Provost's Perspective: Campus Diversity

Provost Andrew Comrie
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There have been reports from UA students that faculty and others have intentionally or unintentionally said things they found to be offensive or hurtful. Provost Andrew Comrie offers his perspective.

The discussion of diversity on our campus has been ongoing for several decades. It is a living conversation among students, faculty and staff as we all continually learn about ourselves and seek to improve how we work together.

Recently, as Chair of the Faculty Lynn Nadel summarized in his Chair Talk [1], he and others heard student concerns in a listening tour that described experiences in which they had been offended and hurt by racial slurs and other insensitive comments. There are a number of efforts underway on campus to address these and other diversity issues.

One of the most important to me is the Diversity Coordinating Council, or DCC, which was established with the support of President Hart.

The goal of the DCC is to strengthen collaboration and activities among people and offices working on promoting diversity across the UA. The council, currently chaired by Tannya Gaxiola, assistant vice president for community relations, is developing a strategic plan that will help us create a more inclusive campus by providing support and coordination for diversity initiatives both centrally and in our many campus units.

Many people have recognized that campus diversity could be considered a competitive advantage for the UA when it comes to attracting the best and brightest students, staff and faculty. It's also one of our core values, stated at the top of our Never Settle [2] strategic plan.

It is well established that diversity in background, view and approach is absolutely key to achieving excellence in teaching and research. It's exciting to imagine how we might transform each of our own areas to help build that competitive advantage.

The Diversity Coordinating Council's first priority last year was to envision a leadership position to make sure we're making progress towards our goals.

At the beginning of this academic year we started a national search for a chief diversity officer. The search is chaired by Francisco Moreno, assistant vice president for diversity and inclusion at the University of Arizona Health Sciences, and Allison Vaillancourt, vice president for human resources and institutional effectiveness.

On Monday, the search committee will begin selecting semi-finalists from a pool of 72 applicants.
There is certainly plenty of work for us to do in advancing diversity, but the UA is good at many things that help make campus more inclusive.

You can read here [3] about some examples from Laura Hunter of UA workshops and presentations available for faculty and staff to learn more about cultural competencies, classroom tips, career discussions and more.

Source URL: https://uaatwork.arizona.edu/lqp/provosts-perspective-campus-diversity

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