

Longwood University

EQUITY ACTION TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

August 20, 2020

Task Force Members:

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Task Force Co-chairs:

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A Call to Action

In May and June 2020, outrage over the violent deaths of Black people – most notably Mr. George Floyd, Mr. Ahmaud Arbrey, and Ms. Breonna Taylor – sparked nationwide demonstrations against racism and police brutality. On June 17, President Taylor Reveley appointed an Equity Action Task Force to make recommendations for actionable steps Longwood could pursue during the fall semester. He declared, “This national moment of reckoning regarding systemic racial inequality and discrimination is a call to action, not just words.” The Equity Action Task Force was charged with making recommendations to advance three goals:

1. Develop a process for addressing incidents of racial discrimination, in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
2. Design opportunities for every student to engage with the Moton Museum and Farmville’s civil rights history
3. Propose a series of Conversations on Campus for the campus community

The Task Force was empowered to solicit recommendations for additional short-term, actionable steps, as well as work with incoming Chief of Police Doug Mooney to plan for expanded diversity and inclusion training for campus police.

Members of the Equity Action Task Force used their broad connections with campus stakeholders, including students, to gather input and suggestions. The Task Force met weekly as a whole from June 25 – August 12, and also held smaller group meetings to discuss specific recommendations.

The Task Force’s efforts focused on short-term actions and did not replace important longer-term initiatives relating to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Longwood’s [2019-2025 Strategic Plan](#) elevated diversity to an institutional priority. The [University Diversity Council](#) and its subcommittees remain hard at work on a diversity and inclusion strategic plan, which will address many areas, including improving faculty and staff diversity. This plan and its supporting action steps will be formalized during the spring 2021. Lastly, the [Bicentennial Initiative](#) was established in February 2020 to study aspects of Longwood’s institutional history, particularly with regard to race relations. As part of its broad scope of work, the initiative will explore the history of people and places on campus, providing interpretation, context, and recommendations. On June 30, the University took steps to ensure that the [names of our buildings](#) truly reflect the values of Longwood.

Summary of Recommendations

1. Develop a process for addressing incidents of racial discrimination
 - a. Appointment of a dedicated Title VI Coordinator and an advisory committee
 - b. Development of sound policy, procedures, and practice
 - c. Commitment to transparency in reporting
 - d. Commitment to campus education and training opportunities
2. Design opportunities for every student to engage with the Moton Museum
 - a. Initial visit to Moton during the Coaching Group experience
 - b. Integration of the Moton experience into the Civitae Core Curriculum
 - c. Creation of the Moss Scholars Program (co-curricular experience)
3. Propose a series of Conversations on Campus for the campus community
 - a. Student-focused town hall conversations
 - b. Continued learning through Residence & Commuter Life programming
 - c. Professional development opportunities for faculty & staff
 - d. Professional development opportunities for campus administration
 - e. Campus Book Read - available to all of campus and the local community
4. Additional Recommendations
 - a. Appointment of a Presidential Student Advisory Committee
 - b. Increased Web Presence for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Issues
 - c. Diversity and Inclusion Training for Peer Mentors
 - d. Orientation & New Lancer Days Programming on Navigating Life at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI)
 - e. Conversations with Campus Police: Policy Review, Training, and Outreach

1. Develop a process for addressing incidents of racial discrimination

Longwood needs a stronger, and more straightforward, process for reports of racial discrimination to be addressed seriously and fairly. Similar to the establishment of a Title IX office to address gender-based discrimination, the most effective way of doing so is by establishing a Title VI office responsible for documenting, investigating, and addressing incidents of racial discrimination. Under Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and its implementing regulations, “no student shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity of a recipient receiving federal financial assistance.” The Task Force recommends the following guiding principles in establishing a Title VI office.

a. Appointment of a dedicated Title VI Coordinator and an advisory committee

The Task Force recommends that the President appoint a Title VI Coordinator who will lead the efforts of the office. The Task Force also recommends the creation of an advisory committee, appointed by the Title VI Coordinator and the President, which will assist in developing policies, procedures, educational programming, and training for the office. The advisory committee should be comprised of representatives from key stakeholder groups across campus, including faculty, staff, and students.

b. Development of sound policy, procedures, and practice

The Task Force recommends that the Title VI office establish a policy and develop a subsequent set of procedures and practices based on best practices. Existing university policies and practices that reference these items will be evaluated and updated to delineate and reflect the work of the Title VI office. Versions of this policy would also be included in the Student Handbook and other appropriate places. The Task Force recommends that the Title VI Coordinator be responsible for the existing bias incident reporting process as well.

c. Commitment to transparency in reporting

The Task Force recommends that the Title VI Office publish monthly a summary of discriminatory complaints and bias reports received on its website. This web-based reporting will indicate the type of incident, group targeted, conduct type, reported location, and the resolution offered regarding the incident. Additionally, a report from the Title VI office will be emailed to the campus community at the conclusion of the semester.

d. Commitment to campus education and training opportunities

The Task Force recommends that faculty, staff, and students participate in mandatory training related to the Title VI process, incidents of bias and discrimination, relevant University policies, and reporting procedures. The Title VI Coordinator and Advisory Committee will determine how the training will be facilitated across campus.

