



Office of Equity and Inclusion Newsletter

April 3, 2023



A Message from Dr. Keith Johnson, Vice President for Equity and Inclusion

**“Perpetually in Motion toward
Equity and Inclusion”**

Dear Friends,

Lily Zheng, author of *DEI Deconstructed* once stated “Companies (including universities) need to engage all stakeholders in DEI efforts. Plan for it to take a while to sustain the cadence of DEI work. If it matters to your business [or university] then give DEI the funding it requires.”

I took the liberty to include universities in Zheng’s statement. Diversity Equity and Inclusion efforts should be perceived as long-term investments, rather than expecting an immediate turn-around.

~ continued on page 2 ~



Civility is the recognition that all people
have dignity that's inherent to their person,
no matter their religion, race, gender,
sexuality, or ability.

~ Ayo (f/k/a Opal) Tometi ~

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Shortly after the death of Mr. George Floyd, who lost his life at the hands of police officers who are sworn to serve and protect him, many organizations and universities sprinted to respond. They created diversity statements, required unconscious bias training, developed DEI strategic plans, set goals to diversify their leadership and employed diversity officers.

Unfortunately, many of those plans have not yielded positive results such as closing equity gaps, increasing persistence and retention, creating diverse employment opportunities, and achieving higher graduation rates. In addition, many of those efforts have been led by those who represent the diverse population with whom the organization or university is trying to address disparities. Essentially, charging already marginalized individuals with solving or fixing their own problem; as if it's in a vacuum.

Faculty and staff employed in education are experiencing fatigue from many DEI initiatives. Often, employees feel frustrated, exhausted and even skeptical that their DEI work will yield sustainable results. Historically, retention and graduation numbers for African American/Black male students, Hispanics male students and other underrepresented populations, have been troublingly low; While families and universities look to receive a return on their investments, including watching their students graduate.

Many people are unfortunately still in denial that inequities exist. They have no interest in supporting equity and inclusion efforts and, in some cases they even attempt to derail efforts that support DEI work.

Many who are deep into DEI work often feel unsupported by peers who are not convinced that their efforts are worthwhile, or worthy of the investment, while others may demonstrate no interest in supporting the work. In addition, there are some research studies that suggest DEI initiatives can actually backfire, making prejudiced and racist behavior more likely to raise its ugly head in the workplace.

I strongly believe people become disappointed with DEI work when, over time, businesses, industry or universities yield the same disappointing results. A part of the problem could be that the DEI work is not linked to measurable outcomes and there are no established metrics to assess the work being done.

Just like incentives given to employees who meet or exceed established performance goals, there should be consequences as a result of not achieving those same goals. In addition, some systematic structures and practices within businesses and universities have shown that some populations benefit as they matriculate, while at the same time disadvantaging others.

Moon Shot for Equity is a very intentional, deliberate attempt to close the equity gaps at ETSU. The partnership with EAB and our local community colleges will concentrate on strategies for

Continued ~ Message from Dr. Keith Johnson

equity and inclusion implementation based on best practices, policies, and technology. Collectively, we commit to following a comprehensive equity strategy proven to reduce and eliminate equity gaps. For our students, that means they reach their attainment goals faster, for less money, and they achieve better career outcomes.

One might ask, why do I think this initiative will be successful when many other institutions and universities across the country are still struggling with closing similar equity gaps that exist at ETSU? Well, ETSU is committed to a student-focused approach that removes barriers inherent in university culture and systems.

Therefore, as part of the process, ETSU will be evaluating and assessing both process and infrastructure in: admissions, financial aid, advising and overall campus navigation, climate, and engagement.

