INTRODUCTION

As one of the most culturally and ethnically diverse campuses in Missouri, UMSL is committed to maintaining a climate where all students, faculty, staff, and visitors can explore their interests, refine their talents and flourish. The Inclusive Excellence Compact within our 2018-2023 Strategic Plan discusses actions to recruit and retain diverse students and employees, and promote activities that encourage civil and constructive discourse, reasoned thought and sustained dialogue in an environment of inclusion, respect, and appreciation. In order to execute those actions, we want to continue to engage our diverse student population, and we will do this by achieving the goal of establishing a campus cultural center. The framework for programming and support will be explored in 2018-19 and plans for the center will be implemented in 2019-20.

An exploratory committee was established with the goal of bringing the Cultural Center to fruition. The committee was formed in September of 2018 and held monthly meetings throughout the 2018-19 academic year. The committee drafted a name, vision, and mission for the Center. The committee members are as follows:

Co-Chairs:
Felia K. Davenport, Associate Professor, Communication and Media Department
Harry Hawkins, LGBTQ+ Coordinator, Office of LGBTQ+ Initiatives

Committee Members:
Alieu Sanneh, Graduate Teaching Assistant, Political Science Department
Dr. Anita Manion, Assistant Professor, Political Science Department
Diquan Jones, Undergraduate Student, Biology Department
Dr. Ashlee Roberts, Associate Director, Office of Student Involvement
Dr. Kim Song, Associate Professor, College of Education
Dr. Lynn Staley, Teaching Professor, English Department
Dr. Priscilla Dowden-White, Associate Professor, History Department
Jamiliah Boyd, Assistant Teaching Professor, College of Business Administration
Luimil Negron, Graduate Assistant for Latino Recruitment and Retention
Melanie Tucci, Sponsored International Student Recruiter and Advisor, UMSL Global
Maya Harris, Coordinator of Vocational Experiences, SUCCEED Program
Timothy Wombles, Strategic Communication Associate, Marketing and Communications

The committee developed subcommittees to explore opportunities for Assessments, Facilities and Staffing, and Programs and Events. The subcommittees were:

Assessments
Ashlee Roberts, Jamiliah Boyd, Anita Manion

Programs and Events
RECOMMENDATIONS

Proposed Name: University of Missouri-St. Louis Cultural Center
At this time the committee recommends naming it the University of Missouri-St. Louis Cultural Center. The naming of the Center opens up the possibility for a distinguished alumnus or donor to have the Center named after them in the future.

Vision: The UMSL Cultural Center facilitates conversations and programs around race, ethnicity, intersectional identities, systems of oppression, cultural empowerment, gender, and social justice. The Center dedicates itself to providing a supportive and welcoming communal space to advance diversity, socially conscious teaching and learning, research, community engagement, and creative approaches to problem-solving.

Mission: To centralize UMSL initiatives emphasizing social justice, academic freedom, and community connection; provide intentional support of and advocacy for underrepresented groups by celebrating identity through race and ethnicity, culture and language, gender, sexual orientation, and ability status.

CORE PARTNERS AND COMMUNITY

The Center will incorporate core partners from various campus units and student organizations. The Center will collaborate with and bolster the programs already existing in these units and student organizations. Community members represent constituencies on campus that the center will work to serve and celebrate. Community members will work with the center to help it fulfill its mission of providing a supportive and welcoming communal space in order to advance diversity, socially conscious teaching and learning, research, community engagement, and creative approaches to problem-solving. The Center has outlined Core Partners and Community members in the list below.

Core Partners

Able-Disable Partnership
Associated Black Collegians
Black Business Student Association
Chinese Students and Scholars Association
Gender Studies
Hispanic Latino Association
Japan-America Student Association
Jewish Student Association
KHAOS-UMSL K-Pop Dance Group
Lingua
Minority Student Nurses Association

Muslim Students Association
Multicultural Student Services
New Student Programs
Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
Office of LGBTQ+ initiatives
Office of Student Involvement
Pan-African Student Association
PRIZM Queer-Trans-Straight Alliance
Student Veteran’s Association
Vietnamese Student Association
Women Empowering Women
POTENTIAL PROGRAMS AND EVENTS

The Center will offer a variety of unique programs and events that support the overall mission and vision. The Center will also collaborate with appropriate Core Partners and Community members to ensure the successful implementation of the programs. This section of the report is divided into collaborative programs and events with those already existing in some form on our campus, and suggested programs and events for the Center to work on establishing.

