



**Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Steering Committee  
Strategic Visioning Process Status Update and Recommendations, February 2021**

This report provides a status update on the Committee’s ongoing work and offers preliminary recommendations based on listening session and survey data and on research completed by the working groups through January 2021. A comprehensive report and strategic vision document, including further recommendations, will be submitted in May 2021.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

For this February report we are presenting recommendations in two categories: Those that may require funding and thus a budget decision in addition to Board approval, and those that can be implemented in the short term to demonstrate the Board’s and the College’s commitment to justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion.

**Recommendation 1:** Hire a cabinet-level Vice President of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion<sup>1</sup> (DEI) to oversee all DEI initiatives, support the Title IX and Bias Incident functions, and have an advisory role over hiring practices. Appropriate staffing and support structures, determined by the President, should be put in place.

**Rationale:** Through both the vision for DEI led by President Samhat and the on-going efforts of current staff and faculty, it is clear that Wofford needs senior-level support to help drive DEI initiatives and effect change. Progress on such initiatives appears to have been made at four of seven peer institutions that have Senior Diversity Officers who have been in place for two to three years.<sup>2</sup> DEI work is a strategic priority and will be best implemented under coordinated leadership.

**Budget implications:** Salary and benefits for the VP-DEI and staff

**Recommendation 2:** Increase budget and staffing for the Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI) and increase staffing and/or resources in other DEI areas. Determination of staffing levels and structures

---

<sup>1</sup> The Committee encourages the Administration to consider the title of this position carefully, particularly keeping in mind the troubling connotations of “chief” in reference to the Indigenous American population, while balancing the need to signal the institutional significance of the position.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix 1 for more detailed peer institution data.

should be guided by a thorough assessment of DEI best practices, current policies, and procedures.<sup>3</sup> Our research has identified three specific needs with regard to staffing and resources:

- a. Additional staff and budgetary support for the ODI
- b. Expertise in National Panhellenic Council (NPHC) organizations and sufficient staff time to devote to chartering and supporting NPHCs
- c. Expertise in DEI for Athletics and sufficient staff time to devote to supporting student-athletes with DEI issues.

The Committee recommends additional support in ODI as the most urgent of the needs listed in recommendation 2, and recommends resources be devoted to the other two needs with timing and structures that will support the work of the VP-DEI. Those working on these needs would ideally report to the VP-DEI.

**Rationale:** The staff and faculty-administrators currently and recently doing DEI work report that the current structures do not allow for consistent and effective support of students. These three recommended priorities for resources would address identified, urgent needs to support our students.<sup>4</sup>

- a. Additional support in ODI would ensure that necessary programming is planned and implemented effectively and help with the stretched resources and excessive work currently falling on that office.
- b. Knowledgeable and dedicated attention to NPHC organizations would provide the necessary structure to support the reestablishment and chartering of campus-based NPHCs, which function quite differently and have very different support needs than other Greek organizations. The importance of Greek life as reported in listening sessions and surveys adds urgency to this need.
- c. Athletics currently has no dedicated staff in place to ensure that students who identify as Black and Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) are appropriately supported, their needs addressed and that the department adheres to best practices regarding issues related to DEI. Conversations with the Athletics director indicate recognized need and support for dedicated resources in this area.

**Budget implications:** Salaries and benefits, administrative support

In considering Recommendations 1 and 2, we invite the Board and College leadership to consider the following questions:

- What structures will help recruit and support a successful VP-DEI?
- What structures and metrics will allow the VP-DEI to measure impact and make data-informed decisions for setting future priorities?

---

<sup>3</sup> The committee is prepared to provide more guidance on these decisions as needed.

<sup>4</sup> See Appendix 2 for peer institution data and further explanation of these roles.

**Recommendation 3:** Continue the Teach.Equity.Now (T.E.N.) Fellows program to support a cohort of 20 faculty and/or staff each year. The program, in its inaugural year, has been successful in training educators to incorporate racial equity principles in Wofford’s classrooms and campus culture.<sup>5</sup>

**Rationale:** Wofford’s educators must expand their knowledge of diversity, equity, and inclusion if classrooms are to become safe, inclusive spaces for all students. Faculty and staff must be given the support and professional development needed to develop a more thorough understanding of systemic racism in the three spheres: interpersonal, cultural, and institutional along with an awareness of the history of racism in the U.S. (The Provost has informally stated plans to fund the program for at least the next academic year.)

**Budget implications:** \$30,000 annual program cost; an additional \$1,000-2,000 for T.E.N. consultant travel to campus

**Recommendation 4:** Join the [Universities Studying Slavery](#) Consortium.

**Rationale:** Wofford will benefit from the expertise and opportunities for collaboration presented by joining the Universities Studying Slavery (USS) consortium.<sup>6</sup> “Created and led by the University of Virginia, the USS represents a multi-institutional collaboration focused in sharing best practices and guiding principles about truth-telling projects addressing human bondage and racism in institutional histories. Member schools are all committed to research, acknowledgment, and atonement regarding institutional ties to the slave trade, to enslavement on campus or abroad, and to enduring racism in school history and practice.”<sup>7</sup>

**Budget implications:** There is no cost to join the consortium. The College will be obligated to assign a faculty member to coordinate its involvement with the consortium.

**Recommendation 5:** Establish a fund to create historical markers, plaques, creative/digital displays, and a new Wofford history book to authentically acknowledge and engage Wofford’s past and tell an inclusive story that highlights the complex lived experiences of women, people of color, and other historically under-represented groups that have helped make Wofford what it is today.

**Rationale:** The physical landscape and the story that we tell about who we are and how we have come to be as a community is central to establishing a profound sense of belonging and connection to Wofford. Our changing campus landscape and the story we tell about Wofford needs to be updated to reflect a more diverse, inclusive community. This fund is the first of several steps that will be recommended in commemorating our College’s complex history and re-imagining our changing campus landscape as we move forward, as a community, in telling the story about our past and the visions for our future.

**Budget implications:** Recommend budget and/or fundraising commitment.

---

<sup>5</sup> <https://woffordogb.com/2020/03/21/teach-equity-now/>

<sup>6</sup> For a listing of Wofford’s current memberships in relevant consortia, see Appendix 3.

<sup>7</sup> <https://slavery.virginia.edu/universities-studying-slavery/>

## LISTENING SESSIONS AND SURVEYS

Listening sessions with a broad array of stakeholders are in progress and will be conducted through early March. Current students, faculty, staff, alumni, and trustees have been invited to participate in listening sessions, and community stakeholders and friend of the college will be invited to sessions. A survey link is available on the Committee website for those who prefer to give their input in writing. While listening sessions and surveys are still underway, many important themes are already recurring. A list of themes is provided below. Further themes, context, and analysis will be provided in the comprehensive May report.

### *Wofford as a community*

- Sustained relationships and friendships
- The support of professors and staff members along with strong professional relationships with alumni or friends of the college have helped students develop personal and professional opportunities
- The people make Wofford what it is; it's more that than the institution or the buildings
- Wofford as part of student/alumni identity, including as a connection to other alumni
  - majority bring it up as being a part of their identity
  - others only bring it up in connection/network context
- Spaces of support (specific offices, educators, organizations) sustain students and are what they remember most fondly from Wofford post-graduation
- Relationship to greater Spartanburg community (Bonner, community-engaged research, service via Greek organizations)
  - Interest in a scholarship for students with connections to the Back of the College neighborhood or the North Side

### *Wofford tradition*

- Concerns about changing away from “my Wofford”
- Desire for change to meet today’s changing social justice and equity landscape and demographics
- Wofford has significant sense of tradition; “The Wofford Way”; negative and positive perceptions of both of these concepts
- “If I tried to get into Wofford now I couldn’t”; pride from alumni of Wofford’s increased academic excellence and national reputation, while still identifying it as “my Wofford”

### *Strong academics and a place for growth*

- “Free speech” vs. “indoctrination” concerns, primarily from older alumni not in close contact with the college’s current practices; concerns about preserving and respecting diversity of thought and teaching critical thinking
- Focus on academics while a student was paramount for some, who may have been less engaged in campus/national/global issues as a result

- “Wofford taught me how to think and reflect” – on values/purpose; we must preserve strong liberal arts core going into the future to support such growth in current students
- Alumni say they developed or deepened their identity due to Wofford curricular and co-curricular education

*Different experiences of students/alumni, varies by decade and identity (race, socio-economic status, Greek/non-Greek)*

- Alumni of color learned how to persevere through adversity – made them stronger, better equipped to deal with real world
- Assumptions from some about others’ experiences being the same as their own (unawareness of pain and discrimination), others state they know they don’t know about others’ experiences
- Privilege – recognized and unrecognized – affecting experiences and perceptions of experiences
- Greek life very important/dominant of social life on campus – and older alumni saw all of Wofford as a sort of fraternity

*A need to shift the campus culture and larger Wofford culture*

- Desire for Wofford to show leadership (e.g. ahead of peer institutions) on moving toward greater justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion
- More diverse representation desired – representation among faculty, Wofford ambassadors, counselors, student-led organizations
  - Opportunity hire program for faculty – support alumni of color in graduate school so that they can join the faculty
- Need to increase students’ knowledge about race and equity issues and its connection to students’ treatment of each other
- Policies more important to changing student experience than one-time changes
- Alumni express desire to be part of the conversation going forward
- Some reports of faculty/staff being unaware or unempathetic of financial and other obstacles to success
- Need for accountability and professional development for all faculty and staff who engage with students (e.g. in teaching, advising)

*Sustainability and recruitment*

- Scholarships and overall affordability absolutely fundamental to diversity going forward
- “Endowment, endowment, endowment”
- Funding for alumni who want to send their child/grandchild here but financially cannot
- Recruitment and awareness of changing demographics of high schools in SC; more targeted recruitment and “special experiences” for prospective students of color
- One key to recruitment is answering the question: why are students of color not coming to Wofford even when the school offers a good deal?
- Going out to key areas and letting students of color know Wofford is an option for them – alumni of color say Wofford wasn’t on their radar until one person reached out

*Perceptions and communication concerns*

- Some alumni say: Prioritize listening to current students, so they will become engaged alumni
- Some students have perception that alumni donations being weighed over their own needs
- Students and recent alumni: perceptions of lack of engagement on issues and lack of appreciation for urgency from college leadership

## **Appendix 1. Wofford College Peer Institutions: The Senior Diversity Officer Role**

In addition to various discussions both within the Committee as well as among Wofford's staff, Working Group 5 conducted research to evaluate whether Wofford's peer institutions have employed Senior Diversity Officers (SDOs) and, if so, at what level of authority. This peer set has been consistently used for the College in other benchmarking efforts. The peer set is comprised of:

1. Centre College
2. Davidson College
3. Furman University
4. Hendrix College
5. Rhodes College
6. Sewanee University
7. Washington & Lee

The group studied these institutions to determine the following information: 1) Whether or not an SDO is in place at the institution; 2) what is the role or function of the position; 3) what is the reporting structure for the position (to whom does the position report); and 4) brief summary of the SDO's professional background. In brief, the research indicated:

- 4 of the 7 institutions have created either specific positions or functions to support their diversity and inclusion initiatives
  - Furman, Centre, Hendrix, and Rhodes all have Senior Diversity Officers
  - Davidson does not have an SDO; however, they have 2 positions dedicated to DEI initiatives: Asst. Dean of Students for D&I and Program Coordinator for D&I
  - Sewanee has created (but not yet filled) an SDO position and appears to be in the early stages of DEI development
  - Washington & Lee appears to have an interim SDO
- Of the 4 SDOs in place, it appears that the roles have been in place for 2-3 years on average
- For the reporting level of the position, less reliable information was available.
  - While most of the institutions in the peer set seemed to have their DEI functions residing under their Office of Student Affairs, the SDO at two (Rhodes and perhaps Furman) report directly to the president of the institution.
  - In several instances, the organizational charts available may not reflect the institutions' most recent efforts and structuring around their current DEI initiatives.
  - Further research or follow-up interviews may be required to provide clarity around this particular data.

**Appendix 2.** Wofford College Peer Institutions: ODI Staffing, National Panhellenic Council Organizations, and DEI Role in Athletics

Staffing in DEI-related positions at peer institutions:

Peer Institution	Diversity and Inclusion Contacts
Centre College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• *Associate VP for Diversity Affairs &amp; Assistant to President</li> <li>• Director of Diversity and Inclusion Programming</li> </ul>
Davidson College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• *Assistant Dean of Students for Diversity and Inclusion</li> <li>• Program Coordinator for Diversity and Inclusion</li> </ul>
Furman University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• *Chief Diversity Officer</li> <li>• Director of the Center for Inclusive Communities</li> <li>• Assistant Director of the Center for Inclusive Communities</li> <li>• Associate Athletics Director for Academic Success, Diversity, Inclusion, and Engagement</li> </ul>
Hendrix College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• *VP for Diversity &amp; Inclusion and Chief Diversity Officer</li> <li>• Director of Student Activities &amp; Coordinator of LGBTQ+ Student Services</li> </ul>
Rhodes College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• *VP for Strategic Initiatives and Chief Diversity Officer</li> <li>• Dean for Faculty Recruitment, Development, and Diversity</li> </ul>
Sewanee University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• *Vice Provost for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion<sup>8</sup></li> <li>• Director of Multicultural Student Affairs</li> </ul>
Washington and Lee University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• *Dean for Diversity, Inclusion and Student Engagement</li> <li>• Assistant Director of Inclusion and Engagement</li> <li>• Assistant Director of Inclusion and Engagement for LGBTQ+ Support</li> <li>• Director of Jewish Life</li> <li>• University Counselor and LGBTQ Coordinator</li> <li>• Catholic Campus Minister</li> <li>• Faculty Advisor to Campus Muslim Students</li> </ul>

<sup>8</sup> This newly created position has not yet been filled, but the person in this role will oversee the newly created Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion which may include additional staff not yet announced.

