

## Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

September 4, 2020

Dear President Robbins,

The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) committee, established in 2020 by a vote of the general faculty, is a standing Senate committee charged with taking up and forwarding issues and action items to Faculty Senate that relate to diversity, equity, and/or inclusion. In addition, and more generally, it aims to provide a place for faculty, staff, and students to access information about the various components of DEI that support a healthy and inclusive University culture.

The DEI Committee believes that institutional accountability and transparency enables diversity, equity, and inclusiveness to thrive at our large public University. The health and well-being of the University and its constituents is our main focus, and we have aligned our Committee mission with the “Test, Treat, Trace” protocol that is being used by the University in its pandemic response. It is the DEI Committee’s mission to (1) gather and maintain the information that the University needs to “test” its commitment to DEI; “(2) treat” situations or events that cause harm to the University’s DEI mission and issue recommendations for the Faculty Senate to consider; and (3) “trace” the impact of various institutional innovations to foster DEI.

Given this charge and our mission, the committee has followed very closely all public discussions over the recently announced Ashford Acquisition. Whereas President Robbins and other senior leaders justified the acquisition on the grounds that it would facilitate the University's DEI Mission and goals, we find the Ashford Acquisition falls under our purview.

Three specific issues became apparent when listening to statements made by Senior Leadership Team about students, diversity, and equity. We believe these issues warrant further explanation by Senior Leadership Team and exploration by campus stakeholders, including but not limited to faculty serving on the recently established ad hoc Global Campus Senate Advisory Committee:

- First, the assertion by President Robbins and other members of the Senior Leadership Team that acquiring Ashford meaningfully contributes to The University of Arizona’s land-grant mission of increasing diversity and access to **underserved populations**, especially BIPOC and active military or veterans. Any effort that focus solely on issues of access and diversity without investing in programs that ensure the academic and

personal well-being of underserved populations is not likely to produce measurable impact for the communities.

- Second, whether and how the acquisition of Ashford may impact **student** recruitment and retention practices of the University of Arizona, especially with regard to BIPOC, active military or veterans, and international students. Major reallocation of resources would be needed to serve the additional students we are hoping to serve, in addition to ensuring that our local students continue to receive the support they need.
- Third, whether and how the acquisition may impact **faculty and staff** equity and retention practices, especially for BIPOC or LGBTQ persons. Are Ashford instructor salaries commensurate with those offered from University of Arizona? Will UA Global Campus instructors be compensated equitably and in line with UA salaries? Will there be a systematic effort to hire faculty and staff from different underrepresented groups to work in UA Global to support students?

We stand unconvinced of the projected benefit of the Ashford acquisition as it relates to any of the above-mentioned DEI concerns. We stand ready to collect the data and do the work in accordance with our mission to Test, Trace, and Treat our University's ability to match our actions with our messaging and bring us into alignment with the University's stated values of Inclusive Excellence.

We look forward to working with shared governance bodies to try to understand the true impact of Ashford DEI at their institution, and at ours.

Sincerely,

Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion  
Faculty Senate  
University of Arizona