

Trustees: Dorm names must stay

Wofford's Board of Trustees have told President Samhat that Recommendation #1 — changing names of dormitories honoring the college's first three presidents — is not acceptable. However, the other 29 proposals by the administration's Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI) Task Force were generally supported along with suggestions. The Trustees' complete report may be found on line at Wofford.edu/strategicvision.

Below is a summary of the Board's response:

Recommendation # 1: Adopt a naming system for current and future residence halls purposefully chosen to emphasize Wofford's common history and community.

Response: The Board rejects changing the names of dorms that honor the colleges first three presidents who, along with college founder the Rev. Benjamin Wofford, legally owned enslaved people.

— Recommendations #1, #4 and #5 should be combined by an ad hoc committee to examine in greater detail the college's history and the naming of additional buildings not supported by donor funds. The committee must develop a plan for Board approval.

Recommendation #2: Allocate and raise funds for new construction in the Greek Village to accommodate a yet-to-be-determined number of National Panhellenic Council (African-American and other minority) fraternities and sororities, and for support of their activities and functions. Address inequities in policies in the use of spaces.

Response: The college should audit fraternity and sorority policies and practices, and continue efforts to get National Panhellenic Council chapters on campus.

— Ask the college's diversity leaders to participate in on-going risk-management training with the college attorney.

— Campus Life and Student Development staff must be more transparent in how the Meadors Multicultural House is reserved for programs and events.

Recommendation #3: Construct new buildings and safe spaces for diverse student populations, and review policies that regulate usage.

Response: Continue to redevelop the Tony White Theater in the Mungo Student Center with expanded and flexible student meeting/activity spaces. The Burwell Building should also offer such space if need be.

— Develop an online room-reservation form to eliminate the perception of a gatekeeper for such spaces, and make the process more efficient. Improve the communication of relevant policies and practices.

— Post a copy of the lease that fraternities and sororities currently sign with the college so all students can be aware of standards for Greek Village houses.

Recommendation #4: Establish a Wofford History and Memory Committee tasked with the development and implementation of related projects.

Response: The Office of Marketing and Communications should consult with the Wofford's archivist and others about how to present college's history in context of the past as well as the present. The office should work with the archivist and student leaders to develop a self-guided history walking tour of the campus.

— Forming a walking tour advisory group, appointed by the president, for annual updates.

Recommendation #5: Create a position of campus historian or historian of the college.

Response: Draft a formal job description and assess budget implications, including the impact on the work of the current college archivist.

— Consider a campaign to raise funds to support the new job, possibly as an endowed chair.

Recommendation #6: Increase black, indigenous, people of color and other forms of diversity in faculty, staff and administration.

Response: Join a consortium for faculty diversity and consider transition of post-doctoral appointments into tenure-track appointments.

— The Provost should work with the new chief equity officer to develop a better strategy for having a more diverse faculty.

Recommendation 7: Restructure academic advising.

Response: Conduct a national search for a new dean of academic advising.

— Task the Provost with bringing together stakeholders to consider new advising practices, structures, policies and expectations for all students (including athletes).

Recommendation #8: Enhance general education and major curricula with increased course content related to race, ethnicity and legacies of colonialism.

Response: The Board supports the ongoing work of the faculty to review and refine the general education curriculum through its governance processes.

— The Provost and the faculty should form a committee to consider diversity, equity and inclusion implications in the Cultures & Peoples general education requirement.

Recommendation #9: Increase infrastructure support for the FYI (first-year-student instruction) program.

Response: Conduct an external review and assessment of current first-year transition courses.

— Enhance training for non-faculty freshman-year instructors.

Recommendation #10: Expand ongoing assessment and professional development for greater equity in the academic majors.

Response: An Arthur Vining Davis grant provides funds to determine each department's DFWI rates. (DFWI rate is the percentage of students in a course who get a D or F grade,

withdraw (“W”), or receive an incomplete (“I”). Each student, regardless of circumstances, should have access to support and services needed to be successful.

— Implement anti-bias training for all department chairs.

Recommendation #11: Revive and support the Wofford Gospel Choir.

Response: Campus Life and Student Development should continue to fund the Gospel Choir for the 2021-22 academic year.

— Ask the Provost work with the music faculty to organize the choir as part of the Department of Music. If a formal degree-granting program is created, it could issue academic credit for Gospel Choir participants.

Recommendation #12: Ensure financial needs are met for laptops and course supplies.

Response: Trustees, other supporters and the Office of Advancement are encouraged to raise funds to meet student needs through the One Wofford fund, Scudder Fund, Asmer Fund, McGehee Fund, Follet Bookstore Fund, Mungo World Experience Fund and several Interim travel funds.

— Consider establishing a more public fund to support students who have demonstrated need.
— Consider pop-up crowd-funding initiatives for pledges of immediate gifts to address a specific need.

Recommendation #13: Create equitable access to on-campus Interim courses.

Response: Raise funds to support all Interim experiences.

— Consider capping on-campus Interim fees.

Recommendation #14: Create structures to ensure best practices for intercultural engagement in study-away Interim courses. Once those structures are in place, create equitable access to one study-away (including study-abroad) Interim for all students.