Heritage and Community Celebration Months
The Center will provide support for and/or partner with the Office of Student Involvement on programming for specific heritage months (listed below) that the OSI currently supports. The Center will also offer specific programs and events.

- September: Hispanic Heritage Month
- October: LGBTQ+ History Month
- November: Native American Heritage Month
- February: Black History Month
- March: Women’s HerStory Month
- April: Abilities-Disabilities Month
- May: Asian Pacific American Heritage Month

First Year and Transfer Student Experience
The Center will collaborate with New Student Programs on a pre-orientation or orientation program for first year and transfer students.

Annual Award
Graduating students will be nominated by students, staff, or faculty for their work in advancing cultural initiatives and appreciation for diversity on campus. The award could be presented at the annual Student Leadership Awards put on by the Office of Student Involvement each year.

Community Poetry and Art Slams
Events will include live poetry and art competitions. Each semester a different theme or concept will be chosen for these live events. Artists and poets will have an hour to create their works related to the concept/theme. Once the hour has ended, the audience will vote for the winner.
The Harriet and Dred Scott Memorial and Art Space

The names of Harriet and Dred Scott are inextricably intertwined with the history of the St. Louis region. In their quest for freedom for themselves and their children, the Scott’s embodied the resilience, determination, and vision that informed the emancipation movement. The lessons that the nation learned from their remarkable battle to be acknowledged as free citizens were forged here, and those lessons have shaped the many conflicts and opportunities for dialogue that the UMSL campus seeks to examine through its teaching and community outreach. The UMSL Cultural Center honors the legacy of righteousness inherent in the sacrifices the Scott’s made. They paved the way for a better understanding of cross-cultural support, and the need to partner with others to fight injustice. We hope our center will serve as a vibrant reminder of what the human spirit can achieve. The Center will also sponsor and provide exhibition space for community art projects, and students, faculty, staff, and members of the larger St. Louis community will be invited to contribute to a rotating schedule of multicultural-themed exhibits.

FACILITIES

The Committee recommends a space on North Campus that is accessible and in a highly trafficked area. Students, faculty, and staff will be utilizing the space on a daily basis, so creating a significant presence on campus is critical to the Center’s success and in keeping with our goals to increase the visibility of our underrepresented constituent groups. The Committee recommends (in order of preference) a space in The JC Penney Building, Lucas Hall, or Millennium Student Center. The spaces in these buildings will allow the Center to be in a central location that is visibly and physically accessible to the campus community, and provide event space for the larger events and programs outlined above.

STAFFING

The Committee recommends a sustainable staffing structure that will fulfill the vision of the Center. At this time, it makes logistical sense for the Center to be housed under the Division of Student Affairs. We propose a staff structure that includes a director, an Assistant Director, one or two graduate assistant(s), and undergraduate interns. The staffing structure will be achieved in two phases, phase one with the hiring of a Director, Graduate Assistant, and undergraduate intern(s); phase two will consist of the hiring of an Assistant Director.

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

Our next steps, the Assessments sub-committee will prepare assessments via Qualtrics and in-person surveys to be sent out to faculty, staff, students, and alumni to further assess their opinions on what they want to see in the Center. The survey will be sent to alumni and staff in the summer of 2019, and to faculty and students in early fall of 2019. Funds in fiscal year 2020 will be set aside to accomplish phase one of the staffing structure which is the hiring of a Director and graduate assistant. Funds in fiscal year 2021 will be set aside to accomplish phase two of the staffing structure which is the hiring of an Assistant Director and another graduate assistant along with undergraduate interns.
A website will be created for the draft of the UMSL’s Cultural Center, which will also serve to provide the UMSL community with an opportunity to provide feedback on the different components of the proposed draft. The committee will be available to summarize this report for the Student Government Association, the Staff Association, and the University Assembly and Faculty Senate, along with other departments or units who would like to discuss the committee’s recommendations.