

## **Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity at Elon: 2017 External Review Executive Summary**

This document is an executive summary of an external review of Elon’s diversity, inclusion, and equity efforts that was conducted in February 2017 by two external consultants: Dr. Sam Museus and Dr. Lucy LePeau, both of Indiana University Bloomington. The scope of the review and biographies of the reviewers can be found in the appendix at the end of this document.

This executive summary contains excerpts of the longer report and action steps planned by the Provost Inclusive Community Team.

### **Assets and Areas of Strength**

The reviewers noted that “Elon University has made significant progress in establishing and developing its diversity and inclusion initiatives across the institution. The community rallied around the ‘Elon Commitment,’ and senior leadership championed work aimed at meeting diversity and inclusion initiatives in this strategic plan. According to some campus community members, most of these efforts historically focused on increasing representation of diverse populations on campus and have more recently shifted to creating a more inclusive institutional environment. Generally, members of the campus community believe that the university approaches its diversity and inclusion efforts with intentionality and demonstrates a genuine commitment to these values.”

Key strengths identified by the reviewers include:

- When institutional leaders have become aware of a specific need on campus, they have created task forces with stakeholders across the University to address existing issues (e.g., the Presidential Task Force on Black Student, Faculty, Staff Experiences; The Task Force on Community Responsibility and Standards for Reporting, Preventing, and Responding to Sexual Assault; Presidential Task Force on a Strategic Plan for LGBTQIA Inclusion, etc.). Evidence supports that these task forces are effective for stimulating change on campus;
- At Elon, leaders maintain strong lines of communication across stakeholders at the university, which is facilitated by existing committees;
- Despite the relatively small endowment, institutional leaders make financial commitments and allocate space for diversity and inclusion initiatives on campus (e.g., CREDE, Disabilities Services, Gender and LGBTQIA Center). Such spaces appear to be critical to support ongoing diversity and inclusion efforts;
- Institutional leaders have strong positive relationships with each other and this rapport keeps institutional systems and structures working more effectively.
- Elon has cultivated a culture in which students feel like the university cares about them and is committed to diversity and inclusion.
- Elon has broadened the discussion of diversity and inclusion to include multiple Centers and stakeholders focused on various aspects of identity. For example,

the Truitt Center for Religious and Spiritual Life, is a space for people of different faiths to find community and engage in difficult conversations about pressing issues related to religion and spirituality. The Center for Access and Success provides programs that support students who face barriers to college access and success from early childhood through college and the Center's Odyssey Scholars Program provides critical support for students from historically marginalized socioeconomic backgrounds. The Global Education Center provides key support for international students and colleagues and houses study abroad and Study USA programs.

- The University has also established several employee resource groups including Black/African America, Hispanic/Latino, LGBTQIA, and caregivers. There are also groups for Black/African America, Hispanic/Latino, and LGBTQIA alumni.

### **Structural Approach**

The reviewers described what they perceived as a *coordinated approach* to diversity and inclusion, one where university-wide committees are established to address issues in the campus environment and stakeholder groups implement initiatives through their respective departments or offices. They suggested that we move away from an additive approach to an equity-oriented approach.

Structural recommendations were offered by the reviewers in five theme areas:

#### **1. Physical Space**

Allocation of space and funding for students and student organizations focusing on aspects of social identity, including space in the Moseley Center, SGA funding, and the Diversity Grant Program through the CREDE.

#### **2. Committee and Council Roles and Responsibilities**

Intersections of committee charges and departmental efforts with the broader university strategic plans for diversity, inclusion, and equity.

#### **3. Inclusion and Equity in the Curriculum**

Assessing student experiences with diversity and inclusion themes in courses where this is an intentional focus, such as COR 110, and ensuring that faculty reward structures support challenging students to develop their thinking about complex and difficult issues of oppression, privilege, and inequality.

#### **4. Racial and Gender Diversity**

Ensuring that values of diversity, inclusion, and equity are a central element of faculty and staff search processes, including searches for senior leaders.

#### **5. Structural Barriers to Staff Engagement**

Support staff who want to engage with diversity, inclusion, and equity initiatives and learning opportunities across the campus; work with supervisors on strategies to support supervisees with embedding diversity, inclusion, and equity into daily practices.

## **Cultural Challenges Requiring Future Attention**

The reviewers noted that “Elon has established diversity and global engagement as a core focus, and it appears that these values have become an embedded element of the culture of the university. Institutional leaders published how they define these values on the Inclusion, Diversity, and Global Engagement website. Yet, it is important to note that during the external review visit, stakeholders sometimes had a difficult time expressing shared understanding regarding how these values are defined or integrated into particular practices. This suggests more work to be done to make this clear and part of the fabric of the institution.”