Response: Continue to use major gifts to support specific intercultural courses, including more than a dozen that already meet criteria.

— Establish best-practice standards for intercultural learning that improve the Interim experience. Create an ad hoc committee with the goal of developing new standards and practices.

Recommendation #15: Encourage coaches, advisors and the Office of International Programs to collaborate so that student-athletes who desire to study abroad can do so.

Response: The Athletics Department should collaborate with the Office of International Programs to assist student-athletes in studying abroad when practical.

— Engage stakeholders in athletics, the Provost and international programs in exploring opportunities and avenues for more study abroad.

— Consider a special initiative for foreign travel for student-athletes. Time it with a three- to four-week window beginning the week after graduation.

— Review and redesign the on-going Level Up program for athletes.

Recommendation #16: Create more equitable pathways to internships.

Response: Secure more funding for high-impact internships.

— Develop an IBM Pitchbook with alumni support that can serve as a template for corporate partnerships.

— The Career Center should examine its operations to determine ways to support student access to opportunities.

— Fund summer housing on campus for students interning in the Upstate.

— The Career Center should reach out to black, indigenous and people of color alumni to build internship support and professional connections.

— Do a better job of marketing.

Recommendation #17: Create more equitable pathways to student development and pre-career opportunities.

Response: Continue to tell stories about career outcomes and successful graduates. These connections help identify potential alumni, business and community support.

— Consider how increased flow of resources for student experiences will impact student development and pre-career opportunities based on demonstrated need.

— Form a committee of stakeholders to examine pathways for student development opportunities.

Recommendation #18: Increase amount and consistency of community engagement in the curriculum.

Response: Formally recognize the importance of community engagement and encourage faculty to deepen efforts in this regard. The Provost is positioned to facilitate this discussion through faculty governance processes.

— New class deans in Campus Life and Student Development should explore partnerships with Academic Affairs and the Career Center to develop co-curricular experiences in the community.

Recommendation #19: Provide support to ensure public research and community-engaged research are practiced in ways that promote equity as well as uplift the Spartanburg community.

Response: Encourage faculty efforts for community-based research and develop policies for getting grants.

— Evaluate the Center for Community-Based Learning, its programming and networks of support for curricular development, etc.

— Host a college planning event for the community, possibly in conjunction with other Spartanburg colleges and universities.

Recommendation #20: Develop a strategic plan for diversity recruitment and enrollment for 2022-26.

Response: The offices of Admission and Financial Aid are working on a new strategic enrollment plan. The planning effort should reflect the significant impact of Jerry Richardson's recent gift, which provides scholarships for students with financial need.

— Consider offering selected students travel expenses and lodging this spring.

Recommendation #21: Plan, implement and assess first-year orientation annually with special attention to Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI) concerns.

Response: Conduct an external review of first-year orientation in collaboration with Campus Life and Student Development and academic advisors.

Recommendation #22: Increase staffing and support for accessibility services and revise relevant policies.

Response: Hire a consultant to conduct an Americans with Disabilities Act campus audit and create a long-range plan to prioritize action items.

— Investigate software support options for Accessibility Services staff.

Recommendation #23: Enhance the Campus Union's ability to represent all students.

Response: None.

Recommendation #24: Establish a Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion student fund.

Response: Review available campus funding to determine existing support for activities related to diversity and inclusion.

— Encourage the new chief equity officer to consider a plan to support diversity and inclusion.

— Consider ways that the Wofford Way Unity Fund could be leveraged to fuel student innovation in the area of justice, equity, diversity and inclusion.

Recommendation #25: Increase support for Wofford's counseling services.

Response: Educate students on expanded counseling services and options available to them.

— Ask the counseling staff to consider alternative approaches to managing caseloads: capping visits (versus unlimited visits), transitioning to area counseling services.

— Determine an appropriate level of counseling services for a college the size of Wofford, benchmarking similar colleges and universities.

Recommendation #26: Establish a student health-care-coverage option for uninsured students.

Response: None.

Recommendation #27: Provide additional resources for Title IX and Bias Incident reporting. Implement structures to allow for consistent, effective and clear processes for problematic

behavior not included in current policy guidelines. Require annual training of all employees in Wofford's Title IX and Bias Reporting policies and procedures.

Response: The new chief equity officer should assess the college's Title IX approach before making changes.

— Consider outsourcing some Title IX work, including investigations, which typically consume the most time.

Recommendation #28: Conduct an external review of the Office of Human Resources and all institutional policies and practices related to hiring and confidential personnel matters to ensure that emerging risks and issues of concern are identified and addressed.

Response: Consider a compensation study for non-faculty members.

— Review institutional policies with regard to bias.

— Develop a pool of funding for supervisor training and support.

Recommendation #29: Create three annual awards for Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI) work.

Response: Consider adding more diversity awards with monetary recognition to include faculty and staff.

Recommendation #30: Establish an advisory committee on Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI) issues on campus. Continue research and reporting from Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee data.

Response: For seven years the college has placed increasing emphasis on justice, equity, diversity and inclusion. This includes the President's Committee on Diversity, the addition of faculty and staff positions devoted to DEI work, and the creation of Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI) committee.

— The new chief equity officer and an advisory committee should assess operational and strategic needs.