

EQUITY ADVOCATES COUNCIL

Oklahoma State University College of Arts and Sciences

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Smita Mohanty, EAC Chair

A Note from the Chair

This is the inaugural newsletter of the Equity Advocates Council (EAC), a faculty and staff advocacy organization in College of Arts & Sciences (CAS). As the current Chair and a founding member of the EAC, I would like to share our organization’s history and our vision for the coming years.

Known originally as ADVANCE Team, the EAC was originally established in May 2017 under the tutelage of then-Dean Bret Danilowicz. Dean Danilowicz invited the West Virginia University’s ADVANCE team to campus on May 22 and 23 to train our fledgling equity advocacy group.

Our original OSU ADVANCE team had 17 members representing various departments on both the Stillwater and Tulsa campuses. I was selected by the Chemistry Department to be part of the OSU ADVANCE team. In 2018, The OSU ADVANCE Team was renamed Equity Advocates Council, a decision made jointly by Dean Danilowicz and OSU ADVANCE Team members. The OSU ADVANCE team created “Implicit Bias Training” materials especially for hiring and provided many trainings in various Departments of OSU during 2018 and 2019. In 2020, providing in-person training was hindered due to COVID.

Dr. Kim Loeffert (at the time, a faculty member in Music) was appointed as the CAS Faculty Fellow for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion for two years from 2019-2021. In August 2020, under the leadership of Dr. Loeffert, the EAC created a Charter and Bylaws Group including Drs. Eve Ringsmuth, Matt Lovern, Marianna Patrauchan, Leslie Currell, Susana Perea-Fox, Flera Rizatdinova, and Smita Mohanty. Throughout that fall, the group drafted and presented the EAC Bylaws to Associate Dean Rebecca Brienen for review and suggestions. After discussions during EAC meetings and reviews by the Dean's office as well as OSU legal, the College of Arts & Sciences Equity Advocates Charter became official on April 5, 2021.

As per the Charter, the EAC elected its officers for the academic year 2021-2022 in May 2021. Drs. Laura Talbott-Clark was elected as the Chair, Smita

Mohanty as Vice-Chair, Heather McLaughlin as secretary, and Emma Draves as Liaison to the College of Arts & Sciences. Dr. Craig Freeman was selected by the CAS Dean's office as the Senior Inclusion Officer. Under the leadership of Dr. Talbott-Clark, the Equity Advocates worked very hard on various issues including equity issues concerning OSU's COVID -19 policy, a recommendation for a faculty and staff Shared Leave Policy, and advocacy for representation of non-tenure-track faculty members in university shared governance, to name a few.

The current elected EAC leadership team members are Drs. Smita Mohanty, Chair; Joey Senat, Vice-Chair; Don Colley, Secretary; Rosemary Avance, Liaison to the College of Arts & Sciences Faculty Council; and Mario Borunda, the AD & SIO. Under the leadership of Dr. Mohanty, the current leadership team and the EAC have started new initiatives and have continued to work on moving many action items down the pipeline. For example, support for a Shared Leave Policy was passed in the EAC meeting in August 2022, moving to the Arts & Sciences Faculty Council which acted on it quickly passing it down the chain to the OSU Faculty Council.

Our current EAC fellows are working on a few new initiatives such as a recommendation to the CAS Dean to create a DEI unit in each department and efforts to enact "Implicit Bias Training" as a necessary first step for anyone involved with the hiring of a new personnel.

There is still much important work to be done relating to DEIR (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Respect) so every member of the OSU community feels at home and has what they need to thrive. That is my dream and that is our dream on the Equity Advocates Council!

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Smita Mohanty

Professor of Chemistry, Equity Advocates Council Chair

CURRENT PROJECTS & INITIATIVES

Our EAC committees are hard at work on the following current projects and initiatives:

- Exploring the possibility of EAs serving as a witness and notetaker in meetings related to discipline or sensitive matters with faculty and staff and their supervisors;
- Monitoring state legislation related to equity, academic freedom and education;

- Updating our implicit bias training modules and providing training to departments across CAS;
- Collaborating with other units on campus to build momentum for equity related initiatives; and
- Monitoring and reviewing OSU and CAS policies and procedures relevant to equity to offer recommendations for improvement.