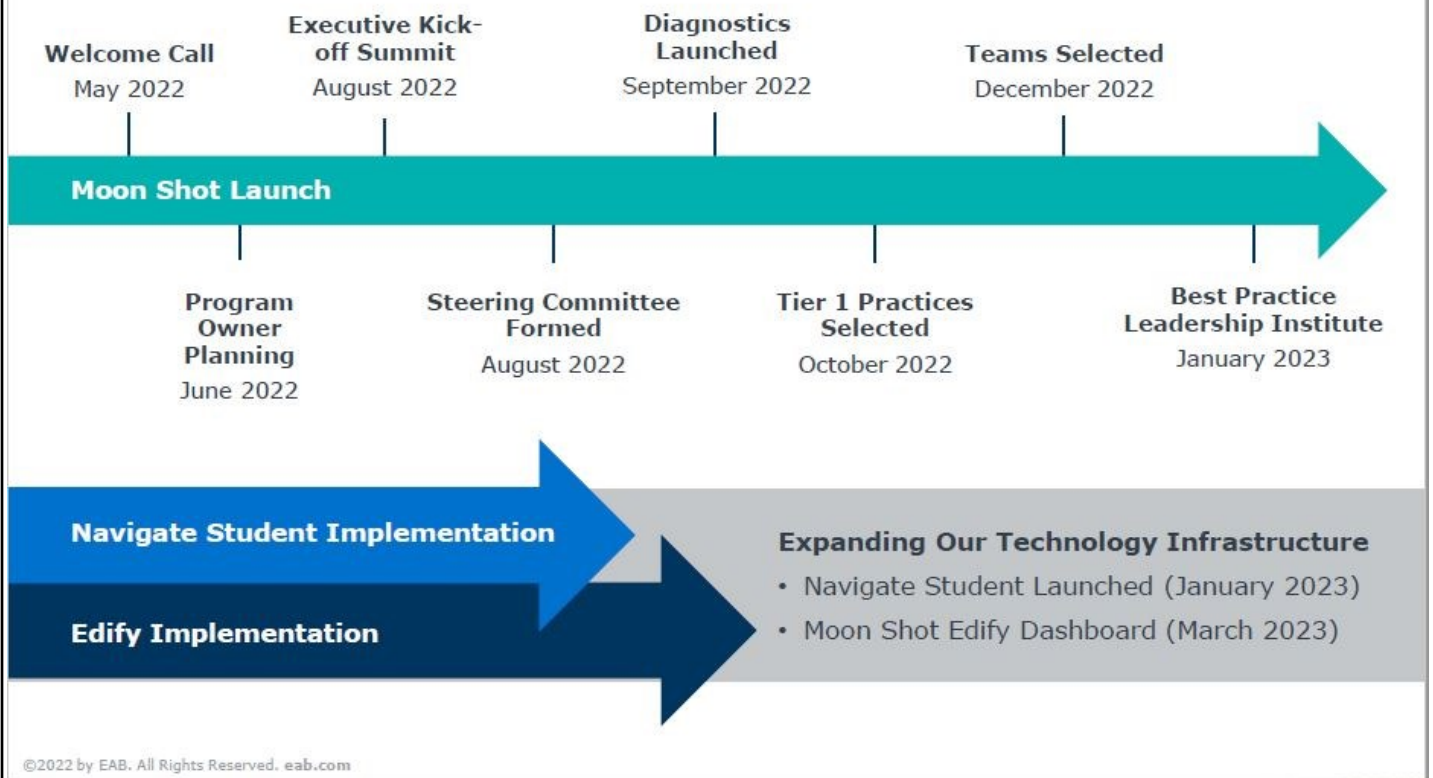
ETSU will also scrutinize college transitions, student support technology, change management, data reporting infrastructure and accountability and equity – mindedness. In addition, the approach is a university wide partnership where many faculty and staff members will be playing key roles in the initiative, not allowing the heavy lifting to be a burden for anyone.

ETSU is fully committed to DEI and closing the equity gaps as a priority for the university. We have outlined in the strategic vision and [plan](#) for the university. As we take deep dives into the fifteen best practices as part of Moon Shot, it is important that the university continues to press onward with transforming the campus into an environment that lives out the values of the university which include the following:

- PEOPLE come first, are treated with dignity and respect, and are encouraged to achieve their full potential;
- RELATIONSHIPS are built on honesty, integrity, and trust;
- DIVERSITY of people and thought is respected;
- EXCELLENCE is achieved through teamwork, leadership, creativity, and a strong work ethic;
- EFFICIENCY is achieved through wise use of human and financial resources; and
- COMMITMENT to intellectual achievement is embraced.

