TO: The University Senate  
FROM: Senators Alberto J. Rodriguez and Heather Servaty-Seib  
SUBJECT: Proposal for a Standing Committee for Equity and Diversity 
DISPOSITION: University Senate Discussion

Sustaining a culturally diverse student, staff, and faculty community is vital to the continuous growth of Purdue University as a leading institution for higher education; therefore, we propose the establishment of a new Senate Standing Committee entitled the Equity and Diversity Committee (EDC).

RATIONALE:

Purdue’s commitment to inclusion, equity, and enhanced diversity is evidenced in a number of university documents and indicated by university actions:

- “Purdue serves diverse populations of Indiana, the nation, and the world through discovery that expands the frontiers of knowledge, learning that nurtures the sharing of knowledge, and engagement that promotes the application of knowledge” (University Mission).
- “Purdue University prohibits discrimination against any member of the University community on the basis of race, religion, color, sex, age, national origin or ancestry, genetic information, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, disability, or status as a veteran” (http://www.purdue.edu/purdue/ea_eou_statement.html).
- Purdue is committed to launching tomorrow’s leaders through characteristics such as: “A learning environment immersed in a rich and dynamic culture of diversity, equality, and inclusion for all people, with widespread support and a diverse educational climate for an evolving global society” (p. 6, New Synergies).
- Purdue hired a Vice Provost for Diversity and Inclusion in 2009. The goals of the Division of Diversity and Inclusion include creating and sustaining a welcoming campus where all students can excel; increasing and retaining the number of historically underrepresented and diverse students, faculty and staff; and preparing all students to thrive in the diverse and global environment.
- Purdue established the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Center on campus in 2012.
- Purdue included intercultural knowledge, global citizenship, and social awareness as embedded learning outcomes in the core curriculum.
- Purdue is engaged in training administrators and search committees chairs regarding strategies for recruiting diverse faculty and staff.
- Purdue is engaged in self-study related to the successful recruitment and retention of underrepresented minority students (i.e., Equity Score Process).
Although there are a number of distinct units at Purdue active in important efforts related to equity and diversity, there is a need for strong faculty and staff leadership in university level conversations related to these issues. More specifically, a senate standing committee is a natural extension and vital step in solidifying Purdue’s commitment to inclusion, equity, and enhanced diversity. A standing committee, as opposed to a faculty level committee, is required because:

- Inclusion, equity, and enhanced diversity are crucial to sustaining a positive overall climate at Purdue.
- Inclusion, equity, and enhanced diversity are the purview of everyone on campus and cannot be appropriately or effectively addressed by single units.
- Inclusion, equity, and enhanced diversity are ongoing, overarching, and constantly evolving areas of attention.
- As a standing committee, the Equity and Diversity Committee will have a broad charge, aligned with the broad charges of the existing senate standing committees.
- As a standing committee, the Equity and Diversity Committee will have more direct access to the senate floor and be more accessible to administrators who require the guidance of the committee.
- The act of establishing the Equity and Diversity Committee at the level of a standing (vs. faculty level) committee sends a more powerful message regarding Purdue’s commitment to inclusion, equity, and enhanced diversity.
- Eight out of 11 of Purdue’s peer institutions have a faculty or university senate committee (most as standing committees) dedicated to addressing issues of inclusion, equity and/or diversity. Although not a singularly compelling argument, it is critical for Purdue to at least review and consider the actions taken by peer institutions. For example, the University of Michigan Committee for an Inclusive University was established in 1994.

COMMITTEE DESCRIPTION:

The Equity and Diversity Committee (EDC)

The Equity and Diversity Committee shall consist of 13 Senators (including Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary), 3 advisors, and 3 students (two undergraduate students and one graduate student). Two established ex-officio members shall be the Vice Provost for Diversity and Inclusion and the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs. Additional ex-officio members shall be invited as deemed appropriate by the EDC. The Purdue Student Government shall recommend the undergraduate students and the Purdue Graduate Student Government shall recommend the graduate student. Each student so chosen shall serve for a term of one year. Any member absent for more than two meetings will forfeit her/his membership on the Committee.

Duties and Responsibilities

The Senate’s Equity and Diversity Committee shall provide guidance in all aspects of climate, recruitment, retention, inclusion, and equal opportunities for access and success. To this end, the duties of the EDC are to:
a) Pro-actively engage with other university units, department and/or organizations to promote a climate of inclusion.
b) Seek to increase cultural awareness, respect and inclusion of all groups—including traditionally underrepresented groups based on cultural, ethnic, language, gender, and/or sexual orientation status and all others noted in Purdue’s nondiscrimination policy.
c) Review Purdue University’s programs for the recruitment and retention of faculty, staff, and students.
d) Advise the Senate regarding issues of prohibited discrimination, equal opportunity, outreach and related matters.
e) Initiate joint explorations and investigations with other Senate Standing Committees to ensure diversity and equity issues are integrated throughout Senate deliberations.
f) Encourage diverse representation of multiple perspectives across Senate and other university committees.

EXAMPLES OF POTENTIAL FUNCTIONS FOR THE EDC:
   a) Revise the University’s welcoming statement and other social media statements to ensure that they address equity and diversity issues.
   b) Work with Colleges/Departments on their respective faculty, staff and student recruitment and retention plans and provide suggestions.
   c) Work with other Equity and Diversity groups on campus to develop short-term and long-term action plans that can maximize our efforts toward “a rich and dynamic culture of diversity, equality, and inclusion for all people” (New Synergies, p. 6).