

Faculty Senate Minutes
Thursday, June 18, 2020, Via WebEx, 2:30 PM

I. Attendance

K. Armbruster, J. Bohus, V. Brown-Kennerly, P. Davis, E. Goedereis, S. Jensen, J. Lassetter, B. Lynch, S. Mahfood, J. Palmer, M. Preuss, T. Reilly, E. Rhiney, L. Risik, D. Stiles.

- II. *Upon motion by S. Jensen, seconded by T. Reilly, the Senate unanimously approved the minutes of the May 21, 2020 Faculty Senate meeting pending revisions.***

III. President's Report – B. Lynch

President Lynch reported that in a task force meeting he received an update from the IT Department regarding the outage of services. They are in 'repair' mode. Webster University does not believe the failure of the email login system and other connection issues was a malicious hack, and that no data has been lost as a result of this failure. The goal is to systematically get individuals access to their accounts without jeopardizing data.

President Lynch reported that he is attending Task Force working group meetings at least once a week. The groups are developing policy papers and making recommendations to the administration. They are working on scheduling and space issues. Deans are working with Chairs who in turn are working with their departments in order to ascertain what kind of supplies, including software and other technologies will be needed in order to facilitate classes. Pres. Lynch believes that students are becoming impatient. He has had discussions with other faculty asking them to look at issues of delivery and how to better serve students. Webster is going to have to find a way to reinvent itself for advancement into the future.

The Senate discussed personal concerns regarding coming back to campus as well as concerns for students such as accommodations, if any particular classes would be prioritized, where Webster's Cares Act money is being utilized.

S. Jensen is on the transitioning back to campus working group. He shared that he spoke with Cheryl Fritz this date and she would like immediate feedback concerning what kind of things faculty think may be helpful for themselves or students. Senators brought up the issues of assistance with mental health and maybe having zoom meetings with new students and parents to answer their questions.

Pres. Lynch said that N. Hellerud and President Schuster would be attending the July Senate meeting to give the Senate a better understanding of pre- and post-Covid enrollment numbers as well as budgetary information. N. Hellerud will also give an update on the HLC report that will have been filed in early July.

IV. Old Business

A. Faculty Appointments to Faculty Senate Committees

The Faculty Senate unanimously approved a motion by B. Lynch, seconded by P. Davis, to appoint Ted Green and Victoria McMullen as School of Education representatives to the Academic Program Review Committee to take the place of Basiyr Rodney who has resigned from the committee.

B. Faculty Senate Committees – Bill Lynch

President Lynch would like to have a complete revision of the current University Handbook completed by December 2020 to present to the administration and urged the Senate to review current committees.

V. New Business

A. Letter from Multicultural Studies Committee dated June 15, 2020 (***Attachment A***)

The Senate entered into discussion concerning this letter that was presented to them for consideration. It was agreed that the content of this letter is good for the university and the Senate to consider. The Committee would like to utilize an upcoming Faculty Institute to not only reimagine Webster University, but to make sure that racial equity is included in those discussions.

B. Letter from Black Faculty and Staff dated June 16, 2020 (***Attachment B***)

This letter was addressed to Chancellor Stroble, President Schuster and Vincent Flewellen, but was sent to the Faculty Assembly as well. The Senate discussed the mission of this letter and agreed that its content was important and justified.

The Senate unanimously approved a motion by T. Reilly, seconded by V. Brown-Kennerly, requesting that Senate President Bill Lynch reach out to both the Multicultural Studies Committee and the signators of the Black Faculty and Staff letter offering them one of the two upcoming Faculty Institute dates to come together and address Webster University racial divides as part of reimagining Webster.

President Lynch states that another Senate meeting prior to the July 23, 2020 meeting is needed in order to work on the scheduled August 18, 2020 Spring Institute.

The Senate agreed to hold a Senate meeting on Thursday, July 9, 2020.

C. President Lynch explained to the Senate that there are three separate types of grievance policies.

1. There is the Webster University Policy Handbook appeals process for faculty.

2. There is the University open grievance policy that exists on the Human Resources website and this policy relates to all faculty and staff.
3. There is a Corrective Action Policy.

President Lynch explained that people are upset because they did not know these three separate policies existed. He would like them all to become part of the University Handbook. He explained that that Webster has no Ombud (formerly Ombudsman) and he would like to see a non-administrative and non-faculty Ombud on campus.

