love and respect, avoiding taglines while carefully choosing language that is genuine and increases trust. We need to acknowledge and use previous work in this area as a community and innovate to look outside of the box and change structures (both formal and subtle). To keep momentum going we need to pursue and celebrate “low hanging fruit” along the way.

1) What does success look like in five years?

- We will have achieved big, audacious goals.
- Diversity, equity & inclusion are recognized key parts of academic excellence.
- We have a diverse and inclusive community for faculty, staff and students.
- We nurture ongoing transformative brave spaces.
- Student admissions and retention policies are working.
- Faculty and staff hiring and retention strategies yield results.
- We invest in diversity, equity & inclusion leadership development for faculty and staff.

2) What is required to make this happen?

- The planning initiative is visible across the whole university.
- The process is inclusive, but not comfortable. Even the skeptics are engaged.
- Consistency of commitment must be present at all levels.
- We must have a clear plan, a consistent message and be held accountable to make progress.

3) What might get in the way of that success?

- Siloes.
- Hostility, apathy, and resistance to change.
- Fear.
- Not enough people, space, technology, or money.
- Mixed perceptions.

4) What role will you play and what are you ready to contribute?

- I will do my job. I will fill a leadership role.
- I will do my own personal work. I will mentor others. I will be an example.
- I will recruit more and different students, and engage them.
- I will engage others in the community.
- I will work with leaders. I will provide leadership.
- I will explore best practices and integrate diversity definitions.
Full Summary

1) What does success look like?

We will have achieved big, audacious goals. We will have radically transformed U-M with visible diversity at all levels. Our efforts will have been so bold that people look back 100 years and say “wow!” Our goals are so audacious it begs the question: “really we think we can do that?” As a result of our efforts, everyone will say “You got to go to Michigan—they’re doing this right.” Other institutions will look at U-M as the leaders in diversity to follow and U-M is leading the way in scholarly activities relative to diversity, equity & inclusion. Across the state, every underrepresented minority considers U-M #1.

Diversity, equity & inclusion are recognized key parts of academic excellence. We are clear and bold in defining and emphasizing our deep commitment to these issues and to the public good. Our research and scholarship on diversity has increased and is embedded into our curriculum from the beginning. Faculty see the connection to diversity, equity and inclusion as part of their job, they understand what it means, and they are accountable to our goals. In every classroom on campus, instructors have critical awareness of differences and find ways to discuss them in ways that help increase the comfort and learning of all their students. There is basic respect for all faculty within their departments and there is more institutional support for hiring diverse faculty.

We have a diverse and inclusive community for faculty, staff and students. Diversity on campus mimics society and it is evident at all levels. Students see faculty and staff that represent them. We’ve increased student numbers with visible and invisible identities. It is easy to live, teach and thrive, even if you are a person of color or from a subpopulation not ordinarily seen. Staff, faculty and students feel a sense of belonging and experience joy. Across the university all community members feel included and feel safe in their spaces and their schools. There is no discrimination around campus crime reporting. Students feel more welcome, minorities are equally likely to progress into highly selective programs such as Ross and Engineering and there are no disparities in graduation rates. There is a clear path for staff advancement and there is respect for minority faculty. Inclusion is the norm and there is room for broad views on politics, religion, and gender identity – all are taken seriously. People are not pigeonholed into one identity, but are valued for their many identities. Every student has a least one meaningful academic experience that focuses on diversity, equity and inclusion. People of different backgrounds communicate with one another and everyone is more sensitive to diversity and embrace it. We have personalized our efforts so individuals internalize impact and meaning to both make the university a better place and grow each individual within our community. We will make connections between people and ideas that resonate with the role of U-M. We’ve made substantive and lasting change as opposed to PR.

