

May 26, 2022

Dear Scranton Community:

As we approach the end of the academic year, we want to communicate some exciting progress on creating a more inclusive campus for our students, faculty and staff. As we enter the summer break, diversity, equity and inclusion work will continue, with the goal of making our incoming class feel welcome and part of the community, and to work with our returning students, faculty and staff to continue to move this work forward.

Since February, the commitment of administrators, faculty, staff and student to diversity, equity and inclusion work was demonstrated by many programs, presentations, workshops, activities and communications that took place. Instead of creating a lost list, below is a list highlighting some important progress:

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategic Plan:

The Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan Team, under the leadership of Kathryn Yerkes, Assistant Provost for Planning and Institutional Effectiveness, and Elizabeth M. Garcia, Esq., Special Assistant to the President and Executive Director for the Office of Equity and Diversity, finalized the Plan and presented it to the President's Cabinet and the Board of Trustees in February with unanimous approval. With that approval, the Board of Trustees also unanimously voted to establish a fund, the Opening Doors Scholarship, to personally support students from Christo Rey and similar mission-driven schools, and fund to support the implementation of the Plan. The Opening Doors Scholarship enabled ten students to enroll at the University in the fall. Additionally, several individuals worked to create a website to house the Plan, which will include status updates in the near future, which can be found [here](#).

Council for Diversity and Inclusion

The Council for Diversity and Inclusion was asked to assist in advancing the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategic Plan. Over the summer, the Council will be working on the development of a statement of shared principles for diversity, equity and inclusion for all members of our University community. As part of planned review of University mission and institutional learning outcomes, consider how this commitment may be realized in these foundational statements, and review the number, charges, and status of campus committees engaged in diversity, equity and inclusion work, identifying potential synergies and connection points. Invite each committee to share an annual report on its activities to appropriate constituents and leadership. Additionally, it will continue to research and analyze ways to respond to incidents of bias.

Black Studies Concentration

The University continues to make strides in diversifying its faculty and staff; however, it still has a long way to go. Two of the recent hires that will start in the fall in History and Psychology and will join Dr. Nichole Hoskins and Dr. Alicia Hatcher in continuing to develop the Black Studies

Concentration. The initial work on course development has begun and the concentration will go through the curricular process in Fall 2022.

Institutional Black History Subcommittee

The Subcommittee gave a “Lunch and Learn” presentation on April 28 on its theme “Remembering Blackness at The University of Scranton: History as a Call to Action.” The presentation provided an update on the subcommittee’s efforts and overview of the University’s Black history as gathered so far; a reflection on the archive and Black studies; and student tutorial research on feedback from Black students past and present. The presentation can be viewed [here](#) and the project’s digital archive can be accessed [here](#).

Black History Month and Women’s Black History Month

The Cross-Cultural Centers sponsored robust Black History Month and Women’s Black History Month programming. Specifically, the Jane Kopas Women’s Center created three “Little Free Libraries,” each full of 15 books written by Black authors (predominantly women and trans/non-binary folks), and placed them around campus to raise awareness of these works, and created numerous social media posts highlighting Black women in STEM and Black queer folks in particular. The Multi-Cultural Center hosted dialogues about gerrymandering, table-sits about inventions by Black Americans, trivia nights, a film screening about John Lewis, and a dynamic keynote presentation by Dan Kimbrough, who spoke about systemic racism, its effects, and how to promote justice.

Women’s History Month

During Women’s History Month, the Jane Kopas Women’s Center was highlighted by a number of smaller awareness programs, a film screening, and two larger events: a collaborative roundtable event with the Women’s and Gender Studies program about the climate crisis and gender, and a faculty panel about the experiences of Women in STEM fields.

Sexual Assault Awareness Month

The Jane Kopas Women’s Center sponsored the 32nd annual Take Back the Night, which included our Clothesline Project display, an educational pre-rally with 23 sponsored tables, a march kicked off by Fr. Marina, and our speakout to educate, raise awareness of, and advocate for an end to all forms of sexual and interpersonal violence.

Other Cross-Cultural Centers Events

The Multicultural Center creatively collaborated with Advancement to co-host a Virtual Networking Event with students and alumni of color with 25 attendees, and also collaborated with Aramark and students to sponsor a “Multicultural Celebration” in the Fresh Food Company. This event featured five stations with food from Mexico, Dominican Republic, Palau, the Philippines, and Haiti, led by students and dining staff to showcase cultures represented on our campus.

The Multicultural Center, in collaboration with Campus Ministries’ Center for Service and Social Justice, offered the fourth annual “Social Justice Retreat.” Eighteen students attended, with four presentations and activities about refugees, their experiences, and advocacy.

The Multicultural Center and United Cultures Organization sponsored the 13th Annual Festival of Nations, which featured tables from 21 different countries. Country table participants shared their culture through food, informational poster boards, and interactive activities.

Faculty Development Subcommittee

The subcommittee continues to plan a day of faculty development on Friday, September 23, 2022. “Creating a Welcoming and Inclusive Classroom at the University of Scranton” will include speakers, workshops and trainings on a variety of topics, and will afford faculty the opportunity to select from eight sessions on different topics. A complete schedule will be shared in August, but we suggest that faculty mark their calendars now for this important event.

Sondra and Morey Myers Fellowship – Roosevelt Montás

On February 10th, the Sondra and Morey Myers Distinguished Visiting Fellowship featured Dr. Roosevelt Montás. Dr. Montás spent two days on campus that included a public lecture, faculty meetings and meetings with first generation students. Dr. Montás is Senior Lecturer in American Studies and English at Columbia University. He was Director of the Center for the Core Curriculum at Columbia College from 2008 to 2018.

Scranton’s Story, Our Nation’s Story

The NEH-funded Scranton’s Story, Our Nation’s Story project continued with its third theme around Indigenous History, including a [Hope Horn gallery exhibit](#) and two humanities talks that bring attention to the original inhabitants of Eastern PA and the broader nation. More information can be found [here](#) with additional events during Native American history month to come in November 2022. Fall project themes will include a focus on past immigration, during the coal-mining era, and more recent immigration, including from across Latin American nations as well as global refugees, highlighting the diversity of NEPA today.

Prison Education Initiative

The Prison Education Initiative was started to provide the University’s education to inmates in Northeastern Pennsylvania in 2020. This year the program will add a second cohort of 15 students who may be awarded an Associates of Art Degree in approximately two and a half to three years.

Certificate in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

The Kania School established the *Dean's Certificate in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion*, which is awarded to graduating seniors who have completed 12 credits of courses with significant DEI emphasis and who submit a 500-word summary of what they have learned about DEI at the University. The program emphasizes the importance of DEI to Kania School students, and seven students received this certificate this Spring.

Donning of the Stole

The Stole Ceremony started a couple of years ago with seven graduates. This year, the Multi-Cultural Center honored 71 graduates at this year’s Donning of the Stole Ceremony, which celebrates the personal and academic achievements of students of color.

Diversity, equity and inclusion work will continue through the summer as the University continues to implement the goals of the new Strategic Plan. Given the complexity of this work, it will take continued effort and determination by every member of the University community. Our commitment to making the University of Scranton a home to everyone that is a member of our community.

Sincerely,

Jeff Gingerich, Ph.D.
Provost & Sr. Vice President for Academic Affairs

Elizabeth M. Garcia, Esq.
Special Assistant to the President,
Executive Director for the Office of
Equity and Diversity, and Title IX Coordinator