

Dive-In Committee Updates

December 2020

Resources we're learning from this month

Better Letters: Equitable Practices for Writing, Reading, And Soliciting Letters of Recommendation (available at this [link](#))

Letters of recommendation are an important part of the graduate school application package and they can potentially carry biases in them -- which directly impacts prospective students from BIPOC and underserved communities. This resource provides instruction on how to write, read, and solicit letters of recommendation that can be effective tools for enhancing equity.

Silence is Not an Option hosted by Don Lemon (available at this [link](#) and various podcast providers)

"America is in crisis right now. A lot of people want to help but have no idea where to start. In our new podcast, we're going to dig deep into the reality of being Black and Brown in America and explore what you can do to help find a path forward... These conversations are going to be challenging—even uncomfortable—but they're important. Because this time, we get to rebuild America together." --CNN website

Dive-In Committee Updates

The Dive-In Committee hosted a "Post-Election Community Conversation for Listening and Support" on Friday Nov. 6th, 3:00-4:30 pm via Zoom. The Committee also provided additional post-election resources listed below.

- Post-Election Resources from W&M Office of Community Engagement - [link](#)
 - After-the-election guide from Center for Inclusive Communities - [link](#)
 - How to talk to kids about the election from W&M School of Education - [link](#)
 - Mindfulness from W&M Center for Mindfulness and Authentic Excellence - [link](#)
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Sub-committee Updates

Training Subcommittee

Hosted a Virtual Lunch N' Learn on December 4th titled "December Dilemma: Exploring Religion through a D&I Lens". Religion and spirituality show up in the workplace and educational settings in overt and subtle ways on a regular basis, from observed holidays, to employee attire and jewelry, to office decorations and foods, and even informal discussions among colleagues. These expressions of faith can be opportunities to come together or they can create deep divisions that impact employee satisfaction and retention.

Policy Review Subcommittee

- The subcommittee is finalizing a draft memo that detailing recommended changes to VIMS staff hiring practices. The final document will be submitted to Dean/Director John Wells for review and consideration.
 - The subcommittee is also reviewing and commenting on a draft of William & Mary's 3-year pilot program for increasing diversity in faculty hiring.
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Many Thanks for Your Generosity

We'd like to thank the VIMS community for generously providing food, toiletries, toys, clothing, and monetary donations to support local community members in the Middle Peninsula area this holiday season. And thank Dive-In Committee members that solicited, collected, and dropped-off donations to charitable organizations.

November/December holiday donation drives facilitated by Dive-In members:

- VIMS Angel Tree Ornaments (VIMS contact: Jenny Dreyer) – Donated clothing, supplies, and gift cards support families in the Gloucester/Mathews area through the local Salvation Army and the Avalon Center.
- Toys for Tots (VIMS contact: Will Benton) – New toys were collected for the local Toys for Tots chapter. The local chapter serves and distributes toys to children in the Middle Peninsula area (Gloucester, Mathews, and Middlesex) of Virginia.

Broaden Cultural and Religious Awareness

A variety of religious holidays, cultural celebrations, and observances take place during the “holiday season” (aka the months of November and December). You may be familiar with holidays like Hannukah (beginning December 10th at sunset) and Christmas (on December 25th), and cultural celebrations like Kwanzaa (beginning December 26th). However, there are many more that take place during the “holiday season” and beyond.

Quick Tip: Check out online calendars like the one at this [link](#) or this [link](#) as a starting point to learn when and where holiday celebrations and observances take place around the world. It's a great *first step* and gateway into learning more about other countries, cultures, and religions through the celebrations that bring people together.