

Daniels Diversity & Equity Committee
Minutes – August 27, 2020

In Attendance

- Robert Wright (Chair)
- John Shnier
- Nicole Tratnik
- Mary Lou Lobsinger
- Randa Omar
- Janice Miyagi
- Danijela Puric- Mladenovic
- Aziza Chaouni
- Mitchell Akiyama
- Fadi Masoud
- Michael Piper
- Hannah Brokenshire
- Tolulope Alabi

Minute taker: Harold Tan

Convened: 5:12 pm

1. Introductions

Chair introduced Hannah Brokenshire, Senior Communications and Media Relations Officer

2. Final Approval of August 13 Minutes

Moved: Mary Lou Lobsinger

Seconded: Nicole Tratnik

Motion carried. Opposed: None. Abstentions:

3. Notes from Chair – Questions

See: Q&A after H. Brokenshire presentation

4. Presentation: Hannah Brokenshire

Hannah joined Daniels Faculty at beginning of August and returned to Canada after working in Indianapolis, Indiana. She previously held a position as Associate Director for Exhibit Columbus (Columbus, Indiana).

- I have been doing my homework to catch up on conversations which have occurred to date
 - Don't have a specific plan to walk through at this time
 - A plan will be something that we develop collaboratively
 - I want to talk today about Daniels Do Better Letter ("DDB Letter") and how it relates to Diversity & Equity Committee's ("Committee") work
 - I am looking forward to conversations scheduled with a number of you in the next few weeks
 - If I haven't scheduled a meeting, please send me an email
 - I want to work with student groups and others in thinking about messaging and how we deliver those messages
 - I will be working with Robert Wright to craft update that will sent out to the Daniels community
 - The update will use the DDB Letter as a framework and talk about the progress the Committee has made
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- Another immediate action item is updating the Daniels Diversity & Equity page
 - I want to make the Diversity & Equity page ("D&E Page) more visible from the Home page
 - My plan is to start building out the D&E Page with more information and add content from work that students are also doing
 - This is also an opportunity to populate D&E Page with information about the collaborations with external partners and associations

Immediate Communications

- Dean's Response to DBB Letter for release prior to term
- Updating Daniels website

Longer-Term Communications

- These are pieces which will require additional conversations
- They include:
 - announcing date of next opportunity to gather and/or Town Hall
 - Committee Work Study positions
 - Diversity & Equity Officer position

- Working with Student Representatives to understand more what sort of online platform we can put together
- I am aware that students have identified a need for information to be captured in a safe and anonymous way
- When it comes to longer-term, I am looking at a two to three month timeline to give everyone an opportunity to connect and conversations
- I want to ensure that anyone who needs to be, and wants to be, involved in the communications process is included
- Specifically, I want to develop an equity-focused communications plan which involves student groups, community members and the Committee
- I see two areas I think the Committee can provide input:
 - Identifying areas for improvement
 - Developing an audit of social media platforms
- A lot of my work initially will be listening and understanding what has (and hasn't) worked and how my role can support these discussions moving-forward

Discussion

- Hannah brings value in providing an outside perspective, including:
 - Daniels website
 - Questions around the Daniels Do Better letter
 - Questions around hiring and other Daniels processes
- Hannah is eager to meet with students individually or collectively to get a better understanding of their needs
- Hannah is also learning how we can expand and deepen our collaborations with external partners
- Important to recognize that what we consider “best practices” can also define content
- We need to look at what students are featured in our communications, how we feature the diversity in our disciplines (eg. Visual Studies, Forestry), and how student, Daniels Faculty and University of Toronto messages differ
- For example: What stories are posted on our website? What disciplines do we focus on?
- Hannah wants to examine these questions as part of a comprehensive communications audit