EQUITY ADVOCATE SPOTLIGHT

Dr. Laura Talbott-Clark

Dr. Laura Talbott-Clark is an Associate Professor of Violin and Assistant Director for Equity, Inclusion, Student Engagement and Faculty Development in the Greenwood School of Music.

A violinist and violist equally dedicated to performing and teaching, she was awarded the Wise-Diggs-Berry Award for excellence in the performing arts and named the College of Arts and Sciences Outstanding Professor by the OSU Student Council.



Dr. Talbott-Clark served as Chair of the Equity Advocates from 2021 to 2022, leading the group through a historic time as the university confronted the COVID-19 pandemic. She was a stalwart advocate for faculty, staff and students and worked tirelessly to bring their equity-related concerns to the attention of the broader OSU community.

She continues to serve as an Equity Advocate and strong campus presence in support of inclusive excellence at Oklahoma State.

EQUITY MINUTE

Five Tips for Recruiting & Retaining Diverse Graduate Students

Adapted from the National Institute of Health's "Raising a Resilient Scientist" series

1. Ensure multiple faculty members evaluate graduate student candidates to gain multiple perspectives.
2. Recruit graduate students for their potential (not just group memberships).

3. Establish trust by investing in and getting to know your students as people. This can look like ensuring you know how to say their name correctly, finding out (and using) their preferred pronouns, and checking in on them regularly.
4. Help your students develop a “Growth Mindset” early on by reframing mistakes as learning opportunities and emphasizing their effort.
5. Model healthy stress management behaviors and overcoming setbacks.

Who are the Equity Advocates?

The Equity Advocates Charter and Bylaws allow for each department within the College of Arts & Sciences to nominate two members to serve three-year terms on the Equity Advocate Council. Members may be faculty or staff at any rank. Our current EAC Fellows are, by department:

- * **Chemistry:** Smita Mohanty
- * **Communication Sciences & Disorders:** Trevor Courouleau
- * **Computer Science:** Christopher Crick
- English:** Ariel Ross & Daniel Morse
- * **Geography:** Don Colley
- Geology:** Ahmad Ismail & Priyank Jaiswal
- * **History:** Sarah Griswold
- Integrative Biology:** Jennifer Grindstaff & Will Wiggins
- Languages and Literatures:** Isabel Alvarez-Sancho & Kimberly Hale
- Media & Strategic Communications:** Rosemary Avance & Joey Senat
- Microbiology & Molecular Genetics:** Wouter Hoff & Marianna Patrauchan
- * **Military Science:** Dennis Slaton
- Music:** Marsha Chapman & Laura Talbott-Clark
- Philosophy:** Hannah Harvey & Heather Stewart
- * **Physics:** Aihua Xie, Thomas Bilitewski
- * **Plant Biology, Ecology & Evolution:** Béné Bachelot
- * **Political Science:** Kristin Olofsson
- Psychology:** Amanda Baraldi & Juliana French
- Sociology:** Laken Pruitt & Corinne Schwartz
- * **Theatre:** Devon Hunt

**Departments marked with an asterisk are eligible for one more Equity Advocate Fellow.*

Call for Equity Advocates:

The following departments do not currently have a representative serving on the Council. We would love to have all departments represented so that we can diligently address issues that affect every corner of the College. For information on how to get involved, please email Smita Mohanty at smita.mohanty@okstate.edu.

Department of Aerospace Studies

Department of Art, Graphic Design and Art History

Department of Mathematics

Department of Statistics

Get Involved

Is there an equity-related issue in the College of Arts and Sciences that you'd like to discuss or address? Do you represent a club or organization whose work aligns with ours and want to collaborate or present at a meeting? Contact any Equity Advocate or email Smita Mohanty at smita.mohanty@okstate.edu.

This newsletter was written and edited by Smita Mohanty, Rosemary Avance, Juliana French and Amanda Baraldi. Let us know if you have equity news to share in future issues!