D. Faculty Senate Vice President – Bill Lynch

Instead of handpicking a new Vice President for the Senate, President Lynch explained that he is taking a different approach and would like to know if anyone is interested in the job. He asked that if anyone is interested, that they reach out to him privately and he would discuss the position with them and that he would keep it confidential.

The Senate unanimously agreed upon motion by J. Palmer, seconded by S. Jensen, to adjourn this meeting at 4:05 PM.

TO: Faculty Senate

FROM: Multicultural Studies Committee

RE: Agenda for delayed spring retreat and/or fall institute

June 12, 2020

Dear Members of the Faculty Senate,

The killings of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor again remind us that we have done too little to redress the long history of anti-Blackness, white supremacy, and state-sanctioned racial violence. We are approaching the six-year anniversary of Michael Brown's murder in 2014, and it's become too clear that we have much more to do. Our nation, our region, our university are riven by racial inequity and violence (in its many forms).

While the committee appreciates the administration's valuing of diversity and inclusion, we must also acknowledge its efforts have fallen far short of equity. Furthermore, given that Black people continue to die from police brutality, and their deaths rip deep into the communities of Black faculty, staff, and students with long-lasting consequences, we feel that it is premature and even tone deaf to praise and advertise our modest accomplishments. This is a time for humility and urgent, concerted action. What we value is only truly revealed in what we do, not in what we say.

The Multicultural Studies Committee proposes that the upcoming Faculty Institute/Retreat (be it the delayed Spring Retreat or Fall Institute) prioritize the discussion, formulation, and implementation of concrete policy changes and institutional actions. For some time, faculty have been asked to "reimagine" Webster to overcome the dramatic challenges facing higher education and the institution. Our reimagining must include racial equity and racial justice.

Our committee (in collaboration with Black faculty, staff, and students) is willing to put together a program of concrete policy proposals at the Institute.

Sincerely,

Member of the Multicultural Studies Committee

Attachment B

Dear Chancellor Stroble, President Schuster, and Vincent Flewellen,

In the wake of the murders of Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and countless others, Webster University has once again missed a chance to engage directly and meaningfully with Black faculty and staff regarding the rage, anger, and hurt felt by Black Americans nationwide. On Saturday, June 6, 2020, a message was sent to the Webster community announcing solidarity, yet it excluded the very voices and perspectives of those in your immediate community. To that end, Black faculty and staff are seeking a greater level of accountability from Webster's leadership. The message affirmed Webster's "commitment to racial equity" and being a "catalyst for change". It also emphasized a belief in "constructive dialogue rather than sensational statements meant to grab attention but little else". Please accept this letter as a direct response to that letter and a call to action for University officials.

It may appear that the worldwide protests strictly center upon the recent killings of Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and Ahmaud Arbery. However, at the core of these protests are decades worth of pain that is the result of the disenfranchisement, deeply ingrained racism, and hate that permeates our society. Racism is the ugly underbelly of America. It is woven into the fabric of American life, including postsecondary education, and not surprisingly, our very own Webster University.

As a predominantly white institution, Webster's very structure is built upon and maintains institutionalized racism. While Webster views itself as an institution that values change, Webster has blended in with every other institution in continuing a legacy of systemic inequities. Some of those inequities include the visible lack of Black faculty, staff, administrators, and of initiatives which directly and specifically support the matriculation and retention of Black students. Consequently, many of Webster's Black faculty and staff do not consider Webster University a champion of justice and racial equity considering that the institution, itself, has not committed to the real, substantive mission of becoming an anti-racist institution. Webster University must do a great deal more.

If you are wondering what Webster can do to become anti-racist and elevate an equity-focused platform, you must first seek to understand the University's culpability in propagating white-supremacy. A serious effort in advancing racial equity must begin with your central constituents; Black faculty, core and non-core, Black staff, and Black students. Take for instance, gestures such as the Webster University Diversity and Inclusion conference, which often exclude Black faculty, staff, and student voices in the planning of the event and often serves as a venue that does not move beyond platitudes and pointing out white guilt. If "diversity and inclusion" is truly part of the strategic agenda of the university, it ought to be clear how the office is meant to serve all facets of the university. If Webster wants to be serious about condemning police brutality in St. Louis, it ought to evaluate its own relationship with the Webster Groves Police Department and take the perspectives of the hundreds of Black students who have abusive interactions on and around the Webster Groves campus. If Webster wants to know what it can do to truly value Black lives, it ought to evaluate the extent that its classrooms are populated with police officers who bring firearms to class, a microaggression toward Black students; it ought to look at its curriculum that does not offer any mandatory courses on the history, politics, and culture of race

in the US or in the world. The lack of attention to how racism permeates this institution is glaring when we look at the composition of our academic departments and curricula, and the composition of staff units across the Webster Network. While it is not our responsibility to educate in ways which will not directly benefit us, many of us feel the need to voice our concerns because we value the potential for change at Webster.

