Hart Outlines Next Steps for Diversity Task Force Proposals

University Communications
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Members of the Diversity Task Force presented a draft report to University of Arizona President Ann Weaver Hart last week, proposing multiple ideas that could touch nearly every facet of campus from facilities and faculty to cultural competency and the student experience inside and outside the classroom.

Developed over a course of several months, the proposals seek to embed the concept of inclusive excellence "into the fabric" of the UA while at the same time being practical and actionable, according to the report. The recommendations at the "highest level" were:

- Expanding and improving student centers and student success programs.
- Ensuring access and inclusion in physical, social and learning environments.
- Ensuring a climate of access and inclusion created by and applicable for all.
- Diversifying faculty and staff.

On Friday, Hart met with the task force to share her thoughts on the draft report.

"My hope for our next steps is that we will have a full integration of the issues that we want to pursue, a prioritization of the order in which we may do them, and an implementation plan that allows us to move forward," she said.

Hart said she would like to build on the task force’s proposals, set priorities and develop an implementation plan by the end of the spring semester so that money can be in place for by the start of the next fiscal year on July 1 and the beginning of the next president's tenure.

"We only have four months," she said, adding that she was "absolutely committed" to working with the task force to develop and prioritize next steps.

Hart announced the formation of the task force [1] in March after students called on the UA administration to address several concerns related to diversity and inclusion. To ensure that it represented as many perspectives as possible, Hart invited numerous groups to name designees to serve on the task force, including the Faculty Senate, appointed professionals, classified staff, diversity councils, diverse alumni associations and clubs, faith groups, the Associated Students of the UA, the Graduate and Professional Student Council and the student groups who stepped forward to raise the issues of diversity and inclusion on campus.

Hart charged the task force "with the goal of helping all of us build a campus environment that values diversity and inclusion as core tenets of what it means to be a Wildcat."

The task force was co-chaired by Javier Duran, chair, professor of Spanish and Border Studies, and director of the UA Confluence Center for Creative Inquiry; Bryan Carter,
associate professor of Africana Studies; Tannya Gaxiola, assistant vice president for community relations and chair of the UA Diversity Coordinating Council; and Jesús Treviño, vice provost for inclusive excellence and senior diversity officer.

The task force held regular meetings and also formed subcommittees, which met independently to develop short-term, medium-term, and long-term goals. Their focus areas were: classroom experience; student experience; admissions and financial aid; health and wellness; faculty and staff diversity; cultural competency training; space and facilities; and student support.

The next steps, Hart said, will be to integrate the subcommittees' recommendations and resolve conflicts or competing priorities in the development of an implementation plan. She encouraged task force members to include student leaders in those discussions.

"Inclusive excellence and community building are the responsibility of all," Hart said.

Her hope is that the next UA president will be presented with a plan that is ready to be implemented across the University.

"This is a multiyear commitment, not a one-and-done," she said.

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