

Women's Caucus Executive Board Meeting
November 19, 2020 (2:30-4:30)
Zoom

Present: Meaghan Davidson, Libbey Bowen, Jennifer Semrau, Lauren Bailes, Naomi Nash, Megan Wenner, Leah Dodd, Zainab Shah, Tywanda Cuffy, Barbara Ley, Sherry Mendez, Kelsey Cummings

Excused: Barbara Settles, Diane Goldsmith, Elaine Warrick

November Meeting Agenda: Approved

October Board Meeting Minutes: Approved

Co-Chair Updates

OEI updates: Megan Wenner discussed how OEI will help us update our website, as the office wants continuity across all caucus websites. This update will happen within the next few months. Leah Dodd will be the point person for this project.

Meaghan Davidson stated that Fatimah Conley was appointed as the university's Interim Chief Diversity Officer. This is the first time UD has had this position. Michael Vaughn will continue in his role as Vice Provost, and he will report under her. We will be hearing more about her new position in upcoming months.

Megan Wenner and Meaghan Davidson attended the OEI open house for new faculty and staff. The breakout sessions were well-attended. We discussed whether the Women's Caucus can host a social event for new faculty and staff to help make connections and form community. Tywanda Cuffy suggested that we integrate this meeting into an upcoming General Meeting by designating one of the topical breakout sessions for new faculty and staff. Meaghan Davidson thought the needs of new faculty and staff members are different, and thus they warrant their own meeting.

Lerner Women's Institute update: Members of the Institute reached out to Meaghan Davidson and Megan Wenner about the possibility of collaborating on upcoming events. Meaghan and Megan are going to schedule a meeting with them to discuss concrete ways that the two organizations can partner.

Subcommittee work: Meaghan Davidson encouraged subcommittee members to work on projects that matter to them, and that the Board wants to support their initiatives. Tywanda Cuffy noted that the board is open to people pursuing their own interests.

Staff unionization: Megan Wenner asked whether the Women’s Caucus should consider pursuing staff unionization efforts. Naomi Nash noted that some staff are already unionized—specifically facilities and maintenance staff, campus police, and movers. It is only administrative and departmental staff who are not unionized. She also noted that there would need to be different unions for different categories of staff.

We discussed how the next steps would be to research different unionization options for staff. Meaghan Davidson suggested that the Policy subcommittee discuss potential next steps on this issue in today’s breakout meeting. Libbey Bowen mentioned that the AAUP is a large organization that works with many academic institutions, and she wondered whether it would know of unions that could work with staff. Sherry Mendez mentioned that AFSCME tends to work with admin and facilities staff.

Campus Events: Meaghan Davidson stated that we should discuss whether to put efforts into creating new events or amplifying other people’s events.

General Meeting Planning

Megan Wenner and Jennifer Semrau stated that the subcommittee sent out the RSVP for the General Meeting. They also put the agenda together, and Jennifer noted that it is quite long. Naomi Nash will structure the Zoom invite. Megan Wenner asked whether we want to keep the agenda the way it is, or whether we want to restructure it. Libbey Bowen stated that all of the issues on the agenda relate to COVID and suggested that we could discuss what we’ve learned about them from the perspective of COVID. Barbara Ley suggested that the meeting have breakout rooms for at least some of the topics, and Megan Wenner suggested having one or two main issues for a large-group discussion, and then have breakout sessions for the other topics. Meaghan Davidson suggested that each of us oversee a breakout room to keep notes of what people are saying. Instead of having a specific topic for each breakout room, Kelsey Cummings thought that each breakout group should discuss the issues that they want. Naomi Nash said that she could help pre-build the breakout rooms, and Megan Wenner asked if we should randomly assign participants to rooms.

Nana Ohemaa Asante’s Thesis Discussion

Nana Ohemaa Asante joined the meeting to discuss her senior thesis. She wants to interview Black women at UD—including students, staff, faculty, and admin—about their concepts of beauty and how they overlap with their experiences of professionalism and microaggressions on campus. She asked our caucus to help recruit participants for the study. Kelsey Cummings stated that she can put together a Google contact form to be included in the upcoming caucus newsletter, and Tywanda Cuffy told Nana that she can connect her with a group for women of color who work on campus.

Subcommittee Updates

Outreach subcommittee: DASL (Delaware Academy for School Leadership)—Lauren connected with Alison, haven't heard back regarding Delaware Women's Leadership Conference, which usually takes place in January. Currently, the conference is still being planned.

Communication subcommittee: Leah Dodd will take the lead when it comes to working with OEI on the caucus website project, and the subcommittee is discussing strategies for engaging followers of the Women's Caucus pages. One strategy is to post topics for people to discuss. Kate Dempsey—a new subcommittee member—will take the lead on this effort. Additionally, the caucus newsletter will go out in December and come out monthly after that. Meaghan Davidson also stated that the subcommittee has started to discuss the annual report, and Kelsey Cummings noted that Alison Walters will send her the workplace data in December. Kelsey also said that she will start thinking about topics for the annual report.

Policy subcommittee: Kelsey Cummings stated that the subcommittee plans to meet on Friday. We will discuss next steps on the childcare survey we are meeting on Friday. Kelsey also noted that she plans to meet with Diane Morello-DeSerio from the Early Learning Center to talk about potential collaborations. She will report back to the subcommittee for us to decide where to go from there.

Next Board Meeting

December 8, 2020 (2:30-4:30)

Zoom