

Diversity, Inclusion and Equity Committee: Proposal to Compose the Committee with Student-Motivated Individuals and Terms

INTRODUCTION:

In the spring of 2016, the Black Law Students Association (BLSA) proposed a Diversity and Inclusion Committee following its event entitled, Black Minds Matter at USF Law. The proposal called for a committee that would work with the law school's administration, the Student Bar Association, faculty, alumni, and the Vice Provost for Diversity and Inclusion as a team to collectively foster solutions to student concerns pertaining to diversity, inclusion, and equity within the law school. This past summer, the efforts toward the formation of a committee and defining the committee's purpose were continued. As of today, the composition and charge of the committee is still under consideration.

The proposed committee was initiated by and created for the positive benefit of the USF law student population. It is important that students have a critical role in helping to structure and determine who serves on the committee.

After speaking with several students, organization leaders, and alumni, we have comprised an ideal list of individuals and representatives for the committee based on student concerns. Further, we have better defined the purpose and charge of the committee.

CONCERNS AND ISSUES:

Our research demonstrates the following concerns are most prevalent to law school students:

- The lack of students of color in the classroom and in the USF School of Law community.
- No awareness of socio-economic, cultural and religious backgrounds and their effects on how students perform in academic settings.
- The discriminatory application selection and policies towards students of color and affinity groups.
- The administration overlooking a student's expressed concerns made on an individual level.
- The low representation of African Americans and Black among both faculty and staff members.
- No policies in place to encourage or assist all faculty and staff members in introducing race and law into the law school curriculum in relevant and pedagogically-appropriate ways.
- The lack of institutional transparency in regards to finances and salaries, the hiring processes of faculty and staff members, minutes from administrative meetings and the application of the School of Law's various policies and regulations as applied to all students.
- Microaggressions that occur from faculty and all people in the USF Law community.
- Core curricula and ABA Bar Exam courses being taught by professors who are not fully equipped with the knowledge and expertise to teach on such courses.
- The lack of a family friendly campus in which student-parents who are also student professionals can use the resources of the law school campus without burden to non-parenting students.
- The lack of support for students who are members of extremely vulnerable populations and have special needs that are exacerbated in the law school environment. (For example: Former Foster Youth, Undocumented Students, Homeless Students, etc.)

****The issues listed above are some of the issues expressed by students. This is not an all inclusive list and we encourage it to be added to and refined.****

COMMITTEE PURPOSE/CHARGE:

Given the above-mentioned concerns, the charge of the committee should be to examine the most prevalent concerns of students and work with the proper administrative function or committee to assist, provide feedback, and resolve the concern.

DESIRED COMPOSITION:

Students have expressed the idea of having members on the committee who are and have been strongly dedicated to diversity, inclusion, and equity in the law school environment. The list, outlined below, was created based on student preference to who they believe is best suited to represent them on the Diversity, Inclusion and Equity Committee.

The suggested stakeholders will include the following individuals and representatives:

- Co-Chair - Dean Grace Hum
- Co-Chair - Faculty Member To be Selected by the Committee
- Mary Wardell, Vice Provost for Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity
- Two Staff/Faculty Members Chosen by the Dean's Office - Suggested: Comertia Cooper, Associate Director for OCP and Heidi Ho, Assistant Director for ASP
- SBA Representative - SBA President or Chair of the SBA Diversity Committee
- Two Full-time, Tenured Faculty Members - Suggested: Professors Magee, Hing, or Manian
- One Student Organization Representative from each group interested in being a part of the committee who has committed itself and its purpose to issues of race, class, and gender issues in legal education. (Optional)

Thank you,

Arielle Brown, Cristal Harris, and Yvette Osumah
Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity Initiation Team
University of San Francisco, School of Law