



April 23, 2021

**Re: SMU Social Justice and Equity Task Force**

**Purpose of the Task Force**

SMU is interested in launching a center or institute that focuses on social justice and equity issues. This entity will be multifaceted in that it will expand existing curriculum for students, enhance research and scholarship of faculty who already write about these issues, and bring programming or initiatives to campus regarding these issues that does not already exist. The center or institute will also work with local entities and the public regarding unmet needs in the area of social justice and equity.

**Objectives**

There are six (6) charges of our task force. We are charged to do the following:

1. Promote collaboration among professors, students, staff and the community to envision what social equity looks like on our campus, in Dallas and beyond, and to articulate SMU's role in shaping that vision.
2. Review SMU's existing social justice and equity initiatives to identify potential synergies.
3. Develop multiple strategic frameworks for SMU's social equity offerings, discuss strengths and challenges for each option and provide a recommendation on the most impactful approach.
4. Identify near term sources of funding and provide a prospectus on opportunities for longer term external funding at the regional, state and national level for supporting possible initiatives, such as a center or institute.
5. Explore and identify intersections between local entities and the University that would provide public service and educational opportunities for our students.
6. Generate a projected five-year programmatic calendar.

We will begin with the first three charges and also work to complete the first-year deliverables listed below.

**Initial Focus**

The initial focus for our team will be to review other University social justice and equity centers and institutes, as well as review what SMU already offers in this space. We will collaborate and brainstorm about the types of issues that we would like to address, as well as explore various strategic approaches our campus body can take to address the selected issues. Committees will be created based on interest and synergies among task force members. The work of these committees (led by chairs) will be determined by the issues we choose to explore and the strategic approaches or plans under consideration. We will eventually prioritize the issues and determine the most feasible strategic approach for SMU.

The estimated time commitment for task force members is 3-6 hours per month, perhaps more for committee chairs, depending on the committee. Students will be given the opportunity to

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conduct some of the research and information gathering so that we can utilize our time strategizing and communicating with stakeholders in the community and local organizations.

### **Timeline**

The timeline for our first-year deliverables is as follows:

- Create Strategic Plan with competitive analysis and targeted objectives (May-November 2021)
- Five-year budget funding plan (September 2021 – March 2022)
- Projected five-year programmatic calendar (October 2021 – March 2022)
- Four pilot courses/seminars/teach-ins for undergraduate and graduate students for implementation in spring 2022 and/or fall 2022 (September 2021 – March 2022)

### **Task Force on Social Justice and Equity Members**

#### **Professor Willie Baronet**

*Stan Richards Professor in Creative Advertising*  
Division of Advertising

#### **Professor Amber Bemak**

*Division of Film and Media Arts*  
Meadows School of the Arts

#### **Professor Eric Bing**

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#### **Moira Cary**

*Office of Academic Services/Registrar*  
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#### **Professor Mario De La Garza**

*Department of Dispute Resolution and Counseling*  
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#### **Steve Denson**

*Director of MBA Diversity Initiative and Adjunct Professor*  
Cox School of Business

#### **Wendelin Donahue, Ed.D.**

*Associate Director of Employer Relations*  
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#### **Ann Fielder**

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Principal and Major Gifts

#### **Renee Gibson**

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Residence Life and Student Housing

#### **Professor Joanna Grossman**

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#### **Professor Dayna Oscherwitz**

*Assistant Provost for General Education*  
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#### **Professor Kelyn Rola**

*Research Assistant Professor*  
Lyle School of Engineering

#### **Professor Abraham Smith**

*Professor of New Testament*  
Perkins School of Theology

#### **Professor Peng Tao**

*Department of Chemistry*  
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#### **Professor Jessica Dixon Weaver**

*Chair of Task Force*  
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#### **Johnitha Watkins Johnson**

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