Sincerely,
Dr. Keith Johnson

Moon Shot For Equity Key Milestones to Date at ETSU



Memorial Fountain at Borchuck Plaza

During recording breaking cold temperatures this past winter, the Memorial Fountain in Borchuck Plaza experienced major damage to its structure. Rather than repair the fountain it was seen as a great opportunity to re-envision what a new fountain could look like.



Dr. Keith Johnson, Vice President for Equity and Inclusion assembled the following faculty, staff, students, and community members to be a part of the Memorial Fountain Redesign Committee:

Kevin Brooks, Co-chair
 Travis Graves, Co-chair
 Daryl Carter
 Ben Daugherty
 Pauline Douglas
 Cerrone Foster
 Keith Johnson
 Diamond Meadows
 George Nichols
 Nate Tadesse
 Raven Woods

Students of Color Symposium

The inaugural Students of Color Symposium held at ETSU February 27th was a time together to share and dialogue. Attendees from Belmont University, Northeast State Community College, Tennessee Technological University, University of Tennessee Chattanooga, University of Tennessee Knoxville, Walters State Community College, Wofford College and East Tennessee State University shared ideas, questions, and hopes for enhancing effective work with students of color.

Colleagues challenged each other – from institution to institution – to keep up, to continue to add more and more best practices that support students. They also discussed the all important part of planning for other opportunities to create alliances and support networks.



Annual Equity and Inclusion Conference

SAVE THE DATE!



"Beyond 'Checking a Box:' Building and Sustaining Campus-Wide Engagement for Belonging."

Thursday, September 28 – Friday, September 29: Conference Sessions
Saturday, September 30: Student-Only Sessions

Students, faculty, staff, and community members are invited to present during the concurrent sessions, special topics sessions, panel discussions, and civic cafes.

We welcome proposals that focus on practical strategies, skills, and tools needed to move beyond superficial diversity initiatives and explore how to create a truly inclusive and equitable campus environment that engages all members of the community. The conference will bring together academics, administrators, students, and advocates to engage in discussions and workshops.

Proposals are due by May 15, 2023. [Click here](#) for additional submission guidelines.

Registration will open later this spring.

Visit [Equity and Inclusion Conference](#) to learn more.

National Arab Heritage Month

During the month of April, the [Arab America Foundation](#) formally recognizes the achievements of Arab Americans through the celebration of National Arab American Heritage Month. Across the country, cultural institutions, school districts, municipalities, state legislatures, non-profit organizations, and public servants, engage in special events that celebrate their community's rich heritage and numerous contributions to society.

Arab American and Arab America Foundation launched the National Arab American Heritage Month initiative in 2017. The Arab American Foundation is a non-profit educational and cultural organization that promotes the Arab heritage in the U.S., educates Americans about the Arab heritage and identity, and connects and empowers Arab Americans.

Meet Walid Alali, Associate Professor



My name is Walid Alali (وليد علالي), an Associate Professor of Epidemiology at the Department of Biostatistics & Epidemiology, College of Public Health. I joined ETSU in September 2022. I am an Arab American originally from Jordan (الأردن). I moved to the U.S. in 2001 to pursue my postgraduate education. Since then, I have lived in several states (KS, TX, GA, and now TN) as well as in 3 different Arab countries (Qatar, UAE, and Kuwait).

As an Arab-American living in the U.S., I have learned that not many people know much about the diversity, culture, heritage, traditions and contributions of Arabs. The Arab World (consists of 22 countries in the Middle East and North Africa) is the birthplace of civilization and the birthplace of the three monotheistic religions. Some of the well-known characteristics of Arabs are the hospitality and generosity. When you are a guest at an Arabic home or visit an Arab country, you are treated like family and will experience the hospitality and generosity of the Arabic culture to the highest. Besides the generosity and hospitality which distinguishes the Arab culture, I am also proud of the contributions Arabs have made throughout history in many important fields, such as, mathematics, astronomy, and medicine. For instance, the English numbers we use today, were invented by an Arab Muslim mathematician, Al-Kindi in 801–873 A.D. In 895 A.D., an Arab Muslim woman, Fatima Al-Fihri, founded the world's first university, "The University of Al-Qarawiyyin" in Fez, Morocco which is still used today.

