

**TO: The School of Law Working Group on Diversity and Inclusion Issues**

**FROM: David Harris, Chair**

**DATE: June 12, 2018**

**RE: Status and Issues for Consideration at Meeting on June 21**

I'm writing to update you on the efforts and direction of the WG, after a conversation with Dean Chip Carter and our incoming Dean, Amy Wildermuth.

The WG was created as a bridge between the School of Law's immediate efforts to address specific concerns regarding diversity and inclusion that arose during the Spring 2018 semester, and a longer-term strategic effort to create an overall plan and set of actions to deal with issues of diversity, inclusion and free expression. Amy expressed her deep interest in beginning the long-term planning project as soon as she arrives. Because the WG was originally envisioned as a temporary group, she understands that these longer-term efforts will entail different supporting structures.

As of today, the WG has already begun three efforts that will form the foundation for all future efforts:

- The WG recommended changes to the 1L Orientation. We are continuing with these efforts, assisting the School of Law's administration with re-working Orientation structure and substance, with a mind to including many of the suggestions that WG members have made in our meetings. I met on Wednesday, June 6, with Associate Dean Hamoudi, Associate Dean of Students Kevin Deasy, Assistant Dean of Admissions Charmaine McCall, and Director of Academic Success Rob Wible to convey the recommendations of the WG to them. I know that they will need to call on us again, especially our faculty WG members, for this effort.
- The WG's endorsement of the creation of a Diversity and Inclusion position within the School of Law's administration. The WG's recommendation will be conveyed to Amy. This will include our discussion of both the status of the position and the varieties of required expertise and duties that we discussed. After receiving our input, Amy has pledged to act quickly to define the role and select someone for it. She wanted me to convey to everyone her very strong support for this effort and her commitment to ensuring the law school has someone with the expertise to help in this critical area.
- The WG drafted principles and goals that can be shared to begin the strategic planning process.

In the next few months, Amy asked if we would be amenable to refocusing our efforts to putting into place measures that the WG believes should be immediately implemented this fall. Based on the prior discussions we have had, Amy has asked that at our June 21 meeting, the WG consider and (if inclined) endorse the following three objectives going forward.

- 1) Beginning with the Fall 2018, the School of Law will make available and strongly encourage participation in multiple iterations of bias training for all members of our

community— students, faculty, administrators, and staff. The form and substance are yet to be determined; we're looking for an endorsement of the concept, with details to be filled in with input from WG members. Amy also asked if members of the WG would be willing to suggest possible trainings and providers as well as volunteer to vet the trainings before they are provided more widely.

- 2) Beginning in the Fall of 2018, the School of Law will provide training for students, faculty, administrators, and staff in carrying on (to use a broad term) difficult or uncomfortable conversations involving issues of diversity, inclusion and free speech. Again, the form and substance of the training is yet to be determined. And as with the bias training, Amy asked if members of the WG would be willing to suggest possible options/formats for this and those individuals who are well-suited to do it, as well as to participate in vetting potential presentations.
- 3) Beginning immediately, every person who is part of our School of Law community, at any level, should look for every opportunity available to incorporate considerations of diversity and inclusion in everything we do. Amy would like to ask for help from individuals on the WG to assist with ideas and coordination of this, broken into faculty, staff, and student efforts. Because one's experience as a student varies by program and year of study, students will likely need to be broken into 1Ls, upper class students (2Ls and 3Ls), and nontraditional students.

With the endorsement of these three items, and with the endorsement of the immediate start to a strategic planning process for diversity in the law school community, the WG will address the critical immediate issues as well as set the stage for a longer-term and more deliberate strategic effort to address our institution's diversity, inclusion, and free expression issues.

My thanks to all of you for all of your efforts so far, and for all you'll do in the work to come. If you have any questions about anything you see here, I'm happy to answer them. I'm easiest to reach by email at [daharris@pitt.edu](mailto:daharris@pitt.edu). If you prefer to talk on the phone or meet in person instead of having an email chat, we can set that up too.

DH