

LAUC-B Committee on Diversity Charge Task Force Report

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INTRODUCTION

The LAUC-B Committee on Diversity Charge Task Force (“Task Force”) was asked to review the charge of LAUC-B’s Committee on Diversity, as well as review the Committee’s web page, for possible revision. Specifically, we were charged on May 28, 2014 to “review the charge to the LAUC-B Diversity Committee and recommend revisions that

- provide guidance on specific activities the committee should undertake
- include liaising with campus programs regarding diversity, equity and inclusion
- incorporate ideas and suggestions for collaborating with Library Human Resources to recruit and mentor a library intern for diversity, equity and inclusion

The Task Force will also review the Diversity Committee web page and suggest changes in line with changes to the charge.” Task Force convener Sholinbeck emailed several LAUC-B members seeking others to join in this endeavor; this offer was accepted by Jane Rosario and Corliss Lee. The Task Force thanks the LAUC-B Executive Committee for this opportunity.

The current charge of the LAUC-B Committee on Diversity reads as follows:

“The LAUC-B Committee on Diversity serves as an advisory body to LAUC-B on issues related to diversity, including but not limited to collections, public service, staff training and development, recruitment and retention, and Library-wide policy issues. Diversity is defined broadly to include such matters as those related to gender, ethnicity, race, class, physical and mental disability, age, and sexual orientation.”

As noted by Lynn Jones in her email with the Task Force charge, “The current charge assigns the committee an advisory function only. While the current charge is admirably open-ended it can leave the committee members without sufficient guidance regarding specific goals to achieve during their term. Executive committee would like a charge that affords freedom for the committee to exercise its judgment, while not leaving them without any framework for action.” The current Committee on Diversity web page features links to some statistics on library diversity, a calendar of “Observances Designated by Congress or by Presidential Proclamation,” and (dead) links to some (now defunct) programs, the LAUC-B bSpace site (which appears to no longer exist), and some reports and document, all over 8 years old. Recommendations for revising this web page include:

- Deleting the calendar of observances;
- Updating if possible the statistics listed;
- Updating links to LAUC and other relevant reports and documents;
- Updating links to LAUC-B programs, such as the Staff Mentorship Program;
- Update or remove all dead or inappropriate links.

The Task Force met and discussed several ideas relating to what might be the important steps for the LAUC-B Committee on Diversity to take toward the future. Independently and together, we consulted several resources: our colleagues, including the current members of the Committee on Diversity; some campus groups, such as the Division of Equity and Inclusion (<http://diversity.berkeley.edu/vcei>) and the Coalition for Education & Outreach (<http://scienceatcal.berkeley.edu/coalition-for-education-and-outreach/>); and various articles, reports, documents, and websites. (See Appendix 1 for a list). We also attempted to examine the LAUC Diversity Committee websites of all the other UC campuses. Very few of these offer anything of substance or any indication of current activities. We quickly realized that the world of diversity initiatives was vast; this required an effort to limit the Task Force’s suggestions (and hence, a suggested new charge) to a limited number of key activities, actions, and tasks.

Based on our research and discussions, two key areas of focus became evident:

- Recruitment and retention of a diverse workforce of librarians* at UC Berkeley
- Appropriate service to our diverse student body.

In order to make the Committee on Diversity's work both relevant and manageable, the Task Force needed to come up with a reasonable set of tasks and activities to propose.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COMMITTEE ON DIVERSITY ACTIVITIES

1. Librarian and staff mentorship program

Much of the literature on diversity initiatives, whether focusing on libraries or other entities, highlights the availability of mentoring as one of the most significant strategies in recruitment and retention efforts. Thus the Task Force's foremost recommendation is to resume the staff mentoring program, which was dropped a couple of years ago. (Note that mentoring of new librarians by experienced librarians is a program already in force, and managed by LAUC-B Executive Committee). While the staff mentoring program was in force, participants valued the experience, with many stating they would do it again and/or recommend it to their colleagues.

We recommend a twice-yearly (at least) outreach to match librarians and staff. Further, we recommend that a mentoring program that would match librarians with library student employees be investigated as a possible future program. There is literature that supports the notion that a more diverse professional workforce can start with library student employees being urged to consider pursuing an MLIS degree (Kandiuk, 2014).

2. Outreach to campus advisors

We further suggest that the Committee on Diversity investigate contacting campus advisors. We suspect that few students are provided with information on becoming a library professional in their discussions with advisors. Because there are so many advisors at UC Berkeley, perhaps concentrating or starting with outreach to select departments would be the best way to start.

* By "librarians" we mean library professionals (librarians, archivists, and others with an MLIS or equivalent) who are LAUC-B members/eligible. The Task Force refers readers to the definition of "diversity" on the UC Regents website, <http://regents.universityofcalifornia.edu/governance/policies/4400.html>.

Based on a conversation with an administrator at San José State University's School of Library & Information Science, History and English are likely good candidate departments for this. The Career Center would be another good candidate for such outreach. The Committee could also make suggestions for changes and additions to the Career Center web site, including the section for graduate students.