My native country, Jordan, is known for its rich history, beautiful landscapes, and delicious cuisine. There are many archaeological sites in Jordan such as Petra (an ancient city built during the 3rd century BC by the Arabs) and Jerash (an ancient Roman city). Jordan is a small country in the heart of the Arab World with a population of 10 million. It is considered one of the top destinations for many tourists. Deeply rooted in the tradition, the people of Jordan are very welcoming and hospitable.

We have a small-size Arab community here in the Tri-Cities, which dates back to the 1960s when the first Arab family moved to this beautiful area of Tennessee. As Arab-Americans we believe that we have a vital role in making significant contributions to the U.S. society to help our country become a better place to live for all. We welcome and encourage others to reach out to us and learn more about our culture and values, while sharing some Arabic coffee or tea time and enjoy a delicious Arabic dish. I believe that celebrating a National Arab American Heritage Month is a great way to recognize the achievements and help erase misconceptions about Arab Americans. Thank you ETSU!

~ Walid Alali

Hannah Smith - Graduate Assistant Disability Services

Hannah Smith, graduate assistant in Disability Services was recognized by the Tennessee Association Higher Education and Disability (TN AHEAD) at its annual conference with the Outstanding Student Award for 2023.

The Outstanding Student Award recognizes a currently enrolled student with a disability whose academic achievement, participation in student activities, and disability advocacy has created positive disability awareness and has helped dispel traditional myths regarding disability.

Here are some highlights from Hannah's nomination letter

Hannah is an absolute delight to be with. She is high-energy, outgoing and very involved on campus. Hannah's accomplishments put her in a class of her own – with or without a disability. As a person with a disability, however, her accomplishments are indicative of ability to the community at large and stand as an example to other students with disabilities. She holds a BA in Theatre with a Communicative Disorders minor. She is currently a first-year graduate student in the Speech Language Pathology program.

As an undergraduate student, Hannah was a Preview and Orientation Leader Organization (POLO) leader and President of the POLO organization. POLO leaders are a support system for incoming students and they share their excitement and pride of the university with new students and families each year. Hannah later became a Buccaneer Involvement Guide (BIG). BIGs are peer mentors that are embedded in the first-year experience courses. Both roles have seen Hannah leading new students and guiding them as they begin their university journey.

As Hannah was graduating with her undergraduate degree in May 2022 and applying for assistantship positions for graduate school,



she was recognized with one of the greatest academic honors given at ETSU; she was inducted into the 1911 Society. The 1911 Society recognizes the university's most notable graduates based on academic achievement; sustained service; honors, awards, recognitions, publications and presentations; demonstrated leadership; and work experience.

Hannah graduated with an overall GPA of 3.40. She has had her poetry published in the Mockingbird, ETSU's literary journal. She appeared in numerous plays throughout her program and was recognized for her acting. Hannah also presented at TEDx ETSU on the topic of positive representation of disability in the media.

Hannah is currently developing her thesis which will address swallowing ability in infants born to drug addicted mothers. She is working with key faculty and hospital staff to develop, not only a record of observed behaviors, but a guide for new mothers in caring for infants impacted in this manner. Hannah completed a clinical rotation at ETSU's Positive Eating Program and is currently in clinicals at Crumley House, Brain Injury Rehabilitation Center.

Hannah is a current member of the Psi Chapter of Delta Alpha Pi at ETSU, the honor society recognizing high achieving student with disabilities.

I cannot say enough about Hannah-she is breaking stereotypes of disability most often without that goal but simply as a result of her active, involved, high-achieving-self and in light of the narrow thinking that characterizes public perception of disability.

Hannah exemplifies a high achiever and saying she is an Outstanding Student is almost not enough!

