

**Annual Report**  
**University Senate Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) Committee**  
April 2024

Prepared by JEDI Chair, Martha J. Cutter  
Professor of English, Africana Studies, and Interim Head, American Studies

**Committee charge:** This committee shall review University policies, practices, and conditions relevant to supporting and promoting justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion among students, faculty and staff.

The JEDI membership for academic year 2023-2024 included:

**\*Martha Cutter, Chair, CLAS, English**

\*Eduardo Urios-Aparisi, CLAS, Literatures, Cultures, and Languages

\*Becky Bacher, CLAS Advising

\*Caitlin Elsaesser, School of Social Work

\*Kristen Govoni, CAHNR, Dean's Office

\*Micah Heumann, Institute for Student Success, ACES

\*Diane Lillo-Martin, CLAS, Linguistics

\*Sidratul Muntaha, Undergraduate Student

\*Eleanor Ouimet, Anthropology

\*Greg Reilly, Business, Management

\*Diandra Prescod, Neag, Educational Psychology

\*Yaowu Yuan, CLAS, Ecology and Evolutionary Biology

\*Cindy Zhang, CLAS, Geography

Greg Bouquot, Registrar's Office

Stuart Duncan, The Graduate School

Angelo Montes, Undergraduate Student

Mackenzie Robinson, Undergraduate Student

Stephany Santos, School of Engineering, Biomedical Engineering

Audrey Silva, Center for Students with Disabilities

Frank Tuitt, Office for Diversity and Inclusion (ex-officio member)

*\*Senate Member 2023/2024*

**Summary**

The JEDI committee met six times during the academic year. Detailed minutes from all meetings are available on the Senate website. In the 2023-2024 academic year, the committee discussed the following major items:

**Major Items of Discussion**

- I. **Academic Probation, DFW rates, and retention of BIPOC Students:** A major topic of discussion was that BIPOC students have a higher DFW rate, higher rates of academic probation, and lower rates of graduation in six years than non-BIPOC students. Martha Cutter has recommended that a motion be made to the university senate to share more widely that data on this subject, but the Senate EC felt that sharing the material in some other format would be more effective. We continue to be concerned about this topic and to ponder how to best share this disturbing data with faculty and staff. From last year's annual report: "Data from 2017-2021 show that much higher percentages of Black, Latino and Hispanic students than white students end up on academic probation at the end of their first semester at UConn, and that these numbers worsened during the COVID pandemic." There has been some rebound since COVID, but BIPOC students remain at higher risk of dropping out at UConn.

Discussion this year centered on how the committee can help faculty and staff become more aware of these issues and the resources available for student support and success. A concern was raised by this committee that this message is not filtering down from leadership, and discussions have been ongoing about how to make this data more widely available.

**Action Item for Next Year:** Martha Cutter will be developing a way to present the data and next year circulation of this data will be vital.

- II. **Impact of recent anti-Affirmative Action decisions on admissions at UConn.** Frank Tuitt, Preston Green, and Jeff Hines meet with JEDI and discussed a presentation on "UConn after SFFA v. Harvard & UNC." The committee

continued to brainstorm ideas about how to create diversity in admissions of graduate and undergraduate students after this decision.

**No Action Items currently, as we observe ongoing developments.**

- III. **Faculty Hiring and Diversity:** The JEDI committee was asked by Laura Burton to discuss the [Review of Faculty and Staff Diversity Report](#). The committee reviewed the report, raising concerns around diversity of faculty, especially concerning the hiring and retention of Black individuals (listed as under 3% total faculty in the report). JEDI has numerous questions about separations vs voluntary retirements, which was not clearly distinguished in the data. HR may be developing an exit interview procedure like the one used at UConn Health. JEDI will be following up on this going forward. There will be ongoing discussions next year about the need to recruit and retain BIPOC faculty and their reasons for separation.

**Action Item for Next Year:** JEDI will be meeting with HR and (perhaps) Labor Relations to help create an exit interview for faculty and staff who separate from Uconn. We also want to hear more directly from HR about the low rates of BIPOC faculty at the University and what might improve this.

- IV. **Salary Equity and Its Impact on Diversity:** JEDI also considered salary equity and its impact on faculty hiring and diversity. The Pay Equity Taskforce created a report in 2022, which pertains to gender, although race is a consideration: “Adding race/ethnicity to the model does not change the gender gap, but adding the department female percentage proves to have the largest downward effect on average salary gap, reducing it by nearly 5 percentage points. In other words, departments with more female faculty are correlated with lower average salaries.”

**No Action Items at this time.**

- V. **Budget crisis’s impact on DEI at UConn:** JEDI remains concerned about DEI in the wake of the current budget crisis. A DEI fellowship for graduate students had already been cut due to the budget crisis. The increase in tuition will adversely impact first generation and BIPOC students. JEDI is paying attention to this topic moving forward.

**Action item: we will be closely monitoring this topic.**

- VI. **JEDI’s role in the Strategic Plan:** A key goal of the strategic plan is inclusivity and DEI Efforts. JEDI would like to be involved in the Strategic Plan’s implementation and has asked about the possible formation of a JEDI Subcommittee. The Strategic Plan (page 19) contains as a key goal “A stronger, more inclusive university.” JEDI would like to engage with other DEI leaders across the university to share feedback and support a broader view of the implementation of DEI efforts in the Strategic Plan.

**Action item for Next Year: We have asked that JEDI members (or a subcommittee of JEDI) be involved in the Strategic Plan’s Implementation.**

- VII. **Enriched Mentorship:** The Enriched Mentorship program launched at the Graduate School has been successful over the past 6 months, and Stuart Duncan report on NEM (Network for Enriched Mentorship): <https://grad.uconn.edu/faculty-staff-resources/network-for-enriched-mentorship/>. The goal is to match graduate students with faculty who are not in their field in order to have open and honest conversations about the challenges they face. There is a particular focus on resources and how to support diversity, equity, and inclusion.

**Action Items for Next Year:** JEDI will support NEM by developing a broader network of communication around the University and by providing feedback on the numbers involved and the value to the community at the end of the fall semester.

- VIII. **Peer-to-Peer Support for Students on Academic Probation:** Angelo Montes will be working with Kamara Nyahuma on a project to support BIPOC students on academic probation. He is still collecting data but hopes to begin piloting this program in Fall of 2024.

**Action Item for Next Year:** JEDI looks forward to hearing more about this endeavor and supporting it in whatever ways we can. We ask students to liason with UConn Connects.