



Association of
Fraternity/Sorority
Advisors

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, & INCLUSION ADVISORY COMMITTEE FINAL REPORT

NOVEMBER

20

21

CO-CHAIRS:
DR. KIMBERLEE MONTEAUX DE FREITAS
DR. ARTHUR E. DOCTOR JR.

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OVERVIEW/STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The charge given to the AFA Advisory Committee on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) centered around four critical areas that would serve as a road map for recommendations to the AFA Board of Directors. Additionally, the committee was asked to critically examine every aspect of the Association through a DEI lens and be bold when considering the path forward for the Association. The four areas that guided our work were:

- Member services
- Operations
- Policy
- Research

PROJECT METHODOLOGY

We are thankful for the Committee Members for their commitment to serve the Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors and to assist in creating recommendations for the following report. The Advisory Committee was composed of thirteen members and led by two co-chairs. Small groups were assigned and met bi-weekly from October to January to further discuss their respective area of focus. Each focus area had a subcommittee that met regularly, engaged in meaningful conversation around diversity, equity and inclusion. Those assignments are listed below:

- Member Services
 - Elyse Gambardella, Lead
 - Huong Truong
 - Vinicius Vargas
 - Yvonne Pitts
- Operations
 - Dr. Kevin Bazner, Lead
 - Phoebe Galbraith
 - Jose Marroquin
 - Dr. Tom Jelke

- Policy
 - Dr. Zach Shirley, Lead
 - Mandy Womack
 - Asia Woods
- Research
 - Dr. Michael A. Goodman, Lead
 - Harold Brown
 - Larry Daves

Additionally, the large committee convened at least once per month to discuss overarching themes and report out on small group meetings. Drs. Monteaux De Freitas and Doctor met with small group leads bi-weekly from October 2020 to January 2021 to provide support, answer questions and give updates specific to their work.

POLICY & GOVERNANCE

Ideal State

The Association is situated in a way that allows it to be responsive to the needs of its diverse membership. The governance model is structured in a way that allows the Board of Directors the ability to operate and make decisions regarding position/policy statements when the Annual Meeting is not in session. Policies and guidelines are developed with a focus on DE&I.

Prioritized Recommendations

1. The AFA Board of Directors should examine the mission and values of the Association to ensure that our commitment to promoting DEI within all aspects of the Association's operations is explicitly stated. Additionally, the Association should develop its own definition of diversity, equity and inclusion (see Appendix A for definitions created by committee members) that will frame and guide how decisions are made regarding the business of the Association.
2. The Association should examine all resolutions and position statements listed on public forums (i.e. website) to ensure they are applicable to the current state of the profession.
3. The Association should review its Bylaws to ensure that it allows the Board of Directors the ability to draft and approve position statements on DEI and social justice topics. Further, the Board of Directors should:
 - a) Propose amending Article XII, Section A of the Bylaws, which requires a vote of the General Membership in order to officially adopt a position statement. This adds additional layers and barriers to the Association being able to respond in a timely and adequate manner to issues pertaining to DEI and social justice that directly impacts its members.

MEMBER PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Ideal state

Positive change in programs and services will require members to engage in genuine, thoughtful and diverse conversations. The Association can provide more opportunities that create a sense of belonging/connection for members from underrepresented backgrounds. Curriculum for new and existing programs must be designed to expand past current offerings and include concepts related to diversity, equity, inclusion and access.

Prioritized Recommendations

1. The Association should create affinity spaces for specific identities and develop a framework for groups to follow. There was a consistent theme across focus groups and Dr. West's research relative to the desire for increased engagement and connection opportunities among different affinity spaces within the Association. Formalizing these groups will demonstrate the Association's commitment to affirming identities and provide an increased sense of belonging for members from underrepresented groups.
2. The Association must commit to providing well-facilitated member programs and invite content experts to provide more opportunities to our members year-round in the areas of diversity, equity and inclusion.

RESEARCH & ASSESSMENT

Ideal State

The role of DE&I within the Association's research agenda is promoted and noted within processes determining research published by AFA. All grant applicants will respond to specific questions about how their work informs diversity, equity, and inclusion with the function of fraternities/sororities and funded grants will be reviewed by committee members through a DEI scope.

Prioritized Recommendations

1. The Association should commit to writing and publishing the AFA Membership Report each year; including diversifying the authorship (e.g., for 2020 both authors were white). The report should be written by people who are not on the Board, nor work at the Association.