3. Peer information counselors

Several US academic libraries use Peer Information Counselors (PICs): students who are specially trained to be first contacts at the library by those seeking research and reference assistance. PICs may be based in the library or elsewhere (e.g., residence halls). Students often feel more comfortable seeking assistance from their peers – especially peers who look like them – than from librarians they've never met (Bodemer, 2014). Although implementing the use of PICs at UC Berkeley would not be a decision that LAUC-B would make, the Task Force recommends that the Committee on Diversity consider investigating whether PICs would be something to recommend to Admin (or other appropriate body).

4. Librarian recruitment

The Task Force suggests that the Committee on Diversity examine some of the infrastructure surrounding recruitment of librarians at UC Berkeley. These include:

- The language of position announcements;
- Where open positions are advertised (including library or other academic diversity email lists);
- Interview questions;
- Search committee composition;
- Presentation topics;

and any other aspects of the recruitment and hiring process for any explicit or implicit biases. This includes conducting exit interviews when librarians leave UC Berkeley employment. These interviews should be standardized to facilitate data collection.

5. Outreach to other diversity entities on campus

The Task Force also feels that the Library and its professional staff would benefit from more outreach to and interaction with the myriad diversity entities on campus. This would include continued (perhaps increased) outreach to groups that work directly with students (e.g., those listed at http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/Help/lia_supprt.html), as well as participation in staff groups, such as those listed on the Equity & Inclusion website (<http://diversity.berkeley.edu/campus-programs-and-services>). Several librarians already participate in these groups' activities. We propose creating and keeping up to date (perhaps with a biannual email) a list of these groups on the LAUC-B Committee on Diversity web page, indicating who among us is participating with/outreaching to them. As a way to further participation with these entities, we propose sending announcements of their events and activities that are of possible relevance to LAUC-B members and other library staff to the allusers list. Periodic events produced by the Committee on Diversity could also serve to increase knowledge and interest in what these groups do and how they serve the needs of diverse students.

6. Examine library policies and practices

Another route to increase the sensitivity of the Library to the needs of our patrons is to critically examine our policies, procedures, and practices for any explicit or implicit exclusionary language. Policies are noted on the Library website, and changes and additions occur relatively infrequently. Perusing these annually or as updates are added could suffice. What we call "practices" however, which refer to the way we work and interact with our patrons, are often not written or recorded, and vary across units and individuals. Perhaps an event with an expert speaker from outside the Library could help us reflect on our practices and how they affect our interactions with patrons. The way we present ourselves, and the assumptions and language we

use, affect the trust level that forms during these interactions. Trust is a key concern of students and it influences their likelihood to continue interaction with librarian (Green, 2012).

7. Interview students

Members of the current Committee on Diversity suggested interviewing students from various groups (International House, student library employees, etc.) to help ascertain the Library's "climate" and the needs and challenges these students face when interfacing with the Library. Such an endeavor could be daunting, but could also be a more casual, low-key process. The Committee on Diversity could brainstorm this in order to come up with a plan of action. Because students are one of the Library's primary stakeholder groups, getting their input is critical. Perhaps teaming with the newly formed User Experience Expertise Group would be an option.

8. Evolving Workforce Residency program

The Library has plans to hire "a temporary librarian position that will be constructed around the concept of a Library Internship/ Library Residency Program." (This was formerly referred to as the "Library Diversity Fellow" but the concept – and the title – are evolving (S. Wong, LHRD, personal communication, July 8, 2014). Library Administration has approved this process. Although outside its purview, the Task Force hopes the LAUC-B Committee on Diversity can have some role – perhaps simply advisory or supportive – of this process, and for the individual, once hired. It is too soon to suggest specific ideas.

Also, The UC Berkeley Office of Equity & Inclusion will be assisting the Library in its E&I strategic planning process in the future. (All departments across campus go through this process). Although this process will ideally involve folks from across the Library, we hope the Committee on Diversity can provide support as appropriate – whether through co-sponsoring events, serving on advisory bodies, etc.

9. Increase annual Committee activity

Finally, the Task Force expects the Committee on Diversity's level of activity to increase in the near future. With this, it is expected that an annual report of activities, events, etc. be provided to the LAUC-B Executive Committee and LAUC-B membership at the biannual assemblies.

SUGGESTED NEW CHARGE

The LAUC-B Committee on Diversity provides leadership and guidance on issues relating to diversity and inclusion at the Library. The Committee focuses on cultural competence and library climate – for both our patrons and our staff – as well as on recruitment and retention of a diverse professional workforce. These are accomplished by:

- Organizing, administering, and evaluating the staff mentoring program;
- Facilitating cultural competence and an enhanced library climate;
- Producing and maintaining a list of campus diversity entities, and encouraging and keeping track of librarian outreach to these groups;
- Investigating outreach to campus advisors from select departments;
- Reviewing information relating to the recruitment and hiring of librarians at UC Berkeley;
- Periodically examining the Library's policies, procedures, and practices for inclusivity in language and intent;
- Continually revising/updating its web page

Each fall, the Committee will produce/revisit a planning timeline outlining how it will accomplish the recommendations in this report, and which recommendations will be addressed in the upcoming year; this document should be finalized before the LAUC-B Fall Assembly, in order to guide the Committees activities. The Committee on Diversity will produce a report biannually to be presented to LAUC-B membership at the LAUC-B Assemblies.

APPENDIX 1: SOURCES CONSULTED

The Task Force wishes to thank various individuals who provided ideas and insight to us during our brief tenure:

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