Additional recommendations for future attention fell into six primary themes:

### **1. Racial and Sexuality Challenges in the Campus Climate**

Initiate a more thorough assessment of marginalized student, faculty, and staff experiences to generate a more holistic picture of their experiences on the campus and develop a clear, consistent, and effective plan to communicate how the campus is responding to behavior that has a negative impact on campus climate for marginalized populations.

### **2. Culture of Politeness and Perfection**

Acknowledge that having deeper conversations about diversity and equity—especially those that grapple with issues of privilege and oppression—requires people to be vulnerable and vocal, comfortable making mistakes, and comfortable taking risks; reinforce the notion that making minor mistakes and learning from them can lead to better outcomes for the entire community; continue expanding professional development offerings that focus on difficult dialogues.

### **3. A Busy Culture**

Respond to the perceived “busy” culture of the institution and challenge this presents for diversity and inclusion efforts by encouraging programs and offices to reflect on and outline priorities and determine which agenda items might be less important than strengthening diversity and equity agendas and more expendable.

### **4. Cultural Taxation**

Examine how faculty, staff, and students are being rewarded for their diversity and equity efforts, and develop a plan to ensure that such rewards are adequate for the extra burden that they carry, particularly for people of color.

### **5. Uncertainty in How to Enact Values**

Define “equity” in institutional documents and continue fostering institution-wide reflection and conversation about how values of diversity and equity can and should be integrated into the different roles of faculty and staff across the campus.

### **6. Relationship between Equity and Global Engagement**

Clarify how Elon’s global engagement efforts are linked to its diversity, inclusion, and equity initiatives and consider whether global engagement activities are sufficiently providing students with opportunities to connect issues within their own communities to these larger systemic issues.

### **Building Capacity through Professional Development**

The reviewers offered one additional observation, that “multiple staff members shared that they do not feel equipped to support students, particularly students with marginalized identities who may be experiencing bias in the campus environment. Elon should also consider offering professional development opportunities that allow faculty and staff to spend time thinking about how they can embed diversity, inclusion, and equity into their work and respective job responsibilities. Such opportunities can disrupt the idea of diversity work as an ‘add-on’ to existing priorities and facilitate consideration of how it can be prioritized and embedded throughout all aspects of faculty and staff work.”

### **Action Items Emerging from the External Review**

The Provost Inclusive Community Team reviewed and discussed the report of the external reviewers and affirmed the existing Diversity Action Plan as one strategy for addressing some of the concerns raised. Additional actions to be added to that plan include:

1. Build a university-wide understanding of core concepts of diversity, inclusion, and equity. Create more conversations around the various ways in which people enact this work based on their roles and disciplines as a way to create a more sophisticated understanding based on disciplinary and professional expertise across campus. Clarify how Elon’s global engagement efforts are linked to its diversity, inclusion, and equity initiatives.
2. Make clear our student, faculty, and staff opportunities for advancing intercultural competencies (based on the AAC&U value rubric as a model) and how they fit together in a system. Fill gaps where needed and promote options clearly to the community.
3. Ensure professional development options that allow faculty and staff to spend time thinking about how they can embed diversity, inclusion, and equity into their work and respective job responsibilities. This would include promoting things already happening (CATL, OLPD and ICD) and filling gaps as needed.
4. Reexamine current committee structures to ensure that each entity working on strategic plan goals related to diversity and inclusion is useful and relevant.
5. Implement the Diverse Learning Environments (DLE) survey and use disaggregated data in combination with other existing data collection to better understand campus climate as a whole and for marginalized and/or underrepresented communities.

6. Create educational opportunities around our hiring protocols and ensure that we are using them consistently across faculty and staff positions. Require that values of diversity, inclusion, and equity are a central element of all administrative search processes.
7. Create a clear message in the faculty promotion and tenure process as part of the charge to the committee about how faculty are supported when challenging students to develop their thinking about complex and difficult issues and will take into consideration the ways in which context affects perceptions of teaching. CATL, deans, and chairs will also work with faculty in writing Unit I and III that put their teaching evaluations in context and also to provide other methods of demonstrating high quality teaching beyond the student perceptions of teaching. Training on bias will be offered to deans, chairs, senior staff and Promotion and Tenure committee members.
8. Implement relevant training for supervisors to lead annual conversations about how faculty and staff can take advantage of professional development and embed diversity, inclusion, and equity into their day-to-day practices.
9. Initiate conversations among the COR 110 faculty about ways in which that course can provide a consistent first-year foundation for students to understand themselves and others as well as key issues of societal marginalization and inequities. Assess effectiveness of any implemented ideas.
10. Continue to refine plans to communicate how the administrative respond to bias incidents; engage students, faculty, and staff in considering strategies for individual or community responses when the campus culture is negatively affected.
11. Conduct an audit of cultural/identity spaces and create a master plan to address inequities.

