



Office of the President

August 6, 2020

To: Members of Moving Forward Together Steering Committee

- Dr. Booker Ingram, (Chair of the Steering Committee)
 - Dr. Serge Afeli, (Assistant Professor Pharmacology & Director of I & E)
 - Dr. Justin Brent, (Professor of English)
 - Mr. Willie Cooper '81, (Board of Trustees)
 - Ms. Maya Evans '21, (Student, President of the Multicultural Student Union)
 - Rev. Racquel Gill, (Assistant Chaplain for Multicultural Community Engagement)
 - Dr. William Harris, (Assistant Professor of History)
 - Ms. Stephanie Keene, (Assoc. Director of Academic Success & Presby First+ Coordinator)
 - Mr. Tommy Lawson '71, (Vice-Chair, Board of Trustees)
 - Dr. Erin McAdams, (Associate Professor of Political Science)
 - Rev. Dr. Danny Murphy, (Board of Trustees)
 - Mrs. Dee Nichols, (Sr. Associate Athletic Director for Compliance and Sr. Women's Admin)
 - Mr. Reagan Osbon '21, (Student, President of the Student Government Association)
 - Rev. Rachel Parsons-Wells'02, (Director of Religious Life & Community Engagement)
 - Dr. Austin Shull '11, (Assistant Professor of Biology)
 - Mr. Steve Smith '84, (Board of Trustees)
 - Dr. Emily Taylor, (Associate Professor of English and World Literatures)
 - Ms. Kennedy Wright '23, (Student, Secretary & Treasurer of Multicultural Student Union)
 - **Ex Officio Member:** Mr. Drew Peterson, (Associate Dean of Students/Director of Residence Life)
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Cc: Board of Trustees

From: Bob Staton, President

Re: Update from BOT Meeting – Next Steps on Recommendations

I have shared your recommendations and reports with the Board of Trustees, and they gathered on Wednesday, August 5 for its summer meeting. I am sharing with you a resolution that they passed

unanimously at the meeting, and they wanted to be sure that I shared their thanks to each of you for the work you've done and the recommendations you've offered us to pursue.

As this group's work for the summer is concluded, I want to share with you what next steps will be as we evaluate and, where possible, implement your proposals. I'll focus on the initial 11 recommendations you have shared, and then address the other items as well.

First, I am attaching for your reference the statement of accountability and apology the Board of Trustees and I have endorsed yesterday. You will find it tracks very closely with what you shared with me last week. Both the Board and I agree wholeheartedly with you that a statement like what you have offered is appropriate, and together we are sending this later today to our students, alumni, faculty, and staff.

We also believe it is important that the campus be able to review the work you have done and the recommendations you have proposed. We will share all of the materials you have prepared at the following website: www.presby.edu/about/office-of-diversity-and-inclusion.

Next, between now and August 31 I expect we will focus on those recommendations that can be implemented quickly:

- I support adopting the definition of racism you've provided in your report;
- We will launch the annual training in diversity, inclusion, equity and anti-racism for all faculty, staff administrators and students; and
- Dr. Joy Smith will work to put together the Student Conduct Committee.

Third, between August 31 and December 31, we will pursue the following actions:

- The Student Conduct Committee you've recommended will begin to create policies and guidelines that reflect your priorities;
- We will examine policies on interviewing and identifying candidates for positions, though I will note that we need to make sure any policy changes are compatible with legal requirements or other regulations;
- We will explore what is involved with greater transparency on bias incident reports, but again we need to make sure that any policy changes are compatible with legal requirements or other regulations, especially in terms of maintaining required privacy for those involved;
- We will share your recommendations on curricular changes with the faculty.

I agree with you that there is a need for additional staff where achievable, including a full-time director of diversity and inclusion, support staff, and grant writing. Part of our challenges now, however, involve very limited financial resources, especially in a period with significant budget challenges stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic. While I endorse the concepts you have submitted, and will share them with the next President of PC, that individual will have to make some of these budget-related determinations, especially as we identify or commit longer-term financial resources.

On the other items you've shared: there are many good ideas here, and I will share them with the different faculty, staff, and leadership you've suggested. Where it is feasible and appropriate, we'll look to implement these proposals or to identify alternatives that achieve comparable goals.

There is a great deal of work ahead of us at PC in the next few months, and I will continue to communicate with the campus as we make progress on different projects. Once we have moved through the year, and the new President is on board, I would look to that individual to determine how best to develop a committee structure to evaluate progress.

Let me express again my gratitude for all you have done on this project, and I look forward to making many of your recommendations a reality in the next few months.