

# PRESIDENT'S TASK FORCE ON ANTI-RACISM, EQUITY & INCLUSION

## MINUTES

Wednesday, August 19, 2020 | 1:30 p.m.

### Zoom Webinar

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Members Participating: Rawan Abhari, Tom Block, Brandon Bowden, Billy Close, Katrinell Davis, Kyle Doney, Michelle Douglas, Miles Feacher, Craig Filar, Stacey Hardin, Robinson Herrera, Roxanne Hughes, April Jackson, Nastassia Janvier, Cassandra Jenkins, Maxine Jones, Hannah Kelsey, Samantha Kunin, Bruce Lamont, Stefany Moncada, Maxine Montgomery, Malik Osborne, Alana Rosenzweig, Nan Rothstein, Kevin Rutois, Jay Terry, Greg Washington, Allisson Yu

#### **I. Call to Order and Welcome**

**Maxine Montgomery, Chair**

#### **II. President's Charge**

**John Thrasher, President**

President Thrasher thanked the Task Force members for willingness to serve on the Task Force on Anti-Racism, Equity, and Inclusion. He also thanked Task Force Chair Maxine Montgomery and Task Force Subcommittee Chairs Brandon Bowden, Michelle Douglas, and Maxine Jones.

President Thrasher delivered the President's Charge:

As members of this task force, you have been given the significant responsibility of helping the university address racial and ethnic disparities on campus and accelerate FSU's goal to strengthen our diversity.

This task force is the result of many conversations I have had with students, faculty, staff, alumni and community leaders regarding recent acts of racism nationally and historical injustices.

I don't think I have to say, and I'm sure it will be an understatement to say, that this is a crucial time in the nation's and certainly the university's history, and I am grateful to everyone for contributing your valuable time and attention to this important effort. I particularly want to thank the students who are a part of this because I know you are going to have other things to do once next week starts. I appreciate your time, your energy and effort for this important undertaking.

At Florida State, we've had a long history of addressing racism and other difficult issues on this campus, and we know there is still much work to do. We must continue, I believe, to listen, to learn and to evolve.

I'm looking forward to hearing your input on a range of important items connected to racial inequality, as well as how to best reflect FSU's values in relation to its historical connections to race and ethnicity.

To that end, I would like your recommendations on specific symbols and names of buildings on campus, including the Eppes Hall and Statue and Doak S. Campbell Stadium.

In addition, I would also ask this task force to identify racial and ethnic disparities on campus and to implement a range of initiatives, such as diversity and inclusivity training and enhanced recruitment and retention of students, faculty and staff from under-represented groups.

I'm looking forward to receiving bimonthly progress reports on actionable items, as well as final reports at the end of the fall and spring semesters. As you forward your recommendations, I will consider action for each item.

I want to assure you I have no preconceived notions about where your work will lead or what the outcome will be.

We all have different life experiences that have shaped our points of view, and I encourage you to share those with your colleagues in a civil and thoughtful manner and dialogue.

I also hope you will approach your work with an open mind and be willing to question your own predispositions as you are presented with new information or different perspectives. That is your challenge, that's your charge, and I believe it's one in which each member will undertake to be a great member of this Task Force and we will come out of it with some excellent recommendations.

Again, thank you for your service and commitment to Florida State University. I know the work you do now will lead to a stronger and more just, equitable and inclusive future for all of us.

**III. Open Government Overview** **Michael Flury, Associate General Counsel**

Associate General Counsel Michael Flury provided an overview of Florida's Open Government laws and public records requests.

**IV. Chair's Remarks** **Maxine Montgomery, Chair**

I'm sure I don't need to remind you that we are at a pivotal moment in our nation's history and in FSU's history as well. The circumstances surrounding the tragic deaths of George Floyd and other black men and women recently have resonated world-wide in directing attention to issues of systemic and institutionalized racism that have gone unchecked.

Those events have prompted quite a bit of soul-searching on the part of political and religious leaders as well as ordinary citizens – folks like us – who find ourselves asking how we arrived at this place, at this moment, only twelve years after electing our first African-American president. It seems that the euphoria associated with the promise of a post-racial society, one where race or difference no longer matters, dissolved quickly into startling media images of social unrest in major US cities like Washington, D.C, Portland, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Atlanta. Although Tallahassee has been relatively calm in relation to the violence that rocked Atlanta or Portland, simmering racial tensions in our city reached a boiling point weeks ago following the police shooting of Tony McDade. If anything, the protests taking place in Tallahassee remind us that despite its veneer of southern charm and tranquility, the legendary canopy roads, majestic oaks, colorful azaleas, and fall football, our town is not insulated from the larger unrest gripping the nation as a whole.

A small, but hopeful sign of progress rests tellingly near the heart of our city, at the intersection of Gaines and Railroad, mid-way between Florida State and Florida Agricultural and Mechanical Universities. A mural was installed at that space, following a nation-wide trend of painting “Black Lives Matter” across busy intersections. Whether the controversial mural constitutes a declaration of established truth or an aspirational hope remains to be seen. No matter how one reads or interprets the mural or its symbolic location, its message, along with the words of my favorite author, award-winning novelist Toni Morrison, resonate with the work of this Task Force. Regarding the centrality of race in America’s public and private discourses, Morrison asserts that “race matters the matter that matters.”