- With social media, we have a real opportunity to engage in a lot of conversations that can go outside of the confines of the stories we post on the Daniels website
- Part of the communications audit will be developing a strategic communications plan for the Faculty
- This would include how we identify stories, what type of stories we are sharing, and an equitable distribution of disciplines
- Will be working with Committee and Diversity & Equity Officer
- A focus on equity will be very much on the forefront
- The process is already underway
- We are identifying questions like: Who decides what gets posted on Instagram? What is the process? What is the image?
- We are also thinking about what we communicate on our website
- On one hand, there's space for news and events
- But it's also where we communicate important student information
- Outward-facing public information and inward-facing student information are comingling
- Audit will also allow us to think about how students and faculty can contribute content on to the Daniels website
- Overall, Hannah looking to diversity ways the Faculty communicates
- Important to keep our focus when we are continually distracted by the latest news cycle
- There is challenge in keeping things in proportion and in perspective, and maintain our focus and priorities when news is so fluid
- We also still want celebrate the wonderful things which are being produced by our student and faculty
- Important to use the word "diversity" carefully and in the right context
- We are a heterogenous faculty
- I think it's important that we hold on to the word for the work that we're trying to do
- We must be careful to ensure our communications isn't solely composed of messages people want to hear
- Movement towards transparency an important step
- If we focus on only certain types of diversity stories, risk being seen as disingenuous and virtue-signalling
- Important to connect concrete action and communication beyond just celebrating things that were not necessarily visible before

- Through conversations, Hannah hopes to understand who need to be at the table and what voices are need to craft that plan
- She wants to be an advocate for the creation of a social media audit and equity-focused plan
- Communications plan must also look outward and examine where we fit in relation to the U of T (which is a city unto itself), City of Toronto, and Canada
- We also want to recognize the variety of disciplines within Daniels
- Some have made much more progress than others
- Architecture tends to be more insular
- Important to understand the link between the professional associations that provide degree accreditation and their own progress when it comes to diversity and equity
- Professional associations often lag behind in their awareness and understanding
- Important to keep focus on key priorities such as increasing diversity of student voices
- Previous student representative on this Committee voiced concerns that who are featured in stories are often White Canadians
- There are many other, smaller stories which are not featured
- Historically, it has been up to faculty members to propose stories
- Some faculty members are shy and not great with promotion
- Need to do an awareness among faculty members
- All of this require a more intentional approach
- Recognition that is hard for an institution which is systemically racist to reform itself internally without outside assistance
- We are aware that how we pick exhibitions, our type of public programming, who comes to lectures and who we invite as lecturers are all part of questions we must consider
- That is why discussions must reach out to all areas (eg. curriculum, exhibition) and involve multiple stakeholders
- When we hire outside consultants/contractors, we will be very careful to include a diversity component
- Example: for Robert Wright's photos, he was very specific about hiring a Black street fashion photographer
- Example: We were intentional in hiring an Indigenous graphic artist to work on our posters
- **Work Study positions:** Robert has agreed to increase hourly rate to \$19.00 per hour

Diversity & Equity Officer position

- U of T Human Resources looked at our job description and elevated it to a PM (Professional and Managerial) position
 - This means it is outside of the union, and was intended to give the position more independence
 - Human Resources also elevated the position to a higher salary band
 - Human Resources asked us to share this position with another Faculty
 - We are in discussion with two Faculties to see which one would make the most complementary partner
 - The PM position reports to a Dean and Kelly Hannah-Moffat, Vice President, Human Resources and Equity
 - That means the position would have arms-length position to the Daniels Faculty
 - Provides more independence to the position
 - The D&E Officer position would have recourse to go above Dean and raise an issue at the University level
 - Unfortunately, all of this takes time and updates will be provided
 - D&E Officer will have faculty and staff in both Faculties to assist them in their duties
 - Putting position into two smaller Faculties will increase resources available to Officer
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- **Indigenous Elder.** Robert Wright is having ongoing discussions with Liat Margolis about bringing an Elder-In-Residence to the Faculty
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- **Doodle Poll.** Reminder for Committee members to complete the Doodle poll, as Fall term meeting date and time has not been finalized
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- if students have any further suggestions as to how we can make the Committee meetings more productive and efficient, please let Committee know
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- Robert Wright in the process of getting Daniels Committee lists finalized
 - That will allow student unions to identify possible gaps
 - Most committees have only one position for graduate student unions
 - There are currently two in Daniels Faculty: GALDSU and FGSA
 - Janice: it's mostly between GALDSU and FGSA
 - Robert Wright is aware of this issue
 - Part of the challenge is that graduate student seat is also based on number of students represented
 - GALDSU is significantly larger than FGSA
 - If FGSA was represented in every Daniels Committee, their resources would be over-stretched

- Robert Wright is open to any ideas which the two graduate student unions can propose to address these challenges
- Always a challenge to find a balance between equity and representation

5. Motion to adjourn

Moved: Mary Lou Lobsinger

Seconded: Fadi Masoud

Motion carried. Opposed: None. Abstentions: None

Meeting end: 6:03 pm