2. Design opportunities for every student to engage with the Moton Museum

In 2015, Longwood and the Moton Museum entered into a formal partnership. The museum's permanent exhibition, *The Moton School Story: Children of Courage*, conveys many messages. It teaches about the particularly powerful and often painful history of African-Americans fighting segregation in our local community during the middle decades of the twentieth century. More broadly, it reveals how young people and their advocates can use the levers of democracy to make meaningful change when faced with whatever forms of discrimination and injustice they may encounter at their own moment in history. Students should have opportunities to engage with the Museum and its content at multiple points over the course of their time at Longwood. The Task Force recommends scaffolding the student experience in the following ways.

a. Initial visit to Moton during New Lancer Days

The Task Force recommends that all Longwood first-year students tour the Moton Museum as part of their Coaching Group experience during New Lancer Days and participate in a Coach/Peer Mentor-guided reflection following the visit. The Moton Museum staff will create the reflection activity and provide support to Coaches and Peer Mentors as it is implemented.

b. Integration of the Moton experience into the Civitae Core Curriculum

The Task Force recommends that the Civitae Core Curriculum Committee work to incorporate the Moton Story into the CTZN 110: Inquiry into Citizenship, ENGL 265: Writing and Rhetoric for Citizenship, and CTZN 410: Symposium on the Common Good courses that are required for all students. This will allow all Longwood students to develop an understanding of local civil rights history and the tools citizens use to make significant change in our democracy. In December 2019, the Civitae curriculum received a [grant](#) from the Teagle Foundation to provide faculty with professional development opportunities to learn about the Moton story.

Moreover, as part of Civitae, encourage faculty to develop team-taught, integrative courses at the Perspectives level that relate to the Moton Story – e.g., by examining the history and culture of our local community or by engaging students in a community-based learning experience. As a precursor to the development of these courses, faculty would participate in a Moton Short Course led by the Center for Faculty Enrichment (CAFE) and Moton.

c. Creation of the Moss Scholars Program (co-curricular experience)

The Task Force recommends that students will have the opportunity to continue engagement with Moton through the Moss Scholars Program, named for Dr. C. G. Gordon Moss, dean of Longwood College, who worked to end the Prince Edward County school closings. Students will be recognized with this distinction during their senior year in a formal program with the Moton Museum and a medallion at Commencement. The framework would be developed by museum staff and staff from the Office of Student Engagement. The designation would require that students engage in a determined number of public programs with Moton and facilitate a capstone service learning project within the Prince Edward community.

3. Propose a series of Conversations on Campus for the campus community

Members of the campus community, particularly students, continue to be affected by recent national events. They are seeking space to converse, listen, process, heal, and develop plans for action. Some of that work has been taking place virtually over the summer, but there is no substitute for in-person conversations. These conversations may be difficult. But as a training ground of citizen leaders, Longwood has a particular obligation to guide and facilitate them. The Task Force recommends multiple opportunities for faculty, staff, and students to engage in dialogue and conversation.

a. Student-focused town hall conversations

The Student Government Association (SGA) will work with the Office of Multicultural Affairs to facilitate a series of student-focused town hall conversations that create space for students and other members of the campus community to reflect, converse, and offer ideas on how the University can move towards being a more inclusive and equitable institution. The first Town Hall will occur within the first two weeks of the semester in a hybrid format and focus on how to have difficult conversations around issues of race, equity, and inclusion. The Town Hall Conversations will continue one or two times per month throughout the semester. The notes from the conversations will be shared with the entire campus community, including with the Student Government Association, Faculty Senate, the President, the Provost, and the Vice President for Student Affairs.

b. Continued learning through Residence & Commuter Life programming

The Task Force recommends that the Office of Residential & Commuter Life (RCL), through their Residence Hall & Campus-Wide Programming model, provide students with opportunities to have conversations about social identity, race, acceptance, belonging, and inclusion. The Residence & Commuter Life Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) model recognizes the importance of facilitating conversations that are timely for the situation and need, including facilitating one-on-one conversations. The RCL team will continue work to provide students with resources at their opening Hall meetings, Commuter Resource fairs, through group facilitation, and through campus-wide programming opportunities (i.e., Longwood's Got Talent).

c. Professional development opportunities for faculty & staff

The Center for Faculty Enrichment (CAFE) will facilitate workshops during the fall related to

- Teaching Difficult Dialogues in the Classroom
- Understanding Issues Impacting Underrepresented Student Populations
- Incorporating Inclusive & Equitable Practices in the Classroom & Co-Curricular Experiences

CAFE will offer a certificate of completion to faculty that they can include in their professional portfolios. Faculty will be encouraged to record this professional development in their annual evaluation, and the Provost will encourage department chairs to recognize this professional

development in their evaluations of faculty. Staff will have the opportunity to participate in these professional development offerings as well.