Upcoming Events

April 2023				
Tuesday	April 4th	Lunch and Learn Universal Design for Learning in Higher Education Discussion Lead: Melody Blevins, Ed.D., Project Manager. Access ETSU	12:00-1:00pm	Via Zoom
Wednes.	April 12th	Unity Fest The Mary V. Jordan Multicultural Center and Black Affairs Association invites you to a day filled with fun, entertainment, interactive games, novelties, and giveaways.	10:00am-2:00pm	University Commons
Friday	April 14th	Lunch and Learn Social Work Speaker Series Focus on DEI Social Work and Indigenous Cultures Speaker: Debi Thibeault, DSW	12:00-1:00pm	Register Here
Wednes.	April 19th	Confronting Explicit Acts of Racism and Racial Violence on Campus Discussion Lead: Dr. Shaun Harper, Exe. Director USC Race and Equity Center	1:00-3:00pm	Via Zoom
May 2023				
Monday	May 22nd	Strategically Recruiting Employees of Color Discussion Lead: USC Race and Equity Center	1:00-3:00pm	Via Zoom
June 2023				
Thurs-day	June 29th	Supporting and Retaining Employees of Color Discussion Lead: USC Race and Equity Center	1:00-3:00pm	Via Zoom
July 2023				
Wednes.	July 26th	Accountability and Incentives for Advancing Racial Equity Discussion Lead: USC Race and Equity Center	1:00-3:00pm	Via Zoom
August 2023				
Thurs-day	August 24th	Fostering and Sustaining Inclusive Classrooms for Students of Color Discussion Lead: USC Race and Equity Center	1:00-3:00pm	Via Zoom

Missed the ["Divisive Concepts"](#) lunch and learn session held on March 28th, [click here](#) for the recording.

Other recordings can be found on the Office of Equity and Inclusion website under [learning/opportunities](#).

USC Race and
Equity Center

Confronting Explicit Acts of Racism and Racial Violence on Campus

*East Tennessee Higher Education
Regional Alliance*



**Wednesday, April 19
1pm-3pm EDT**

Shaun Harper is one of the nation's most highly respected racial equity experts. He is a Provost Professor in the USC Rossier School of Education and the USC Marshall School of Business. In 2022, he was appointed University Professor, a distinction bestowed only to 26 of 4,700 USC full-time faculty. Dr. Harper also is the Clifford and Betty Allen Chair in Urban Leadership; founder and executive director of the USC Race and Equity Center; and chair of the University Committee on Appointments, Promotion and Tenure. He served as the 2020-21 American Educational Research Association president and the 2016-17 Association for the Study of Higher Education president, and was inducted into the National Academy of Education in 2021.

Register at www.uscrec.info/ETHERA_4

The recording of this live session will be available on equityconnect.usc.edu.

eConvenings

East Tennessee Higher Education Regional Alliance

USC Race and Equity Center

This professional learning series is for full-time and part-time employees at Alliance member institutions. Each month, nationally renowned equity experts will offer a highly-engaging live session via Zoom on a different racial equity topic. Useful tools and practical strategies will be provided in every synchronous three-hour experience. Every campus can send up to 400 employees to each session – it could be the same 400 people, or a different set each month. While there is no cost, advance registration is required for each individual session.

