Diversity and Inclusion Committee

Meeting Minutes, Thursday Dec 1st, 2022

1. ***Past events***: Big thank you and paying tribute to organizers and participants in the successful programing in fall 2022 as follows
   1. Hispanic Heritage month: Montse Feu, Donnie Lopez and subcommittee members organized 1) Kick off Extravaganza. 2) Spanish Minor and Bachelor of Integrated Studies. 3) Latinx Catskills. 4) Latinx Poetry and & Prose Reading.
   2. Native American Heritage Month: Jeff Gardner and subcommittee members organized 1) Indigenous Erasure in classrooms. 2) Viewing indigenous art from a native perspective. 3) Screening and discussion of Reservation Dogs. 4) Talk on Atakapa-Ishak.
   3. Participated in the advertising for book signing of John C Gruesser.
   4. Participated in the home coming parade. Special thanks to Diane Dowdy for volunteering her truck and float. (please refer us to your students so that we can send them Starbucks gift notes)
2. ***Future Events***

2.1- Series of Uncomfortable Conversations, in response to the climate survey. The previously-distributed proposal was submitted and approved by the dean’s office. We were recommended to work with Jalon Berry, Assistant Director for Inclusion Initiatives, in the Office of the President, which will help with recruitment and student outreach. Jalon has scheduled us for two sessions during Bearkats Belong Week. The first session (12:30-1:30 on 2/7) will be for moderator training, led by Steven Koether, and the second (12:30-1:30 on 2/9) will be our first Uncomfortable Conversation session and will be a time to determine the topics for subsequent sessions later in the spring. This subcommittee is chaired by Samar, Ben and Kandi and in collaboration with Kristen Terry, Susan Strickland , Diane Dowdey, William Lutterschmidt, Nathan Eckstrand.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Feb 7th at 12:30 | Moderator Steven Koether |
| Feb 9th at 12:30 | 1st Uncomfortable Conversation session |
|  | 2nd Uncomfortable Conversation session |
|  | 3rd Uncomfortable conversation session |

Please contribute by

1. suggesting topics for discussions. The following are ideas for consideration
   1. 1- The First Amendment and book bans (LGBTQ, gender, CRT).
   2. 2- Religion, sexual orientation, and abortion.
   3. 3- Confederate monuments and what counts as racism.
   4. 4- Politics and civil discourse: How to discuss politics with people you disagree with
   5. 5- Student led roundtable about experiencing bigotry in the classroom. (Benita Brooks?)
   6. 6- Inviting some scholars of Critical Race Theory or faculty of color to present on teaching about race in Texas

2) recruiting students for training with Steve Koether on 2/7

3) volunteering to lead and participate in discussions

2.2- **Diversity Reader**:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Date March 28th 2023 at 4:00 pm, zoom** | Writer Stephen Klineberg discussing his book *Prophetic City* |

Ben & Samar are working with Erin Owens, Diane Dowdey, and Leslie Anglesey to plan this event.

An initial batch of 80 Books will be ordered through Amazon. 20 have arrived so far. Please encourage Faculty to adopt the book for their classes (provided for free to faculty and students, so no need to go through the Bookstore). We are willing to buy more.

Budget 2000

Tiana will create the flyer and start advertising early in Spring

2.3- Feb. **Black History Month**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Feb 21, 2023, 5:00- 6:00 pm on zoom | poetry reading by Afro-Caribbean poet Chenelle Heard |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |

chaired by Diane and Bernie in collaboration with Thomas Meagher, Jeff Littlejohn, Shantha Stokes, April O’Brien, Miriam Akoto, Benita Brooks, and April Shemak.

* 1. March. **Arab and Muslim** Culture Week

Samar, Susan and Aisha will create a tentative program by 1st day of classes and send event forms by 1st of Feb.

