

Minot State University Diversity Council Report for AY 2020–2021

The Diversity Council met ten times during this academic year. Its officers were:

Mark Singer, Chair
Jordan Laducer, Vice-Chair (through Fall 2020)
Annette Mennem, Treasurer
Evelyn Klimpel, Secretary (retired June 2021)

Activities and Events Sponsored

While COVID-19 continued to greatly reduce on-campus activities this year, the council did sponsor, support, and participate in the following events and granted \$4050.00 in funding.

September 2020

9/5 Magic City Equality Minot Pride 2020
12/20 Drive Through Powwow
9/21–25 MSU Campus Pride–Pride Week

December 2020

12/1–20 Virtual Holiday Celebrations from Around the World
12/18 Active Minds speaker Greg Vogt – “Adapting to the New Normal: Mental Wellness through Transition”

March 2021

3/25 International Deaflympics Interactive Lecture

April 2021

4/14 –15 Two presentations by Northern Illinois University professor Dr. Joseph Flynn Jr., author of *White Fatigue*: “Protests Aren’t Parades: Moving from Resistance, to Ally, to Accomplice”

May 2021

5/2 Minot Chapter of the Music Teachers National Association Diversity Library Showcase Concert

June 2021

6/19 Minot Juneteenth Freedom Day
6/21 Red and Green Garden

Committee Activities

The Diversity Council is a standing Minot State University institutional committee whose members are appointed by the university President. As part of its work this year, the council updated its bylaws and membership, adopting those new bylaws on 19 October 2020. Those bylaws now explicitly allow the council to organize and fund events related to its mission and to participate in Minot community events to represent the council and Minot State University. The council's membership was expanded to include as standing members the Director of Human Resources, the Campus Minister, the Director of the Native American Cultural Center, and a representative from the Athletics Diversity and Inclusion Council. It also invites members from student organizations like MSU Equality and MSU Campus Pride to attend its meetings and participate as non-voting members.

The Diversity Council has a new logo this year developed by Roxi Mathis in Design and Print Services. The council's web site was also redesigned to include anti-bias and anti-racism curricula and training resources provide by Dr. Kathy Hintz, Professor of Education (who is a member of the council as of the 2021–2022 academic year).

This year also brought challenges. Communication was difficult; for example, the council did not know that MSU Athletics had organized its own Diversity Council until Mark read about that in the *Red & Green* student newspaper. The council talked quite a lot this year about what was needed to revive Safe Zone training, a difficult process that resulted in the awareness that such training needs to be professionally done and broader than its initial LGBTQ2S+ focus. Also, when Black History Month came in February 2021, the council had no events planned and had received no notice of events from campus departments or organizations. This year brought into focus that a committee like the Diversity Council that meets monthly for one hour and depends on others to create programming really cannot coordinate and implement the type of full-time, far-reaching, and effective diversity, equity, and inclusion program that Minot State University requires.

In response, Mark drafted and the council approved a recommendation (attached) from the Diversity Council to President Shirley which states that Minot State University should “hire a professional Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion” whose mandate would include “the coordination of and advocacy for a university-wide strategic diversity, equity, and inclusion plan and its implementation that touches on all areas of campus.” That recommendation was submitted to Dr. Shirley on 28 April 2021.

The council also worked with Annette Mennem, Dr. Hintz, and Dr. Joseph Jastrzembski to outline and to request that Dr. Shirley support the creation of a Minot State University Land

Acknowledgement statement (attached). This request was sent to Dr. Shirley on 21 June 2021, and he affirmed this request on 2 August 2021.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Mark Singer, Chair of the Minot State University Diversity Council

15 September 2021



28 April 2021

To: Dr. Steven Shirley, President, Minot State University

Recommendation: Creation of a Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and Revision and Updating of the Minot State University Diversity Plan

Summary

As part of its duties that include “to advocate for a diverse and inclusive campus community” and “to forward recommendations to the university president to enhance a diverse and inclusive campus,” the Minot State University Diversity Council recommends that the university hire a Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion whose mandate would include coordination of and advocacy for a new university-wide strategic diversity, equity, and inclusion plan and its implementation. We are the only four-year campus in the North Dakota University System that does not have anyone in such a role and leading an office dedicated to institutional diversity, equity, and inclusion, and our current diversity plan has not be updated since 2001.

Background: Minot State University’s Diversity Plan and the Diversity Council

In 1996, Minot State University established the “Cultural Diversity Committee,” which in March 1999 authored the report, *Multiculturalism & Diversity at Minot State University: An Assessment*. That committee also created a diversity plan that was submitted to the State Board of Higher Education in January 2001.