We nurture ongoing transformative brave spaces. We’ve changed who we are as a university and as individuals through a healing process for students, faculty, and staff. We build trust among faculty and staff and between units. We are able to talk about race, class, and related topics, with courage, not just code. We’ve created norms and established brave spaces where difficult conversations can be had, be comfortable with the uncomfortable and create comfort from discomfort, be understood in spite of language differences, and ensure people who don’t agree don’t feel ignored and alternative views are discussed free from power dynamics or backlash. We provide space for critical identity to get resilient. We are willing to tackle tough conversation in classrooms and staff meetings.
**Student admissions and retention policies are working.** We strive for a cultural mass of minorities, recruiting with intentional outreach like we recruit football players. We are admitting a more diverse student body and faculty, and we’ve closed the gaps in application rates for underrepresented populations. We have higher numbers of students who are 25 years and older. Student support is embedded into the fabric of the institution – it is accessed and available to all, and there is no stigma attached to using it. We have given students tools to cope with whatever challenges exist and have provided them with a network to support them after graduation. There is a much larger endowment to increase minority students, regardless of financial need, and there is more financial support for the middle class of students. We start talking about diversity and inclusion during orientation. We leverage greater financial aid and student health insurance, provide faster turnaround on financial aid offers, create ad campaigns for minorities to apply, connect prospective students with current students, invest in k-12 programs, establish greater school/university partnerships, and communicate across university on actionable ways to target recruitment so departments know what options are available. Mentorship is expected and incentivized, and we provide mentors with needed tools, especially for at-risk individuals. We assume new students need opportunities beyond classes to learn some of the life basics: connect with jobs and provide training for budgeting, money management and student loans.

**Faculty and staff hiring and retention strategies yield results.** We hire staff who are passionate about the work, individually and collectively. We talk to colleagues about how to pool resources and about retention. We use our roles to raise the issue and push it in our staffing and coaching groups. We rethink HR efforts toward greater investment in people, such as incentives to improve the already entrenched annual review process.

**We invest in diversity, equity & inclusion leadership development for faculty and staff.** We provide the professional development necessary for faculty and staff to develop shared understanding of diversity, equity and inclusion and why it is important, without getting bogged down in over-intellectualization. These efforts include templates/guides on how to start, providing ways for supervisors to share message with those who didn’t hear or don’t get it, getting faculty and staff to feel this is part of their job as well as well as creating an environment where all of our diverse community feels comfortable and is able to excel.

### 2) What is required to make this happen?

**The planning initiative is visible across the whole university.** As many people as possible know about the process, understand how to get engaged in it and are updated about the process at measureable points along the way. Everyone understands that they have a role to play and know how the process “affects them.” We push ourselves, as a community and individually, to get involved. We aggressively communicate the November events.

**The process is inclusive, but not comfortable. Even the skeptics are engaged.** We employ highly inclusive processes and as many people as possible have a voice, including staff, faculty, undergrads and graduate students. Engagement happens at all levels because planning leads returned to their departments and identified other champions. We have an authentic and inclusive dialogue, with robust debate that allowed for new ideas and the option to “agree to disagree.” We push past the superficial and get uncomfortable. As a result, even the skeptics are included in the process and there is transparency around how input will be used.
**Consistency of commitment must be present at all levels.** This initiative needs to permeate the institution. Leadership needs to occur at all levels: sustained backing and clear expectations from executive officers, unit ownership, and faculty, staff, and student buy-in. This requires top-down and bottom-up support, as well as the embedding and integration of the two. We collectively need to envision and articulate what buy-in looks like. We must have buy-in from department chairs to substantially and deliberately promote this in the classroom as well as create and manage an effective structure, such as diversity champions across job classes. Success will require significant coordination to ensure sustainability in that “everyone’s job” doesn’t effectively become “no one’s job.” The entire community must take responsibility and feel part, especially having regular interaction opportunities for those who may not be in formal leadership roles. We must collaborate. We must figure out how to handle the workload and keep this initiative a priority. We must make personal commitments. We must go the extra mile to make it happen. We must find the passion and energy to keep pushing. We must talk about this initiative with others. We must be all in. We have a lot of work to do! We need to create capacity and need permission to take other things off the plate to say “yes” to this effort — existing demands on our time, competing priorities, staffing limitations and existing funding limitations.

