Engineering Systems and Environment

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee

Summary and Response to DEI Related Emails from 06/17/20 – 06/23/20

The purpose of the summary is to recap the comments on DEI matters shared by the ESE community via open email dialog, confidential emails to the DEI committee, anonymous surveys, one-on-one forums, and open forums. It will also present actions that the committee proposes in response to requests for action by the ESE community.

Summary of Responses

Over the past week, six members of our community shared their views on issues of racism, diversity, equity, inclusion, and injustice via the department-wide email exchange. There were no anonymous feedback survey responses and no forums.

The messages discussed the oppressive and extractive founding of the University of Virginia through the enslavement of people and how the aftereffects of that are still reverberating today.

A few of the messages opened a dialogue questioning the continued elevated status of Thomas Jefferson at the University of Virginia due to the fact that he enslaved people and committed sexual violence. While there was discussion around how to grapple with this, most comments called on us to not defend the past, but rather focus on what we want to do as a community now.

Many of the messages spoke to a desire and need for an opening up a dialogue in the department around historical and present racism. Here, individuals are looking for ways to address systemic racism in a collective effort which allows for differences of opinion, but centers on anti-racist action.

Most of the messages acknowledged their own challenges, or perceptions of the group, towards open and effective dialogue on systemic racism as a department. Respondents called for civil discourse in commenting, but also acknowledged the need for listening, learning, and understanding.

A few actions were proposed:

- Measuring UVA’s reputation in the community as a metric for success around increasing DEI efforts.
- More information on grounds on the history of the enslaved people and enslavement at UVA through tours, plaques, or incorporation into the curriculum.
Summary of Suggested Actions & DEI Proposals for Action

1. The DEI committee is asking ESE graduate students and faculty, to prepare an Expectations Document, which provides guidelines for expected behavior and performance in the student-advisor relationship. The DEI communications subcommittee is willing to facilitate this work.

2. Encourage the faculty and graduate students to start pursuing diversity recruitment efforts. An independent recruitment chair needs to be appointed and tasked with this.
   a. The DEI committee has appointed a recruitment, retention, and advancement subcommittee (see table below).

3. We implore the DEI Committee & ESE Department leadership to create a fellowship fund for Black students in Virginia wanting to attend graduate school.
   a. The DEI committee is recommending to the department leadership that funds be allocated to support at least two ESE graduate fellowships. Budget in progress.
   b. The DEI committee has appointed a community programming and outreach subcommittee (see table below).

4. Push the faculty to create funding opportunities for students that include racial equality themes in their research.
   a. The DEI committee will present this request to the ESE faculty and solicit recommendations for implementing it. In progress.

5. Push faculty to consider the challenges that underprivileged undergraduates face in the classroom, especially in comparison to their more privileged peers. Our new digital prowess as a result of the pandemic may offer solutions in this area.
   a. The DEI committee will present this request to the faculty and offer to host open forums with students as well as with invited speakers to educate our community and implement this request. We will ask the ESE community to participate in developing activities and metrics to chart our progress in this action. In progress.

6. Working directly with HBCUs as a whole for recruitment or working to merge with VSU engineering like Prof Lambert suggests, would both be a great way to specifically encourage Black engineers to consider UVa for a graduate program.
   a. The DEI recruitment and retention subcommittee has taken up this matter.

7. Provide avenues and support for efforts by students to engage with local K-12 schools to “prime the pipeline” of students, especially students of color to consider entering ESE.
   a. The DEI subcommittee on community programming and outreach is preparing a forum for ideas to implement this.

8. Provide avenues for and support efforts by students to engage with the Charlottesville community.
a. The DEI subcommittee on community programming and outreach is preparing a forum for ideas to implement this.

9. Address concerns about racial bias toward Chinese students in the recent email exchanges in response to Prof. Pindera’s email to Ciarra Horne and Katelyn Stenger’s response to Prof. Pindera.
   a. This is currently in progress with mediation from the Center for Diversity in Engineering.

10. Other items in progress:
   a. ESE DEI website
      i. More timely summaries of the emails.
      ii. Post the weekly updates for comment.
      iii. Post metrics and polls for review of progress on action items.
   b. ESE DEI committee Mission Statement (draft to be posted as Google doc for editing by ESE community).
   c. ESE DEI Vision Statement (initial ideas to be posted as Google doc for editing by ESE community).

We welcome suggestions from our community for specific actions to implement items from the list of demands circulated by UVA’s BSA, referenced above.

- One suggestion to the DEI committee was to look to the Technology Leaders Program (TLP), which used to be supported by ESE, for examples on how to take action on items 1 – 8 above. Under the co-leadership of Prof. Reid Bailey, the TLP program was able to:
  o Support 2 graduate students of color through external funding.
  o Accept students holistically by focusing on students’ interest and desire to be in the program rather than on GPA.
  o Directly partner with PVCC to reach a broader, more diverse range of students.
  o Placed hundreds of TLP students in outreach opportunities with local schools, prioritizing schools with a large percentage of children on free and reduced lunch.
  o TLP also hosted a section of ENGR 1620 that worked with Clark Elementary (85% free and reduced lunch) for 9 years.
  o Offered a summer camp jointly with Compters4Kids.

The DEI committee is committed to a transparent, participatory and iterative approach to achieving our vision of a truly diverse, equitable, and inclusive ESE.
### DEI Subcommittees*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subcommittee</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>Facilitate open dialogs on DEI issues. Host open discussions with relevant experts.</td>
<td><strong>Jose Gomez</strong>, Andres Clarense, Kelsey Hollenback, Saran Mishra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Programming &amp; Outreach</td>
<td>Facilitate community engagement activities: K-12, community participation</td>
<td>Michelle Busby, Shravan Sreekumar, Arsalan Heydarian, Courtney Rogers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment &amp; Retention</td>
<td>Facilitate efforts to recruit, retain, and advance diverse students, staff, and faculty in ESE. Facilitate DEI education and training for ESE community.</td>
<td><strong>Leidy Klotz</strong>, Jon Goodall, Tina Tang, Shelley Thomas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weekly Updates</td>
<td>Provide periodic updates on DEI commentary and progress on action plans to ESE.</td>
<td>Garrick Louis, Lisa Colosi-Peterson, Sadegh Eghdami, Patrick Hancock</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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*We welcome members of the ESE community to join as ex-officio members of these subcommittees to engage in doing the work.*

Respectfully submitted by Garrick Louis. Chair of the ESE DEI committee. 20.06.23.