Understanding and Addressing Implicit Bias

Thursday, January 26 | 1-3pm EST

Register at www.uscrec.info/ETHERA_1

Engaging in Productive Conversations About Race and Racism

Tuesday, February 28 | 1-3pm EST

Register at www.uscrec.info/ETHERA_2

Understanding the Effects of Racism on Students' Experiences and Outcomes

Thursday, March 30 | 1-3pm EST

Register at www.uscrec.info/ETHERA_3

Confronting Explicit Acts of Racism and Racial Violence on Campus

Wednesday, April 19 | 1-3pm EST

Register at www.uscrec.info/ETHERA_4

Strategically Recruiting Employees of Color

Monday, May 22 | 1-3pm EST

Register at www.uscrec.info/ETHERA_5

Supporting and Retaining Employees of Color

Thursday, June 29 | 1-3pm EST Register at

www.uscrec.info/ETHERA_6

Accountability and Incentives for Advancing Racial Equity

Wednesday, July 26 | 1-3pm EST

Register at www.uscrec.info/ETHERA_7

Fostering and Sustaining Inclusive Classrooms for Students of Color

Thursday, August 24 | 1-3pm EST

Register at www.uscrec.info/ETHERA_8

Meaningfully Integrating Racial Topics Across the Curriculum

Friday, September 29 | 1-3pm EST

Register at www.uscrec.info/ETHERA_9

Engaging Students of Color in High-Impact Educational Practices and Experiences

Tuesday, October 24 | 1-3pm EST

Register at www.uscrec.info/ETHERA_10

Using Disaggregated Data to Identify and Address Racial Inequities

Thursday, November 9 | 1-3pm EST

Register at www.uscrec.info/ETHERA_11

Strategic Planning and Action for Racial Equity

Tuesday, December 5 | 1-3pm EST

Register at www.uscrec.info/ETHERA_12

race.usc.edu

Direct all inquiries to
Dr. Minh Tran (mctran@usc.edu)

USC Race and
Equity Center

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**VIRTUAL COMMUNITIES
OF PRACTICE**



FIND RESOURCES

Learn more at
equityconnect.usc.edu

This portal is for employees of colleges and universities that are members of the USC Race and Equity Center's alliances, equity institutes, leadership academies, and other partnerships. It includes video recordings and assets from eConvenings, as well as other downloadable racial equity resources. This portal also allows persons with authenticated profiles to form and actively participate in virtual communities of practice. Posing questions of practice, offering advice to colleagues, sharing effective practices, and fostering new collaborations are all possible in the virtual communities.

Meet Diversity Champion, Dr. Hadii Mamudu



**Hadii M. Mamudu,
PhD, MPA
Full Professor,
College of Public
Health**

The beauty of a university campus is that it is the convergence of people of diverse backgrounds, regardless of any ascribed characteristics or attributes. As such, I feel the purpose of the ETSU Office of Equity

and Inclusion is to help ensure that these diverse groups of people feel that they are an integral part of the ETSU community and are not treated differently or discriminated against because of who they are. The ETSU Office of Equity and Inclusion should support efforts to make everyone feel welcomed on ETSU campuses regardless of any ascribed characteristics or who they are or their condition. An Advisory Council can play a critical role in this process by ensuring that the Office of Equity and Inclusion closely focuses on its purpose, facilitating access to resources to accomplish such goal, and serving as a laboratory for discussing and generating new ideas to foster diversity, equity, and inclusion at ETSU. As no university exists as an island, the Advisory Council can serve as a liaison between ETSU and the community and other constituencies on issues pertaining to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Building trusting relationships within a safe, objective environment is key to discussions about difficult topics. As a faculty with several advisees and mentees, I am a strong proponent of open one-on-one dialogue with my students. Typically, during my first meeting with any student, I assure them that our conversations are protected and will remain private. By encouraging open dialogue and guaranteeing students that whatever they share with me will be protected forever, they start to open up about some of these difficult topics. Additionally, conversations must be voluntary based on the desire of all participants regarding the best time and place to discuss these topics and should never feel forced or rehearsed.

As a faculty, a key way to enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion at ETSU is to create a classroom environment where all people feel welcomed. As such, I try to include diverse perspectives in my syllabi, including from guest lecturers, required readings, and supplementary materials. Thus, I will continue to be a strong advocate of inclusive classrooms. Additionally, I serve as the Chair of the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Civility (DEIC) Committee of the College of Public Health where we are currently implementing a 2021-2026 Strategic Plan to foster diversity, equity, and inclusion in the College. As chair of this committee, I serve as the college liaison to the ETSU Office of Equity and Inclusion, where we coordinate and share ideas to facilitate diversity, equity, and inclusion in ETSU.

~ Hadii Mamudu

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**We would like to
hear from you.**

If you have an announcement, event, accomplishment, etc. you would like to have published in the newsletter send them to Kim Maturo at maturo@etsu.edu.

To add a name to our mailing list, please email Kim Maturo at maturo@etsu.edu.