**We must have a clear plan, a consistent message and be held accountable to make progress.** Our vision and our rhetoric must be aligned. We must establish well-structured accountability mechanisms that reward and recognize meaningful goals at all levels, including provost holding deans and department heads accountable to incentivizing all faculty and front-line staff. We need a high level of awareness about the unit process and how constituents can contribute individually. Resources are tied to success. Incentives should include cross-unit collaboration and fun functions that use arts components to inspire through grace and beauty. We must create a culture of buy-in and local-level climate change, and be honest about the challenges that exist, as well as be aggressive about identifying and prioritizing the issues that the plan might address. Risk-taking should not be penalized and people should be allowed to spend time and be recognized for diversity, equity and inclusion contribution. We must establish a shared understanding of metrics that matter within a timeline that is manageable, so we can make small changes over short and specifically defined periods of time. Leaders need to model the expected behaviors and value diversity, equity and inclusion, to show they are truly committed to this effort. We need to develop an understanding of what is acceptable, helping us establish the new norms.

**3) What might get in the way of that success?**

**Siloes.** We need a way to share information across units so that we can learn from one another and do not waste time “reinventing the wheel.” We need to share best practices and move forward more efficiently and more effectively. We must not become paralyzed by the process of analysis; we are all at different stages within our own departments. We must have help working through “how” to accomplish our goals. Students need to hold leadership roles to ensure this is an inclusive process.
**Hostility, apathy and resistance to change.** We need to create a more collaborative, trusting culture that changes previous patterns of exclusion. We need to move past “the mindset” (i.e., of course they have to be qualified), and past notions of “waiting it out.” We must have a process of feedback where we cannot assume we know the problems. Change requires breaking down the way it has always been to move toward something different, and that is uncomfortable and difficult. We have a lot of excuses, so it will take communication backed by research to help us change our mindset, shift our culture and attitudes, and make the nontraditional become our new tradition. We have to figure out how to bring the passion of the initiative to each individual despite our social differences, generational differences, and different levels of commitment. We may not all understand why something is offensive, but we must help everyone respect that it is.

**Fear.** We fear taking risk. We fear being ostracized or marginalized for our efforts or for our lack of effort. We fear being labeled. We fear our own lack of understanding. We fear pressure to take action before we have had time to adequately think things through and plan appropriately. We fear making mistakes that could bring about legal or political ramifications for ourselves or the university. We fear that we lack the capability as individuals and as an institution to “practice” every day “what we preach,” and we fear failure if we cannot reach our goals. We fear change moving forward down a path that may be different from how we have previously behaved individually, or operated as a department. We fear intolerance and we fear being responsible for educating our colleagues with regard to what we are trying to accomplish. We fear what will be required of us to work through this long process beyond the metrics. We also fear unknown problems that might arise from successfully increasing diversity at the university. We also fear that the timeline will impede our ability to involve as many students as possible in helping us achieve our goals. We fear that if we do not address these issues and provide additional support staff, students and faculty will go elsewhere.

**Not enough people, space, technology, or money.** We must ensure equitable and inclusive funding – this should not be an unfunded mandate – both initial and ongoing funding. We must systematically provide open spaces for collaboration, support, and to engage on diversity, equity and inclusion. We must address perceptions that funds are currently inequitably allocated. CRLT and the other units that do this work need more staff. The development office should pursue more diverse donor programs, causes, and populations.

**Mixed perceptions.** Some perceive skepticism and a negative image of diversity here at the university, that increasing diversity means lowering our standards. Some perceive that the university’s image might be considered at the cost of working through necessary and difficult conversations. Others perceive a lack of genuine effort toward improving diversity, equity and inclusion underneath the “talk” around the issue. Some pointed to Proposition 2 and the workarounds that followed. We need to get in front of the legal requirement so it doesn’t stop us.

