Cedar Crest College Board of Trustees
Ad hoc Committee for Racial Equity
Update: December 7, 2020 Committee Meeting

College Update

President Meade provided the monthly update on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) actions at the College. Cedar Crest has entered into an agreement with the City of Allentown to create the ‘Center for Police Innovation and Community Engagement’. The Center will involve the work of faculty members Scott Hoke, Ph.D. and Kerrie Baker, Ph.D., as well as provide research opportunities for both undergraduate and graduate students. The aim of the Center is to evaluate and support police practices in four areas: police strategy and practice, community outreach, police organization, and the transferability of nationally recognized police interventions. The overall goal is to increase the quality of interaction between the police and the community as well as the effectiveness of police work in the community.

This year’s IDEA (Innovative Diversity Efforts Awards) grants were awarded to Melissa Kamyab, Ed.D. (Education) and Amy Faivre, Pd.D. (Biological Sciences). IDEA grants are used to fund campus initiatives from faculty and staff that advance the College’s Diversity Statement. Dr. Kamyab’s project will focus on the implementation of more diverse representation in children’s literature in the department’s curriculum and includes bringing author/illustrator Vanessa Brantley-Newton to campus. Dr. Faivre leads the Faculty Diversity Advocate & Trainers program and her projects will focus on the faculty and staff mentoring program as well as additional diversity training.

President Meade's article "National Leadership and the Significance of the Breadth and Depth of American Identity" was published in Diverse: Issues in Higher Education on December 1.

Board of Trustees Update

Chair Sylvia Gardner advised that the College’s four module Diversity Training program will be offered to the members of the Board of Trustees in January 2021. This specially scheduled training will be delivered on-line in a series of four weekly sessions and facilitated by a member of the College’s Diversity Trainers team.

Faculty members Elizabeth Ortiz ’01, M.A. and LuAnn McCracken Fletcher, Ph.D. have been invited to present an update on the Faculty Institutionalized Racism Action Plan at the February 2021 Board of Trustees meeting. Committee Co-Chair Trustee Tracy Broomall ’93 will provide the update on the Board’s ad hoc Committee for Racial Equity.
Committee Member Update

As part of this year's Giving Tuesday fundraising effort, committee member Daria Warner '21 was featured in a social media campaign. Four students were asked to reflect on their experience with in-person learning this fall semester when many other college campuses were closed.

Under the direction of Tammy Bean, M.Ed., The Lutz Center for Community Engagement is celebrating its 25th Anniversary. To commemorate this occasion, there is a “25 Days for 25 Years” social media campaign from November 30 – December 22, where staff provide resources and highlight Cedar Crest’s engagement with community partners. All are invited to follow the Lutz Center on Facebook and Instagram.

Tammy provided an update from the Diversity Trainers. At the present time, three new Diversity Training Modules are in various stages of development (new modules have three pilot phases) and will be introduced to the campus community beginning in the next academic year. The new module focus areas include a reflective dialogue on race (deliberative dialogue), accessibility, and interfaith.

Racial Equity Committee Feedback Form Update

During the month of November, we received two submissions for the Committee’s review. These submissions provided a starting point for discussion and integration into the development of initiatives for the Anti-Racist Action Plan for the next year(s).

The first submission advised us of the Spring 2021 Theatre production – FACTOR. This will be a presentation (a program of oral interpretation) of original writing, artifacts, and historical readings spanning the history of Cedar Crest College through the lens of racism and bias in higher education. The program is curated by AnToinette Byers-Paredes ’12, Elizabeth Ortiz ’01, and Roxanne Amico, M.F.A. and will be staged and co-directed by Byers-Paredes, Ortiz, and former Forensic Speech Coach Tim Brown. During the meeting, Liz provided the Committee with a deeper look into the creation of this program. In addition, students enrolled in her Spring 2021 Storytelling course will be involved, as they learn how to use storytelling as a form of activism. The deadline for submission of original works and artifacts for consideration is January 11, 2021.

Our second submission came in from a 2011 alum (name to be provided upon authorization) from the art and history departments who recommended that we consider the following areas in both department academics and programming: curriculum diversity (expansion of Black history, Latinx history, Indigenous studies), faculty member diversity, culturally significant art courses (ensure that we present art from more than white male artists), and expansion of multi-cultural art and events. This feedback submission will be addressed by the Student Academic Experience Working Group and the Faculty Council, led by committee member LuAnn Fletcher. In addition, this alum will be engaged in the development of recommendations aligned with the feedback submission to the extent she desires.

All members of the College Community have an opportunity to participate in our anti-racist work and are invited to submit feedback to the Committee via the ‘Racial Equity Feedback Form’ located on the Anti-Racism Initiatives and Update page on the College’s website. All submissions will receive a response.
Working Groups Update

The four Working Groups provided an update on their initial conversations over the past 30 days, which led to a lively 60-minute discussion within the full Committee on the various topics raised. This exercise helped to broaden each member’s knowledge of the institution’s policies, processes, and programs and generated additional ideas for Working Groups to pursue further during their December/January sessions. At the present time, initial areas under review are as follows: student (undergraduate/graduate) advising and tutoring initiatives; a detailed review of all course syllabi as part of a curriculum review; various academic and college life (including safe space) components of the School of Nursing; improved utilization of campus space (i.e. role of the Cressman Library as a gathering space); enhanced mentorship programs (alum/current student and current student/community partners).