PUBLICATIONS

Ideal State

The Association will conduct reviews of both accessibility of the submission process and the feedback procedures. There will also have been an audit conducted of past publications to track DE&I themes, populations being studied and authors. One-third of the peer-review board members will be persons of color and all volunteers working with the Association's publications will complete cultural competence training that includes content on:

1. Understanding of larger fraternity/sorority context
2. Racial issues within fraternities/sororities
3. Awareness of all umbrella groups/organizations

Prioritized Recommendations

1. The Association should audit the current *Oracle* membership and work to diversify both the Editorial leadership as well as the Review Board. A specific % of Review Board and Editorial leadership members should be Persons of Color.
2. The Association should ensure every edition of both *Essentials* and *Perspectives* contains *at least* two pieces related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (including but not limited to cultural-interest fraternities and sororities, uplifting queer narratives and class concerns, racially diverse authors, and more).

ANNUAL MEETING

Ideal State

The Association will be more intentional with creating inclusive and welcoming environments and examine barriers that prevent members from attending or participating fully at the Annual Meeting. Colleagues arrive with a wide range of experiences, knowledge and identities that help inform their perspectives on the Association, the annual meeting and their sense of belonging.

Prioritized Recommendations

1. Provide structured spaces for affinity gatherings.
2. Develop opportunities for individuals to meet one another beyond early career professionals.
3. Create a working-group to take a closer look at the financial barriers of the Annual Meeting. While the Association does provide scholarships for the Annual Meeting, there continues to be a low completion rate for the application and misunderstanding of availability.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

Ideal State

The Association will continue to have a commitment to expanding educational program speakers, trainers and facilitators in all educational program offerings. Additionally, the Association must reconsider “working across differences” within the Core Competencies as they currently exist. Specifically, this must move beyond a transactional approach, and lend to honoring humanity.

Prioritized Recommendations

1. Annual assessment of educational programs offered each year provided to membership and categories of topics. (i.e. AdvancedU, Annual Meeting)
2. Exploration of continued and expansion of virtual learning opportunities to assist with access to experts and attendees.
3. Commitment to two diversity, equity and inclusion Annual Meeting advance programs each year.

VOLUNTEERISM

Ideal State

Volunteer positions within the Association become another opportunity to demonstrate our commitment to promoting DEI as chair and leadership positions are reflective of the demographic makeup of the Association. As a part of the onboarding process, all volunteers will annual cultural competence training that includes content on:

1. Understanding of larger fraternity/sorority context
2. Racial issues within fraternities/sororities
3. Awareness of all umbrella groups/organizations

Prioritized Recommendations

1. Announcement of volunteer positions should not only be sent through general AFA listservs but also through Region Leadership teams, as well as Affinity Groups (after their establishment)
2. Onboarding for all volunteer positions should include the aforementioned cultural competence training

ACCESS

Ideal State

The Association will benchmark itself against other comparable organizations to learn about opportunities to remove barriers to existing programs and costs associated with membership. There will be increased opportunities for virtual and hybrid engagement that will improve connectivity across all membership types.

Prioritized Recommendations

1. Increased education for AFA members on the availability of scholarships for different educational programs, initiatives and Annual Meeting attendance. Utilizing the Regional Leadership Teams to disseminate information through their targeted, direct communication.
2. Assessing membership statuses and annual meeting registration/expenses for potential restructuring to provide more financial support for those who do not receive financial support from institution/organization.

ASSESSMENT: HOW WILL WE KNOW WE'VE MADE PROGRESS?

Throughout this document we have mentioned various documents and measurements that can assist with assessment. Additionally, listening sessions should be conducted annually and a committee formed to create a climate survey to be distributed every other year with the off year additional questions regarding climate and/or diversity, equity or inclusion efforts added into already existing surveys and opportunities to collect information to tell our story.

Because there are no other professional fraternity and sorority associations, it would be encouraged to compare our climate to other associations in higher education and seek out best practices with evidence-based results for the membership experience.

APPENDIX A

Definitions for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (as drafted by members of AFA DEI Advisory Committee)

Diversity

Defining diversity in the social-cultural construct is about intersections. It is engaging with intersections to affirm each person's experience; they are all vastly different, they all enrich the group, and all needed for the group to move forward in its development.

Equity

Equity is the engagement in assessment of a group's operations and utilizing those results to create systems and structures to support group members' achievement of a more balanced pathway to maintain and succeed in their membership.

Inclusion

Inclusion can be defined as the understanding and ownership over historic or current exclusion. Striving for inclusion looks like a group continually discerning their policies, procedures, practices, and perceived environment for those who don't identify with/have access to the privilege of the majority. This discernment must acknowledge the times in which it fails to include; both active and passive failures. This acknowledgement can serve as the catalyst to begin repairing exclusion.

Belonging

Belonging exists when it's practiced equally (if not more often) more than just the feeling arising. Between the space where diversity, equity, and inclusion are practiced within a group, members will feel, see, understand the group's philosophy on inclusion. Members should have a sense of agency in equitably being able to challenge and appreciate the group, knowing that regardless of how difficult, the practice will have been - all will be better because of it.



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SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR DIVERSITY, EQUITY, & INCLUSION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

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