Additionally, a Brown Bag Discussion, entitled “A Chat to Counter Oppression: Doing Race & Undoing Racism in the Dismantling of Inequities in Higher Education,” will be held monthly in a hybrid format. The purpose of the monthly chat is to learn about race and racism in the United States during this critical time in history and to increase awareness and understanding of racial bias and structural racism. Since racism is a system of oppression, it is the intent of the organizers to problematize racism systematically. The chat will use a critical race theoretical framework that is rooted in social justice while deconstructing educational disparities related to equity in higher education. All individuals regardless of current comfort level or competence in racial equity are encouraged to attend.

d. Professional development opportunities for campus administration

The Task Force recommends that an outside facilitator or organization, such as the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities (VCIC), come to campus to facilitate diversity-related conversations for members of the President’s Council and for leadership in each of the Vice Presidential units, similar to the VCIC workshop for the Board of Visitors. Institutional change relating to equity and inclusion needs to be led by each of the Vice Presidents in their units.

e. Campus Book Read - available to all of campus and the local community

The Task Force recommends the facilitation of a campus read and reflection opportunity that will be available to students, faculty, and staff. This reading opportunity will be diversity-focused, and its goal will be to help make students, faculty, staff, and community members more socially aware of issues surrounding race and ethnicity. This would be planned during fall 2020.

4. Additional Recommendations

Through its connection with the University Diversity Council, the Task Force developed some additional recommendations that could also gain momentum during the fall semester. Additionally, the Task Force endorses Chief Doug Mooney's proposed plan for initiatives regarding the University police, which includes the review of policies and procedures, enhanced training, and the creation of a community board.

a. Appointment of a Presidential Student Advisory Committee

Building on the regular conversations that have taken place between President Reveley and student leaders from campus multicultural organizations, the Task Force recommends the establishment of a Presidential Student Advisory Committee that would focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion issues. This group would comprise of student leaders of campus multicultural organizations who would meet monthly with the President, certain members of the President's Executive Council, Admissions, Campus Police, and other administrators as needed. The purpose of these meetings is to provide updates about current campus climate, to address needs and concerns of current students, and to assist in creative problem-solving.

b. Increased Web Presence for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Issues

The Task Force recommends that the Office of Marketing & Communications assist with building a more visible web presence related to diversity, equity, and inclusion work on campus. This increased web presence would provide for a landing page that highlights the work of the Equity Action Task Force, University Diversity Council, and Bicentennial Initiative. It would also incorporate the work of the Title VI Office. It will also provide resources for faculty, staff, and students related to classroom learning, bias and discrimination incident reporting, etc.

c. Diversity and Inclusion Training for Peer Mentors

The Task Force recommends that the Office of Student Success incorporate diversity, anti-racism, and bias training for Peer Mentors. Student Success will work with Multicultural Affairs to implement a required presentation, workshop, or training on diversity and anti-racism, along with a presentation on protocols and reporting for incidents of gender and racial discrimination.

d. Orientation & New Lancer Days Programming on Navigating Life at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI)

The Task Force recommends that the Office of Student Success incorporate into the Orientation and New Lancer Day Schedule sessions on helping students from underrepresented populations learn about the experience of attending school at a predominantly white institution (PWI). This session will focus on helping students to understand the opportunities and challenges that come with this experience and to learn about resources to help them navigate campus through their academic and co-curricular experiences.

e. Conversations with Campus Police: Policy Review, Training, and Outreach

The Task Force engaged Longwood Chief of Police Doug Mooney about the national climate regarding policing. As he begins his tenure at Longwood, Chief Mooney is conducting a thorough review of Longwood police's policies, procedures, training, and outreach efforts. Together, Chief Mooney and the Task Force share in a commitment to ensure that we are best meeting the needs of the campus and community.

The Task Force endorses Chief Mooney's initial planning for the Longwood Office of Police and Public Safety, which includes the following:

- Auditing all departmental policies, including an update to the Use of Force policy that bans the use of chokeholds.
- Providing police officers with adequate training about bias and culturally-related issues, community policing, de-escalation and use of force, which will be conducted in collaboration with relevant Longwood offices and the Central Virginia Criminal Justice Academy.
- Forming a Police & Community Relations Group to foster communication and community engagement. This group will be comprised of campus stakeholders and would focus on current events, discussing ways campus police can improve relations in the community. While this group will not make policy, they will offer suggestions and ideas that will improve effectiveness and overall relations within the community.