We propose the following action items, to be implemented in consortium with Black faculty, staff, and students:

1. Establishing universally standard hiring policies that assures that the hiring process meets a high standard for equity and inclusion
2. Establishing talent pipeline and development of retention tools for tenure-track faculty and professorship; including recognizing how the extra level of responsibility placed on Black faculty is not considered in promotion/equivalency in workload. This could include course reductions for new faculty on the status-track to ensure they have the time needed to pursue research and other professional development opportunities relevant to status and promotion. This would also include mandatory mentoring and on-boarding of new Black faculty during their first year or longer as requested
3. Expansion of course offerings on race/race theory with appropriate faculty, particularly in the GCP program
4. Expansion of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion with increased budget and professional staff, and publicized performance metrics with increased focus on intra-community collaboration. This would also include ensuring how faculty, staff, and students have greater participation in the Diversity and Inclusion conference
5. Creation and expansion of staff leadership opportunities where upward mobility is not readily available
6. Creating measures to support proportionally aligning administration and staff to the racial makeup of student body
7. Ensuring there is access to Black counselors
8. Creation of research and engagement opportunities specifically for Black students and other students of color
9. Creation of/financial investment into programs supporting matriculation and support for Black students and other students of color
10. Analyzing affordability and matriculation ability for Black students and other students of color, identifying as low-income, with particular focus given to students from Title I schools
11. A thorough and transparent review of the financial aid office governance and associated University financial aid policies
12. An annual report on advancements in racial/ethnic Faculty, Staff and Administration (FSA) hires, promotions, and dismissals along with steps to rectify disproportions. Webster should be

required to report the racial/ethnic makeup of all committees used to hire, promote and dismiss FSAs along with steps to rectify disproportions

13. A commitment to eliminating reporting non-paid low-balances to collection agencies
14. Financial and programmatic investment into strategies that support Black students' "15-to-finish"
15. A thorough review of University policies upholding racism/structural inequities with recommendations for immediate reconciliation
16. Expansion or revamping of the current Board of Trustees to greater reflect and speak on behalf of the campus community
17. A thorough reporting system for racism

To support your Black community, we request:

1. Chancellor Stroble and President Schuster meet with Black employees interested in expressing concerns and how the campus can move forward, as many of the aforementioned items warrant deeper discussion.
2. a series of meetings with Black students interested in expressing how the administration can support their interests.
3. establishing a diversity, equity, and inclusion council committed to working with the Office of Diversity and Inclusion to spur equity changes/improvements.

How are you actively supporting your Black community at Webster? What resources have you offered? Have you contacted us and asked for guidance or ensure our mental well-being? Simply put, how are you actively addressing systemic racism? We, the undersigned, believe it is necessary for Webster to take this opportunity to be reflective about the ways it has neglected its Black faculty, staff, and students, and instead, opted for empty and performative statements. Webster can and should be unequivocal in believing that Black Lives Matter, but it should also be unequivocal in demonstrating its support for a segment of the University that it neglects all too often. Ignoring it is not an option.

Respectfully,

Sandra Beins, LMS Administrator, Online Learning Center
Rayme Cornell, Associate Professor, Conservatory of Theatre Arts
Corey Hawkins, Transitions Coordinator, Academic Resource Center
Ashia Jackson, IT Service Desk Shift Supervisor, User Services
Greg Malone, Technical Project Manager, Project Management
V Muthoni Musangali, Associate Professor, Department Chair, Professional Counseling
Dr. Eric Rhiney, Associate Professor, George Herbert Walker School of Business and Technology
Dr. Basiyr Rodney, Associate Professor, Department Chair, Department of Teacher Education
Vanika Spencer, Assistant Director, First Year Experience and Undergraduate Persistence

Sharon Turner, Representative, Electronic/Photographic Media Department

This letter is also submitted in solidarity with other Black faculty and staff members within the Webster University community.