Today, we find ourselves at a crossroads, an in-between space that could lead either to further social tension stemming from decades of systemic inequities, or, hopefully, a place where we arrive at a more socially-just, equitable, and humane institutional culture. The task before us is great, and the road is certainly paved with unexpected twists and turns. We are sure to engage in some difficult conversations in the months ahead, and we can’t resolve every issue. But it is my firm belief that together we can engage in the important work of helping Florida State reach its full potential in becoming a more welcoming campus for everyone. We carry out this challenging task of transformative change, which is, by its very nature, anti-racist, not only for ourselves, but also for those who will follow in our footsteps.

I would like to take this opportunity acknowledge each of you for your willingness to serve, echoing the words of President Thrasher, beginning with the members of our Executive Committee: Brandon Bowden, Michelle Douglass, and Maxine Jones. Each of these individuals is doing double duty in their roles as sub-committee facilitators. And I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge Jimmy Cole of University Relations who has been doing a phenomenal job in handling the details of our Task Force assembly. I realize what a tremendous commitment this Task Force is, and I wish we could compensate all of you for your time and energy. But I want you to know at the outset that I appreciate your efforts.

I don’t have all the answers, yet I am surrounded by an impressive group of smart people. Despite the different ideologies that we represent, I believe we share a mutual interest: addressing issues related to the creation of an equitable, more inclusive campus culture. And I look forward to working closely with you in the coming months.

## **V. Public Comment**

A full recording of public comment is available at [president.fsu.edu/taskforce](http://president.fsu.edu/taskforce).

## **VI. New Business**

**Maxine Montgomery, Chair**

Chair Maxine Montgomery discussed the three subcommittees.

### **Subcommittees**

Recruitment, Retention, and Diversity Training

Campus Climate

Historical Legacy

### **Subcommittee on Recruitment, Retention, and Diversity Training**

To develop and implement an initiative to foster the recruitment and retention of students, faculty and staff from underrepresented groups.

To develop and implement an initiative requiring mandatory training for all campus employees and students on anti-racism, diversity, inclusion, and bias.

To develop and implement a framework for university academic and administrative units to strategically plan for increased recruitment, retention, and mentoring for members of underrepresented groups that is supported and accounted for within the University Strategic Plan.

To develop and implement a mentoring program for Black students, staff, and faculty.

To develop and implement a plan that addresses the under-representation of Black males at the undergraduate and graduate levels.

To develop and implement a plan to enhance partnerships with organizations, such as the Florida Endowment for Higher Education's McKnight Foundation, to increase representation of members of underrepresented groups within our graduate and faculty ranks.

To develop a coordinated effort among affinity groups in furthering the goal of mentoring for junior faculty and staff.

### **Subcommittee on Recruitment, Retention, and Diversity Training**

Michelle Douglas, Subcommittee Chair

Billy Close

Robinson Herrera

Roxanne Hughes

Hannah Kelsey

Samantha Kunin

Bruce Lamont

Alan Rosenzweig

Jay Terry

Allisson Yu

### **Subcommittee on Campus Climate**

To acquire formal data/assessment about the experiences of our diverse community members – students, faculty, and staff – once they arrive on campus. The sub-committee will review and recommend a climate survey to be administered to faculty and staff.

To develop a means of collection, maintenance, access, and review of data centrally so that the University can easily map the progress in this area.

To articulate a set of concrete, achievable actions that will make Florida State a more diverse and inclusive community in which a wide range of experiences and views are represented and all individuals are valued and treated with respect.

To recommend a series of programmatic events focusing on anti-racism,

equality, and inclusion involving individual colleges and engaging with the Tallahassee community at large. Programs featuring inter-institutional events with Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University would be especially appropriate.

To partner with the Florida State University Police Department to administer anti-bias training to officers and establish a Community Relations liaison within the force. Additionally, the University will continue to support a FSU student representative to be appointed to the Tallahassee Police Department Community Review Board.

To craft a plan for working in tandem with the History Department in creating a First-Year Experience learning module involving race, ethnicity, and diversity to be implemented during the 2021-22 academic year. Such a module might involve a series of workshops, symposia, and/or lectures centering on a recent publication dealing with race or ethnicity, and include presenters from Florida State, Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University, or from other institutions. Events might culminate with an address from a nationally or internationally recognized speaker in conjunction with the annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Program or the Golden Tribe Lecture Series.

#### **Subcommittee on Campus Climate**

Brandon Bowden, Subcommittee Chair

Rawan Abhari

Tom Block

Cortez Brown

Craig Filar

Gail Jackson

Stefany Moncada

Nan Rothstein

Greg Washington

#### **Subcommittee on Historical Legacy**

To document the history of FSU in relationship to race and ethnicity, with particular emphasis on the experiences of African-Americans and American Indians.

To review and recommend best practices for establishing, maintaining, or removing honorary names or recognitions, including but not limited to the Frances Eppes Statue and Hall, B. K. Roberts' Hall, and Doak Campbell Stadium. The sub-committee will refer to findings on the part of the 2017-2018 President's Advisory Panel on Namings and Recognitions as part of current and future deliberations.

