

September 21, 2020

**Addressing Racism and Social Injustice at the University of Illinois**

***Working Group 4: Community Action and Public Engagement***

Wanda Ward, Executive Associate Chancellor for Administration and University Relations, Chancellor's Office (Co-Chair)

Danita Brown Young, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, OVCSA (Co-Chair)

Annie Abbott, Director of Undergraduate Studies, Associate Professor, Spanish & Portuguese, LAS

Aeriel Burtley, Student, LAS

Neal Cohen, Director, Interdisciplinary Health Institute, OVCR

Jennifer Dillavou, President, University of Illinois Alumni Association

Tori Exum, Senior Human Resources Manager, Illinois Human Resources; Urbana School Board

Antonio Franklin, Associate Director, University of Illinois Extension

Robert Flider, Director, Community and Government Relations, Chancellor's Office

Jazmyne Kellogg, Interim Director, Bruce D. Nesbitt African American Cultural Center, OIIR/Student Affairs

Emily Knox, Associate Professor, Interim Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, School of Information Sciences

Ruby Mendenhall, Associate Professor, Sociology, LAS; Assistant Dean for Diversity and Democratization of Health Innovation, Carle Illinois College of Medicine

Faranak MirafTAB, Professor, Urban & Regional Planning, FAA; Gender & Women's Studies, LAS

Brent Roberts, Director/Professor, Center for Social and Behavioral Sciences, Psychology, LAS

Medra Roberts-Southerland, Assistant Director for Diversity Initiatives; OVCDEI

Jon Seydl, Director, Krannert Art Museum

Sam Smith, Director, Civic & Community Practice, Krannert Center for the Performing Arts, FAA

Rachel Switzky, Director, Siebel Center for Design

William Trent, Professor, Education Policy, Organization, and Leadership; Center for Education in Small Urban Communities, College of Education

Liliane Windsor, Associate Professor, School of Social Work

Gina Lee-Olukoya, Director of Student Engagement/Student Success and Engagement, Student Affairs

Kandace Turner, Working Group Executive Liaison, Associate Director for Public Engagement, Chancellor's Office, (Ex-Officio)

Penny Nigh, Assistant to the Executive Associate Chancellor, Chancellor's Office

Tara Smith, Administrative Assistant to the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, OVCSA

Dear Colleagues:

Thank you for agreeing to serve on the Community Action and Public Engagement working group under the coordination of Addressing Racism and Social Injustice at the University of Illinois Steering Committee. Vice Chancellor Danita Brown Young and Executive Associate

Chancellor Wanda Ward will chair this working group. Penny Nigh, Assistant to the Executive Associate Chancellor, and Tara Smith, Administrative Assistant to Vice Chancellor Young, will provide the staffing and support. Your work will complement the efforts of three other teams being charged as part of this effort: Teaching and Scholarship; Diversity and a Culture of Inclusion; and Public Safety, Policing, and the Justice System.

Community partnerships are a critical component as we seek to serve the needs of the residents and citizens of our state. Illinois' strategic plan states that "interaction with our community will be woven into the fabric of everything we do – from research and teaching to educational experiences to our external partnerships." Now, more than ever, our neighborhood nonprofits and schools are on the front line providing essential human services during this crisis, while also experiencing significant health and financial challenges. Such partnerships should advance economic and social progress in our neighboring communities and the state of Illinois, as well as improve the way we prepare students to change society.

Building upon the growing relationship between the community and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and the respected leadership role that this university plays throughout the local, state and national community, we seek to establish a local university-community partnership that addresses structural racism, bias and social injustice through ongoing dialogue and the collective development and implementation of a strategic action plan. We ask that this group consider how the University of Illinois can create an institution-wide commitment to civic engagement that prioritizes community-based initiatives and the ongoing and transparent dialogue essential to creating trusted relationships and productive collaborations.

I ask that you consider some specific areas of focus:

- Convene community and university leaders to discuss systemic racism and the impact on our community.
- Provide a space to give voice to community concerns and issues.
- Develop a strategic evidence-based approach and plan to combat systemic racism in our community.
- Create a short- (1-2 years) and long-term (5-10 years) action plan to support impacted groups and their surrounding environments and to maximize the cultural assets/wealth that they can contribute to improve the whole community.
- Produce an action plan for inclusive education, health (including mental health), workforce and economic development, and community safety.
- Leverage the energy and enthusiasm our students have for change to create a better university-community integration. How can we reduce barriers to community service and promote diversity and equity among students through community-based work?

In your discussions and action plans, I ask that you be guided by these core principles:

- Embed racial equity and inclusion as foundational values throughout a University of Illinois educational and workplace experience, as well as its public engagement.



- Prioritize concrete action steps and plans that will lead to positive, lasting change.
- Establish processes that are bold, open, generative, collaborative, transparent, and respectful of our traditions of shared governance.

The Steering Committee will have their initial meeting on September 24, 2020. As the first step of this process, I ask that by October 5th, you develop initial timelines, milestone goals, and interim report deadlines with Sean Garrick, who chairs the Steering Committee. Your final Working Group report will be due to the Steering Committee May 1, 2021.

I thank you for your service as we transform the capacity of the University of Illinois to create a more just society.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Sean C. Garrick".

Sean C. Garrick  
Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion