

Campus-Wide Listening Session #17 “How will UofL Recruit and Retain Diversity?”

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Session Focus

Over the summer, the Supreme Court ruling ended race-based affirmative action initiated by the lawsuits from the University of North Carolina and Harvard University. What impact does this ruling have on the University of Louisville community? Additionally, with recent laws in Florida and Texas to eliminate DEI work, departments and titles dedicated to DEI have been changing names. As affirmative action ends and an attack on DEI efforts continues to spread, how will we recruit and retain racial diversity at the University of Louisville?

Impact of Supreme Court Ruling

- Will we have to put limits on what we say about ourselves, how we embrace those values publicly without repercussions? If funders (especially state legislators) are starting to pick apart different organizations and institutions of higher education, does that limit what we can do as a university to provide a community of care to our students, faculty, and staff?
- There's a misalignment with the UofL legal vs. the actual ruling from SCOTUS.
- Someone said that they host DEI in the Workplace as well as Social Justice and Advocacy info sessions. Does the SCOTUS ruling mean these session names must be renamed?
- We need to get on the same page about what exactly the ruling is and how do we continue to recruit and retain faculty and staff with diverse backgrounds.

Personal and Professional Impact on Efforts Against DEI Programs

- From a professional perspective and being someone who went to a predominantly white institution (PWI) and received an academic scholarship that likely was due to affirmative action – knowing that affirmative action opens doors for those BIPOC groups to institutions that may not necessarily consider them for admission – it takes another resource from students.
- I saw that UofL's DEI office changed names to the Office of Institutional Equity. I didn't publicly see why that shift in title was made, and I've been wondering if that was in

response to the ruling. Our titles that have DEI in them, is that going to be a trend? Do we need to shift away from that language? Will changing our names even make a difference? How impactful will it be to even change titles or a name?

- We did something similar at Bellarmine a few years ago when there was a similar initiative through the Trump administration to try and keep the resources available to students, without “breaking the law” -- changing the terminology is meant to mask to appease the oppressor in this case and still find a way to move DEI efforts forward.
- There is concern across the DEI Professionals of the ACC (ADID and CORE leadership). The ACC Unity Tour and Unity Week was created to shine a positive light on diversity, equity, and inclusion across the 15 member institutions. The Unity Tour has created an impact for a number of student athletes and administrators. At some point we chose Washington, D.C., after the inaugural trip to Selma, Alabama. There was pushback from a neighboring state as well as the states with more restrictive anti-DEI bills that questioned whether their universities across the region should or could participate.
- They are poor states that need federal money, they tabled these conversations because they don’t want to lose federal dollars. Zero bills have been introduced in Kentucky.
- Fear, there is reason to be afraid but also maybe we need to fight that? People’s positions like recruiting equitable faculty, they just go away all the time. If people are trying to make you feel inessential, we can’t let them.

Concerns about Ending Affirmative Action and Ongoing Attacks on DEI

- The attacks on DEI make me focus on how to make sustainable the anti-racist work that our team is committed to in terms of describing and presenting historical materials. There is no way to talk about the history of this country and of Louisville without discussing enslavement, Jim Crow, and the multitude of ways these and related forms of violence endure in shaping our present.
- It would help if we felt supported at the university. That we know that leadership has got our backs, DEI offices in particular. There may have been a statement – I’m not sure – but it would be helpful that your work is not in vain and if there is an attack, that your university is going to fight back. We’re trying to create an inclusive climate for our students, but if we’re changing our titles and worried about losing our jobs how can we focus on unity?
- Managing hysteria around the room – let fear influence how we react and make decisions. I feel like I’m putting out fires that shouldn’t be there in the first place, especially by the response to news headlines.
- Even just changing the names can make finding resources more difficult for students.
- The sense of belonging is a huge factor for diverse populations at any institution. Students and employees look for faculty and staff who look like them, community for them, resources for them – it creates safe spaces. It’s important to continue to keep those lines open for the offices that support this effort so our students, faculty and staff can be retained.

UofL’s Best Options Moving Forward

- It could impact the LLC (Living and learning Communities) and the TC (Themed Communities) for students. The LLC community specifically is the first experience for college students. How can we target and support students with diverse backgrounds?
- Find an affinity group to find something. How would you get a student to want to go here if they wanted a diverse learning environment? Will that also be impacted if RSOs catered to certain groups of students? Do we have to change language or terms? People are looking for those terms, it creates a problem if they can't find it. People are looking for those so, what can we keep so that people still know it's a welcoming environment for students, faculty, etc.
- We certainly need to pay people more to recruit and retain.
- Having key faculty members across the community that could support a simple request like encouraging people of color to apply would get institutional support.
- My vision has been focused on Black and queer faculty (whom I knew), who were brilliant but leaving in large part because they were underappreciated and overburdened, often with advising and service. In my experience the issue has been retention.
- I'll see info from the provost etc., as an almost immediate blowing out of the candle when something happens in the community. We'll get this beautiful email, but as an employee, what are the thoughts on how this fits into strategy now? Is this really important to the university?
- It would be great to see an action plan for this that includes some of the president's decision making and thoughts to know that it's with those people higher up. That's how it goes in any university, top down. The strategic plan is one thing, but we don't have anyone from their office here today.
- I think a good start would be clarity around DEI terminology, resources, positions, ERGs and RSOs which will impact website terminology which then also affects recruitment. Students, staff, and potential faculty are going to look at the website when they are researching, so what can we keep and highlight inclusivity – what things can we tie into our communities on our website? Louisville is the most diverse city in Kentucky.

How can UofL best support its community in the face of this issue?

- We had a black faculty member who was here that was brilliant, internationally known, doing impactful community work. If I said his name, you would know. He was made promises that the university did not keep. What happened? He left.
- Do what you say you're going to do. Keep your word at it.
- We had a person who just left here who just made serious growth around mental health. Even before covid, they had made large in-roads for community health. And someone else approached them and the university did nothing to retain these people.
- We're always talking about making the community better... but where is the support? This is not a part of our regular workday. We're talking nights, weekends, whatever.
- When we talk about salaries, administrative support, etc. The university needs to step up. They need to keep their promises. All these endowed chairs that were BIPOC – and they're all gone? Where did they go? There is a long history of this. You want to tell your friends it's a great place to work, but is it really? Your support group is leaving around you. At what point does belonging too, make a difference professionally and personally.

- I've known some great colleagues who were almost exploited because they were so knowledgeable and great advocates, but it didn't seem like a shared effort with the particular agency. It can be exhausting without extra support.
- We also have a lot of programs that serve the community (human services preprofessional programs, faculty studies and community projects etc. How can we use those as leverage for diversity to attract students and community efforts to keep those partnerships
- The inclusive excellence website highlights all things in this community especially as we recruit diverse populations. I hope those things will also be spread out on all our pages -- folks should be able to start with the main page and feel that sense of belonging and support.

Relevant Resources

[Supreme Court Ruling: Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. vs. President and fellows of Harvard College](#)

Argued October 31, 2022—Decided June 29, 2023
supremecourt.gov

[What the Supreme Court rejection of affirmative action means](#)

Inside Higher Ed
June 29, 2023

[FACT SHEET: President Biden Announces Actions to Promote Educational Opportunity and Diversity in Colleges and Universities](#)

White House Briefing Room
June 29, 2023

[DEI Legislation Tracker](#)

Chronicle of Higher Education
July 14, 2023