To propose educational programs and partnership opportunities that will highlight FSU's history surrounding race and representation.

#### **Subcommittee on Historical Legacy**

Maxine Jones, Subcommittee Chair

Katrinell Davis  
Kyle Doney  
Miles Feacher  
Stacey Hardin  
April Jackson  
Nastassia Janvier  
Cassandra Jenkins  
Malik Osborne  
Kevin Rutois

Subcommittee members are not precluded from participating in subcommittees of which they are not assigned.

Subcommittee objectives are general and designed to guide discussion. The objectives are advisory and not prescriptive.

### **Fall 2020 Meeting Schedule**

The full schedule will be released soon.

Wednesday, August 26, 3:00 p.m.: Subcommittee on Recruitment, Retention, and Diversity Training Listening Session

Wednesday, September 2, 3:00 p.m.: Subcommittee on Campus Climate Listening Session

Wednesday, September 9, 3:00 p.m.: Subcommittee on Historical Legacy Listening Session

Wednesday, September 16, 3:00 p.m.: Full Task Force Meeting

## **VII. Task Force Member Open Forum**

Task Force Member Cortez Brown asked about subcommittee assignments. Chair Montgomery encouraged Task Force members to participate in subcommittees of which they are not assigned.

Task Force Member Rawan Abhari asked collaboration with ongoing similar efforts at Florida State University. Chair Montgomery explained the Task Force will hear from expert presenters and individuals engaging in this work so there is not a duplication of effort.

Task Force Member Robinson Herrera asked exploring FSU's connection to the Seminole Tribe. Chair Montgomery explained that this is implicit to the objectives of the Task Force.

Task Force Member Cortez Brown asked about switching subcommittees. Chair Montgomery suggested members contact Jimmy Cole. She requested members provide a compelling reason for changing subcommittee assignments.

Task Force Member Jay Terry asked about communications between subcommittee members with other Task Force members on different subcommittees. Chair Montgomery responded that this does fall under the Open Government regulations.

The Task Force website is [president.fsu.edu/taskforce](http://president.fsu.edu/taskforce). The e-mail address is [pres-taskforce@fsu.edu](mailto:pres-taskforce@fsu.edu). Chair Montgomery suggested that Task Force members forward Task Force related input to the e-mail address.

## **VIII. Adjourn**

Chair Montgomery adjourned the meeting at 2:40 p.m.



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# President's Task Force on Anti- Racism, Equity & Inclusion

Organizational Session

August 19, 2020



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# President's Charge

President John Thrasher



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# Open Government Overview

Associate General Counsel

Michael Flury



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# Chair's Remarks

Professor Maxine Montgomery



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# Public Comment





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# New Business





## Subcommittees

- Recruitment, Retention, and Diversity Training
- Campus Climate
- Historical Legacy



## Subcommittee on Recruitment, Retention, and Diversity Training

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- To develop and implement an initiative requiring mandatory training for all campus employees and students on anti-racism, diversity, inclusion, and bias.
- To develop and implement a framework for university academic and administrative units to strategically plan for increased recruitment, retention, and mentoring for members of underrepresented groups that is supported and accounted for within the University Strategic Plan.



## Subcommittee on Recruitment, Retention, and Diversity Training

- To develop and implement a mentoring program for Black students, staff, and faculty.
- To develop and implement a plan that addresses the under-representation of Black males at the undergraduate and graduate levels.
- To develop and implement a plan to enhance partnerships with organizations, such as the Florida Endowment for Higher Education's McKnight Foundation, to increase representation of members of underrepresented groups within our graduate and faculty ranks.
- To develop a coordinated effort among affinity groups in furthering the goal of mentoring for junior faculty and staff.



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## Subcommittee on Campus Climate

- To acquire formal data/assessment about the experiences of our diverse community members – students, faculty, and staff – once they arrive on campus. The sub-committee will review and recommend a climate survey to be administered to faculty and staff.
- To develop a means of collection, maintenance, access, and review of data centrally so that the University can easily map the progress in this area.
- To articulate a set of concrete, achievable actions that will make Florida State a more diverse and inclusive community in which a wide range of experiences and views are represented and all individuals are valued and treated with respect.



## Subcommittee on Campus Climate

- To recommend a series of programmatic events focusing on anti-racism, equality, and inclusion involving individual colleges and engaging with the Tallahassee community at large. Programs featuring inter-institutional events with Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University would be especially appropriate.
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Subcommittee on Historical Legacy Listening Session



## Fall 2020 Meeting Schedule

**Wednesday, September 16, 3:00 p.m.**

Full Task Force Meeting

All Fall 2020 meetings will be scheduled and announced before the September 16 Task Force Meeting.

All meetings will be posted at [president.fsu.edu/taskforce](https://president.fsu.edu/taskforce) and to the university calendar.



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# Task Force Member Open Forum





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**[President.fsu.edu/TaskForce](https://president.fsu.edu/TaskForce)**

**[pres-taskforce@fsu.edu](mailto:pres-taskforce@fsu.edu)**