

Task Force on Racial Equity faculty and staff diversity recommendations: President's response

January, 2021

Attracting, retaining and supporting faculty and staff members who are reflective of and responsive to the student population Michigan State University serves is of great importance as we focus on overall student success and employee satisfaction.

I appreciate this task force working group's acknowledgment of some of the challenges before the university, including the different approaches needed to address the concerns of the individuals and groups represented here. I agree that some issues will require deeper examination of racial inequities facing faculty and staff, and I anticipate that the work of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Steering Committee will contribute to that body of information.



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Expanding DEI hiring efforts

I am pleased several key recommendations would expand policies and programs already found across the university or within individual units. Two examples are the expansion of hiring streams and the use of Faculty Excellence Advocates to coach search committees in the utilization of DEI principles and best practices. Having a new vice president and chief diversity officer on board and a DEI strategic plan in the works promises to advance such activities.

Cluster hiring is one initiative that can help diversify candidate pools. MSU's Academic Human Resources supports discussion during spring 2021 budget meetings of potential research, teaching and outreach and engagement areas in which cluster hires would have the greatest impact.

Some plans in development also could help support the adoption of recommendations such as uniform anti-bias training for search committees. With reimagining work underway for the Academic Advancement Network to prepare for a new associate provost, AAN would be a logical source for such training. AAN or other units or groups also might find ways to support executive leadership training for diverse faculty and staff, as recommended. Tapping into the Big Ten Academic Alliance's Academic Leadership Program is an existing means of cultivating leadership development among promising diverse faculty and staff. The program always has touted a diverse MSU cohort,

including individuals who are not in tenure-system or faculty appointments.

As we seek inclusive hiring, Provost Teresa Woodruff currently is working with the colleges to consider requiring faculty applicants to submit diversity statements with their other application materials. This change also requires working through the University Committee on Faculty Tenure. Meanwhile, the provost's Reappointment, Promotion, Tenure and Retention Task Force is considering how to incorporate DEI into annual performance reviews, which also would need to be worked through academic governance committees.

On the staff side, two of MSU's largest units, Residential and Hospitality Services and Infrastructure Planning and Facilities, have made significant investments in training and education programs to follow best practices in conducting inclusive searches and creating a culture in which staff from underrepresented groups can thrive. Human Resources provides many courses through its elevateU program that promote DEI, including courses on unconscious bias and promoting an inclusive work environment.

The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated that the workplace of the future will look and operate much differently than the pre-pandemic one. Human Resources is launching an initiative to examine how the workforce may change post-pandemic, specifically around issues of remote and flexible work arrangements, giving particular attention to addressing DEI-related issues in these new settings.

There is capacity to increase recognition for faculty and staff excellence in supporting DEI, as recommended. An incoming University Communications specialist position for DEI support will be helpful in this regard. Additional recognition in the form of funding for units notably advancing DEI initiatives is something that has been done in the past, and I've asked the provost and the vice president and chief diversity officer to explore doing so again.

Creating a diversity recruitment program that brings scholars to MSU to visit could be helpful. Another way to recruit diverse faculty members is by expanding our overall pool of applicants by forming relationships and collaborating with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic-serving Institutions (HSIs) and other Minority-serving Institutions (MSIs) as recommended.

Longer-range issues

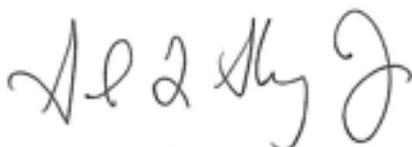
Some of the faculty and staff diversity working group's longer-term recommendations are currently addressed in various ways, including in the area of information-gathering, research and data analysis. The university, for example, already produces a 20-year historical summary of hiring and retention changes across groups of faculty and academic staff. Annual salary cohort analyses involve deans, chairpersons and directors in explaining and addressing salary inequities.

Cataloging and examining the differences in diversity and equity practices and policies across the university for hiring, onboarding, evaluating, mentoring and promoting groups of employees is something that could be performed by Faculty Excellence Advocates, associate deans for DEI and associate deans for faculty affairs and/or Academic Human Resources.

The idea of conducting departmental hiring audits is similar to planning meetings with colleges that, until a few years ago, used to be held by the provost's office, Office for Inclusion and Intercultural Initiatives and Academic Human Resources. Reestablishing such reviews is worth considering as part of planning processes currently underway. Benchmarking other universities' practices in promoting DEI in attracting and retaining diverse faculty, as recommended, would be a useful practice for the university and individual units.

There is much potential in this task force working group's recommendations, as well as the need for continued study and effort toward realizing the goal of a world-class faculty and staff that more fully reflects the society and students we serve. I thank the group for its study of this issue and its thoughtful recommendations.

We will continue to update you on progress made toward the implementation of these recommendations as we work to support the recruitment, retention and advancement of a most diverse and exemplary faculty and staff population.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. L. Stanley Jr.", written in a cursive style.

Samuel L. Stanley Jr., M.D.
President