Tentative

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| March 8 | Movie: The Swimmers |
| Tentative March (21, or 14 or 17) Newton Gresham library | Interactive Islamic Arts Exhibition |
|  |  |

* 1. March: **Women’s Affairs** : Kandi & Diane are working with Jessica Elkayam, Jean Lovell, Mindy Weathers, Bree Boppre & Emily Cabaniss. Please send tentative program first week of spring semester and event forms first week of Feb.
  2. May: **Asian Pacific Islander**. Co-chairs: Lei Duan & Christie Coursey Tentative program due 1st March and event forms 1st April. Would you like to hold any events earlier during the spring semester?
  3. June**: LGBTQI**+. Chair: Christopher Patane working with Kandi Tayebi, Tiffany Russel, Sarah Mass, Craig Henderson, Mindy Weather & Jared Ruchensky. Tentative program due mid-March and event forms 1st April. Would you like to hold any events earlier during the spring semester?
  4. Time ? **Disability and Accessibility Culture**. Ada Hubrig is working with April Shemak and Leslie Anglesey. Please provide input about dates.

1. **T shirts** : They are ready and available to claim from PACE.
2. **University Policy free speech**

In response to the Kelly Neidert event and the Middle Eastern Night, Jeanine Bias referred the committee members to [the TSUS Rules and Regulations](https://nam12.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fgato-docs.its.txst.edu%2Fjcr%3A6566ed0c-ffba-4b06-a19d-1afbcb32a558%2FTSUS%2520Rules%2520and%2520Regulations.pdf&data=05%7C01%7Csxz015%40SHSU.EDU%7C2e1435baf2804adfab3408dac8df8b5c%7Cb153cbd8b39247449b39e3cdb8677f00%7C0%7C0%7C638043159685225079%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=x8OSjFX6Gesm8%2BHWLCaMhdrLP%2FyJ8p8LBfYtassmP7I%3D&reserved=0) (“Chapter 5 – Component Employees, 4.7 – Rights and Responsibilities as a Teacher and as a Citizen” page 23) and the [SHSU Expressive Activity Policy](https://www.shsu.edu/dept/dean-of-students/expressive-activity/expressive-activity-policy). Jeanine stressed the policy on free speech available for student organizations and the freedom of speech granted by the US Constitution. In response to members’ concerns about the possible hostile environment caused by slurs or derogatory remarks or behavior, she discussed possible guidelines to limit offensive speech. Such guidelines include a cultural shift towards more inclusive values and university culture. We cannot directly address legal permissibility through our programming (though we can vote!), and we can only indirectly address social permissibility. We also cannot, as a committee or university, ban free speech even if it expresses hate. We are limited to addressing institutional permissibility—ie, what university policy and practice allows. Our guidelines can insist that student organizations on campus should not violate university values mentioned below.

At the university, we care to create an environment of inclusion, free from hostility and marked with empathy and kindness. We aim at creating positive interactions and avoid reactive responses. We exemplify the required behavior and show that while some incidents of bias or hate speech may occur, this is not what we are like. We encourage proactive measures. For example, we promote the development of personal coping mechanism such as walking away from the aggression or microaggression, disengaging, and learning how to self-care. Individuals exposed to bias or exclusion are encouraged to develop and explore ways by which they can empower themselves and learn how to deal gracefully and strongly with perceived prejudices. We aim at creating and maintaining a congenial inclusive campus. Jeanine discussed the meaning of a safe/unsafe campus. Most participants believe verbal abuse can cause people to feel unsafe. Unfortunately, this cannot be controlled by us or by law enforcement. This is to be treated in a holistic way, by improving and modifying the campus culture and environment. One potential avenue for doing so would be for a subcommittee to convene for the purpose of developing proposed guidelines for use by the Expressive Activity Committee in evaluating external speaker and other requests. While these guidelines would not be binding, they may positively influence the climate of our campus.

In the instance of the Neidert talk, it was an underwhelming event with a very small audience. The Chi Alpha national organization event, Middle Eastern Night, in which students made fun of another faith and believers, presents a different situation. As staff and advisors were in attendance, there is the potential to address this through an established grievance process.