Since then, this committee, first as the Diversity Committee and since 2003 as the Diversity Council, has provided small grants to campus organizations in support of their diversity and inclusion programming, helped organizations promote that programming, and worked to encourage diversity and inclusion events and activities on the Minot State University campus. That programming is critical to maintaining a “vital and inclusive campus” by extending “diversity and inclusion awareness for [the] campus community,” as Goal 4 of our *Empowering Generations* strategic plan articulates. It is critical as well to the university’s meeting the Higher Learning Commission’s Criteria for Accreditation 1.C, which states that the institution should provide “opportunities for civic engagement in a diverse, multicultural society and globally connected world,” that its “processes and activities” should “demonstrate inclusive and equitable treatment of diverse populations,” and that it should “foster a climate of respect among all students, faculty, staff and administrators from a range of diverse backgrounds, ideas and perspectives.”

Over the past two years, the Diversity Council has once again secured funding to support diversity programming through student fees and has begun to plan its own as well as to support others’ initiatives. The Council currently is working to revive the Safe Zone network that has fallen into abeyance over the past few years by developing and coordinating training that supports all aspects of diversity, equity, and inclusion in the campus community. Also, despite the challenges presented by COVID, the Council has been involved in events in the Minot community—Juneteenth Freedom

Day and Minot Pride—that have positioned Minot State University as an advocate for diversity, equity, and inclusion in the region.

Challenges: The Need for Coordinated Planning and Leadership in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

As the Diversity Council has worked to meet the university's needs over the past two years, its limitations as an institutional committee have become increasingly clear. Despite members' individual knowledge and commitment, it is not possible for a committee that lacks institutional authority and reach to consistently and proactively promote and coordinate diversity, equity, and inclusion projects and initiatives across all areas of campus or to engage with the broader regional community. Some difficulties are related to communication; for example, the Diversity Council did not know that an Athletics Diversity Council had been formed until I as chair read about that in the *Red & Green*. Likewise, when Black History Month came this February, the Council realized that few events were planned and that there was no coordinated communication of events across the campus. Many of the events that did finally take place came from individual members of the Council planning or urging others to plan them.

While some of these issues are related to “this time of COVID,” the Council has come to realize that coordinating and administering programming for students, advocating for diversity, equity, and inclusion at a campus-wide level, and interacting with the wider community goes beyond what any committee or its chair has the time, the resources, and, frequently, the authority to accomplish.

Recommendation: A Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and a Diversity Plan

Because of this, the Diversity Council recommends that Minot State University hire a professional Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion as a vice-presidential (or equivalent) administrator reporting to the University President. This Director's mandate would include the coordination of and advocacy for a university-wide strategic diversity, equity, and inclusion plan and its implementation that touches on all areas of campus. A director-level administrator in charge of an Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion would advocate for diversity issues and activities, provide resources and assistance to programs who want to develop student events and programs that support diversity and inclusion, and coordinate co-curricular assessment of diversity programming. That administrator also would serve as the university's chief diversity officer and provide vision, leadership, and counsel to the President and in the development and assessment of institutional goals regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion, including equity and inclusion in all of the university's processes and activities as required by HLC. Finally, the Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion would work with community organizations and others who have an interest and a stake in diversity, equity, and inclusion on the Minot State University campus.

Having a Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion would ensure that Minot State University truly lives its values and creates a vibrant and inclusive campus community for all its constituents. We know that recommending the creation and funding of a new position and mandate in a legislative year is a tough sell, but we are convinced the benefits to our students, to our campus community, and to our position within our community and region and among our peers would be well worth this investment.

Subject: Land Acknowledgement
Date: Monday, June 21, 2021 at 3:15:59 PM Central Daylight Time
From: Mennem, Annette
To: Shirley, Steven
CC: Jastrzembski, Joseph, Hintz, Kathryn, MiSU Diversity Council
Attachments: image001.jpg

June 21, 2021

President Steven Shirley,

On behalf of students, faculty, and staff at Minot State University, I ask that you support our efforts to research, write, and publish a land acknowledgement recognizing tribal nations Indigenous to the area our campus resides.

The purpose of land acknowledgements is twofold:

1. Pay homage to the original people of an area, recognizing the history. It is a first step toward reconciliation because they acknowledge we live and work on unceded Indigenous land. It honors the culture and reminds us that the land is sacred. Once completed, MSU would make the acknowledgement at the beginning of ceremonies, public events, included on syllabi, to name a few times we would include the land acknowledgement.
2. Create a plan that will move the acknowledgement toward a process of incorporating the traditional values and cultures of these nations into our academic programs.

In this process, we would include the tribal nations of Fort Peck, Standing Rock Sioux, Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa the original people of Minot and the Minot State University area.

With your support, Dr. Hintz, Dr. Jastrzembski, the Diversity Council, and the Native American Center will take the lead on the process moving forward for a Minot State University Land Acknowledgment. We ask that you—Dr. Shirley—to name a person from Dakota College Bottineau to be added this group working the process of land acknowledgement.

Miigwech (thank you) for your consideration, if you should have any questions or concerns please reach out to any of this group.

Best regards,

Annette Mennem, MsM

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Native American Cultural Awareness Club Advisor
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