**Appendix**  
**External Review**  
**Inclusive Community at Elon**

**Primary Goal**

Review conducted by external experts to examine our institutional approach, structure, communication, and practices related to diversity, equity, and inclusion, offering analysis of our current work and providing recommendations for the future

**Framing Questions**

- Do we have the right structure and approach? Are the components working together as a system? How are they perceived by members of the Elon campus community?
- Are there things we should stop doing? How can we ensure sustainability with our efforts?
- Are there things we aren't paying enough attention to that we should? What should we be anticipating on the horizon that we are not currently?
- With fresh eyes, what appear to be our assets and areas of strength?
- Also with fresh eyes, what are the greatest weaknesses or opportunities we are missing?

**Document Review**

Prior to the campus visit, review materials and data related to our diversity, equity, and inclusion work including website and communication materials, planning and progress reports, and outcome/climate data. Documents to review include:

- Elon Commitment Strategic Plan
- Diversity and Inclusion Plan – past and current draft
- Institutional priorities for Theme One from the past 4-5 years
- Annual inclusive community progress reports
- Task force reports and progress updates:
  - Black Communities
  - LGBTQIA
  - Title IX
  - Multifaith Strategic Plan
  - Social Climate Task Force Survey Executive Summaries
- MSL belonging data
- Race report snapshot
- Main landing page website and related pages.

**Stakeholder Meetings**

Two-day campus visit to review systems and communication across diversity and inclusion efforts.

- Provost Inclusive Community Team (PICT)

- Steven House, Executive Vice President and Provost
- Leo Lambert, President
- Senior Staff
- Inclusive Community Council
- Convening Offices for Diversity Education
- Consortium for Diversity and Inclusion Content Experts (CDICE)
- Student Inclusive Community Council
- Academic Council
- Staff Advisory Council
- Student Government Association
- Academic Affairs Advisory Council
- Student Life Vice President's Council
- Admissions staff
- Human Resources staff and Office of Leadership and Professional Development
- Alumni Relations and Advancement staff
- Center for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning
- Athletics diversity committee

### **Reviewer Biographies**

**Lucy A. LePeau** is an Assistant Professor of Higher Education and Student Affairs at Indiana University Bloomington. Her research, teaching, and service activities have focused on academic affairs and student affairs partnerships promoting diversity and social justice initiatives on campus, organizational change, and improved student affairs practice. She joined the faculty at IU after completing her Ph.D. in College Student Personnel at the University of Maryland College Park (UMCP). She was a recipient of the Emerging Scholar and Annuity Coeptis awards from ACPA College Student Educators International in 2015 and the Melvane D. Hardee Dissertation of the Year from NASPA Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education in 2013. Prior to doctoral study Lucy served as an Assistant Dean of Students for New Student Programs at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. She has been a student affairs educator as a faculty member and practitioner in the field for over 10 years. She earned her B.A. in Psychology from Marquette University and her M.S. in Higher Education and Student Affairs from Indiana University.

**Samuel D. Museus** is Associate Professor of Higher Education and Student Affairs at Indiana University, Bloomington. He is also Founding Director of the [Culturally Engaging Campus Environments \(CECE\) Project](#). Prior to joining Indiana University, he taught Asian American Studies and Higher Education at the University of Massachusetts Boston and was a faculty member in Higher Education at the University of Hawaii at Manoa and the University of Denver. Museus has produced over 200 [publications and](#)

[presentations](#) focused on diversity and equity, campus environments, and college student outcomes. He has published in a wide range of journals, such as the *Harvard Educational Review*, *Journal of College Student Development*, *Journal of Higher Education*, *Research in Higher Education*, *Teachers College Record*, and *The Review of Higher Education*. He has produced 10 books, including *Creating Campus Cultures: Fostering Success Among Racially Diverse Student Populations*, *Asian American Students in Higher Education*, and *Racism and Racial Equity in Higher Education*. He is also creator of the Culturally Engaging Campus Environments (CECE) Model of College Success among diverse student populations. Museus has previously received several national awards in recognition of the impact of his scholarship, including the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE) Early Career Award in 2011 and the NASPA George D. Kuh Outstanding Contribution to Research and Literature Award in 2014, and he has been featured in various media outlets such as NPR, InsideHigherEd, and the Boston Globe. Museus is actively involved in several national associations, including the American Education Research Association, the Association for the Study of Higher Education, and NASPA Student Affairs Professionals. He serves on the editorial board of multiple journals, including the *Journal of College Student Development* and the *Journal of Higher Education*. He also consults with college campuses that seek to transform their institutions and cultivate more inclusive campus environments.