\*Denotes the highest-level position with working titles that include either diversity, equity, or inclusion

NPHC organizations at peer institutions:

College	Total Student Body	% of BIPOC students	# of NPHC orgs	DEI position in Athletics
<b>Centre College</b>	1,450	16.50%	0	No
<b>Davidson College</b>	1,983	32%	4	No
<b>Furman University</b>	2,629	20%	1	Yes <sup>9</sup>
<b>Hendrix College</b>	1,208	19.70%	0	No
<b>Rhodes College</b>	2,010	25%	4	No
<b>Sewanee University</b>	1,710	15.70%	0	No
<b>Washington &amp; Lee University</b>	1,843	20.13%	4	No

The National Panhellenic Council (NPHC) does not currently have an official charter on Wofford’s campus. The college desires to (re)establish NPHC chapters, which will require that necessary structures be put in place. Staff support for these efforts requires expertise of the intricacies associated with these fraternities and sororities which operate very differently from the Interfraternity Council (IFC) or Panhellenic Council (PC). Several of our peer institutions currently have NPHC presence (see above). DEI support for student athletes would provide support to SAAC and to athletes who encounter DEI-related issues. Conversations with Elizabeth Rabb and Richard Johnson indicate that many issues are specific to athletics and are not addressed well by more general DEI programs and training. It is thus important for these students to have support from someone who has the knowledge to help them from both an athletics and a DEI perspective. Based on best practices, DEI support within athletics would not further isolate athletes but build a bridge for student-athletes to the rest of the college experience. Samford created in June 2020 a DEI position specifically dedicated to athletics. The person in that role provides programming not only for students but coaches and administrators.

---

<sup>9</sup> Furman University has an Associate Athletics Director for Academic Success, Diversity, Inclusion, and Engagement.

### Appendix 3. Wofford's current memberships in relevant consortia

Consortium	Led/coordinated by	Member since
Legacies of American Slavery, Council of Independent Colleges	Camille Bethea Dan Mathewson	2020
Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation, W.K. Kellogg Foundation	Jessalyn Story John Miles	2020
Just Futures Initiative, Andrew Mellon Foundation	Jessalyn Story Kim Rostan	2021
Liberal Arts Colleges Racial Equity Leadership Alliance (LACRELA)	Dan Mathewson	2020
National Coalition Building Institute (NCBI)	Sara Milani	2015

Universities Studying Slavery is a historically oriented national consortium that would make available to Wofford resources and collaborators specific to studying and telling the story of Wofford's history with slavery.

#### **Appendix 4.** Details on the Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Steering Committee

The Steering Committee's charge is to recommend to the Wofford College Board of Trustees a strategic plan and vision for an equitable and just Wofford for the future. The committee's work includes facilitating listening sessions with and collecting surveys from a variety of stakeholder groups, collecting and reporting relevant disaggregated data from those sessions and surveys, amplifying and building on equity work already being done, and helping build and sustain an equity-focused and equity-informed culture at Wofford.

The committee members include four trustees, two students, five faculty, and five staff.

Dr. Christine Sorrell Dinkins and Dr. Ramón Galiñanes (Co-Chairs), Dean Taifha Alexander (Staff), Dr. Begoña Caballero-Garcia (Faculty), Chris Carpenter (Trustee), Dylan Goshorn (Student), Dr. Jameica Hill (Faculty), Jurnee Jones (Student), Dr. Dan Mathewson (Faculty/Admin), Greg O'Dell (Trustee), Arsenio Parks (Staff), Hon. Costa Pleicones (Trustee), Rev. Ron Robinson (Faculty/Admin), Dr. Tasha Smith-Tyus (Staff), James Stukes (Staff), Joyce Yette (Trustee)

Consultants: Dr. Debora Johnson-Ross '81, Caitlynn Myer '18, Kathleen Hughes '19

The committee is conducting research and conversations in five working groups:

**WG1: History, Memory, and Place:** Galiñanes (Lead), Pleicones, Robinson; non-committee members Dr. Dwain Pruitt (Alumnus/Admin at University of Louisville), Dr. Tracy Revels (Faculty), and Dr. Phillip Stone (Archivist)

**WG2: Curriculum, Teaching, & Advising:** Dinkins (Lead), Mathewson, Caballero-Garcia, Goshorn; non-committee member Dr. Trina Jones (Faculty/Admin)

**WG3: Student life:** James Stukes (Lead), Parks, Carpenter, Hill, Jones

**WG4: Enrollment, Recruitment, & Marketing:** Parks (Lead), Yette, Robinson

**WG5: Policies, Procedures, & JEDI structure:** Smith-Tyus (Lead), O'Dell

The Committee's work is also supported by a team of eleven student researchers who are trained to take notes in listening sessions, conduct research to support the working groups, and analyze data from the listening sessions and surveys:

Olivia Free, Ansley Hardeman, Megan Holderness, Sandra Lopez, Hector Ortiz, Marcus Reid, Julie Rodrick, Samuel Smith, Jay Stevens, Delaney Walden, and Jeffrey Woodward.