Some perceive that overall, many individuals have difficulty discussing diversity, equity and inclusion. Are there cultural disincentives? Is it personal choice or discomfort? Are we ill-equipped to participate in these conversations? Do we only talk with those who we perceive to be similar to ourselves? Do lower classes find it hard to identify with other groups?

Some perceive that the phrase “the Leaders and the Best” is not accurate, and that we, as a university, have not been a leader in the area of diversity for many years. Others perceive that the university has not acknowledged that this community has been paying attention and we have a response. Some
perceive that our image of diversity is misleading to incoming students and that we should better involve our student body in our efforts to develop and promote a more positive diversity, equity and inclusion image across campus. Some perceive faculty as not being properly equipped to influence a change in the perspective of our students to become more inclusive. Others perceive that hiring is often based upon tenure rather than overall skill, that this issue is an administrative problem, or that there is an overall lack of transparency here at the university and an inability to share information. Some perceive a sense that “it is working, so why break it?”

4) What role will you play and what are you ready to contribute?

I will do my job. I will fill a leadership role. I will serve as planning lead. I will chair our diversity committee. As a dean, it is required to think about diversity, equity and inclusion in search committees. I have a university spokesperson role, I can live it and breathe it. I am responsible for programs and people, so I could do something tomorrow. This is our program, this is at the center of what we do. Diversity, equity and inclusion are part of my job, and I love it!

I will do my own personal work. I will mentor others. I will be an example. I recognize this is a lifelong commitment and it takes work. I will advance the argument that diversity drives excellence. I am out as a gay man, and in my role it reflects an institutional value on diversity. I will seek to understand diversity more fully. I will notice how I show up and how I communicate. I will work to be more inclusive. I will be a change agent. It is my job to bring these issues to the attention of my community. I will use my own mistakes, and be vulnerable in sharing them, in order to help others. I will be an example of what I want to see. I will speak up. I will not shy away from hard conversations. I will be an ally, an educator and a mentor. I will be visible in these discussions. I will develop a more welcoming culture and climate. I will set the tone for social justice. I will prepare myself by reading about what is happening and stay involved. I will be the person who talks about the initiative and issues of diversity. This is my opportunity to DO something and be involved.

I will recruit more and different students, and engage them. I will provide individual and unique student experiences. As faculty, I will contemplate new initiatives. I will create more pathways for people to get to U-M. I will prepare potential students through pre-college work. I will reach out to and recruit underrepresented groups and advise them. I will continue to talk about the importance of building awareness about resources for students and parents. I commit to making U-M students aware about what’s going on. I will learn about what kind of pipelines we have for students and learn how to reach others. I will make diversity, equity and inclusion a part of my role and be a bridge between faculty and students. I will continue to champion students to student mentoring. I will pay it forward by having meaningful conversations with recruits and tell them about the community and acceptance here.

I will engage others in the community. I will create process for more staff and faculty to contribute to the discussions. I will make a connection between the university and people outside the university. I will facilitate a process of engagement and make sure proper resources are obtained. I will keep constituents engaged and involved. I will reach out to the community to make a lasting difference. I will make sure everyone’s voice is heard. I will take this process and build on it by bringing in more voices. I will reach out to faculty and staff about serving veterans well on campus. I will build stronger relationships with the community, higher quality connections and more local connections.
I will work with leaders. I will provide leadership. I will educate my new director about our culture and the expectations of his/her role. I will provide budget and be awake for creative opportunities. I will work with leadership and keep up energy. I will show leadership and cease hand picking students. I will foster a culture of change overall and offer visibility of that change. I will provide support for staff and get people involved. I will reduce barriers in order to help others. I will examine the service faculty and staff have to provide with regards to diversity. I won’t let people off the hook and I will check in about where we are we at each stage.

I will explore best practices and integrate diversity definitions. I will examine diversity definitions across disciplines. I will contribute and share what we’re learning. I will record, recognize, and share best practices. I will share the story of the “first of many firsts” and learn about the story that followed.