

Diversity Matters

THE E-NEWSLETTER FROM THE EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY TEAM

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Spotlight on our Equality and Diversity Champions

Paul Stephenson, Vice-President Human Resources



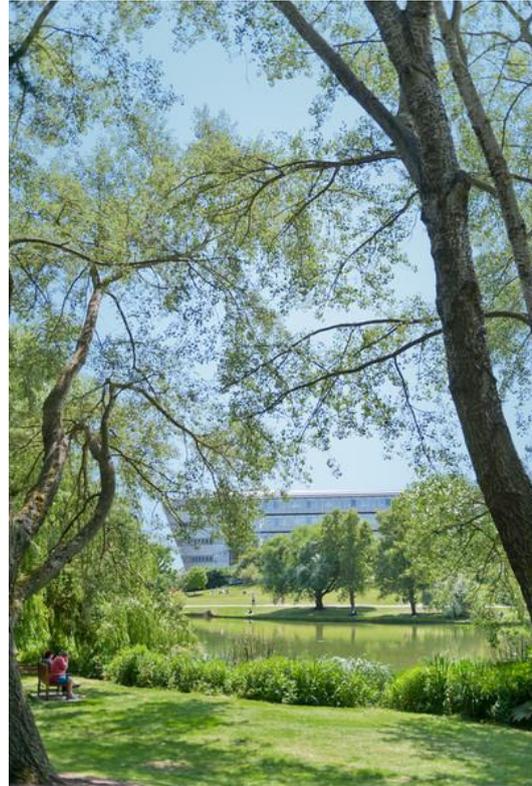
I was delighted when Angie invited me to write an introduction to this month's Diversity Matters newsletter. "Just set out your personal views on equality and diversity at Surrey in your role as Exec Board lead" she said, "and say a bit about what we will be doing under your leadership". But the more I thought about this, the harder the task became, not least because it would take me far more than the space allowed to do the request justice. What's more, whilst as Executive Board lead and Vice President Human Resources I have more chance to shape the way the organisation operates in this area than most, I'm equally conscious that for the many colleagues and students in the various communities included in the equality and diversity remit, you'll all have views, many strongly held and perhaps developed in response to life experiences gleaned over many years, that need to be taken into account. Your views are fundamentally important in

shaping the future direction of our work, as are the views of the other colleagues and students who together form our broader community and our Institution's culture.

What I do know is that it's great to have the Equality and Diversity team as part of HR Services again. The team has achieved much since they moved from HR Services four years ago, firstly to Sarah Litchfield's line management, then to Vince Emery's. For example, I'm really pleased to see the progress we have made in raising the awareness of equality and diversity issues across the organisation, and to see the improved feedback on equality related issues within the staff survey this year (up 7% on last year). In the last two years, 272 colleagues have followed the lead set by the Executive Board and have undertaken unconscious bias training, and we've seen the number of attendees on the Aurora programme (a women's only development programme run by the Leadership Foundation) rise from 4 in 2013 to 22 in 2015, with 32 of the 36 attendees being in academic posts. Also, in the last two years we've seen over 50 staff take up support from Mentors, and we now have Equality Groups focussing on gender, race, faith, LGBT and disability. We've introduced improved flexible working arrangements, and our policies and procedures, such as the new dignity at study and work policy, compare well with other similar institutions. We've certainly come a long way since the University first appointed an Equality and Diversity Advisor back in 2003.

Our student body are an integral part of the work on Equality and Diversity. The Equality and Diversity Team meet the Student Union Sab Officers (VP Society and VP Community) on a monthly basis to discuss current issues. The Sab Officers are also important members of the Equality and Diversity Committee and the working groups associated with them. At these meetings they raise issues of importance to the students and the wider University community. The Equality and Diversity Team also worked with Student Union officers to deliver the Wellbeing and Disability Awareness Day – ‘WellFayre 2016’. This collaboration will continue throughout all upcoming events and also, in the areas of charter work, such as Athena SWAN and the Race Equality Charter Mark.

So, good progress. But there's still much to be done. A colleague I spoke with recently defined how she saw equality and diversity. "Equality is about promoting and fostering everyone's right to be different, being free from discrimination, and individuals having choice and dignity with a right to personal beliefs and values" she said, adding that for her diversity "is broader than equality. It's about creating a culture which values individual differences and variety for the benefit of all". She is right in this, particularly in a post-Brexit referendum world, where it's really important that we not only avoid discrimination (that should be a given), but also retain and develop our values of equality, diversity and inclusivity in all that we do. I'm sure that everyone will have their own emphasis of what is important within equality and diversity definitions. For me, I also have a broader vision, a vision that applies to all our staff and students. I'd like our University to be an inclusive place where everyone has the opportunity, should they want it, to be able to fulfil their potential. I'd like everyone to feel confident and self-assured in themselves, in the way they live their lives, and in the way they respect and are respected by others. I'd like our University community to be a rich melting pot of diverse talents, beliefs and cultures all united and engaged in making our University a great place to work, live and study. For my part, my own values have been shaped by having a daughter with a profound learning disability, and seeing her struggles with inclusion and achievement of her potential as a result. She and our whole family have made compromises in the way we lead our lives, and I'm sure everyone will have examples they can draw on too.



Wouldn't it be great to be in a society or organisation where there was no need for all the policies and procedures and the rules and regulations that are set up to achieve greater equality and diversity? A society where everyone just instinctively behaved the right way. But we are not there just yet. There's still a number of challenges to face, and that's why we have more work to do to ensure that we engrain the right behaviours and attitudes in all our communities, and in our institution as a whole, to deliver and maintain the culture we seek. This will be the driving force behind our work, whether that be through enhancing our own policies and procedures, auditing our activities, seeking third party accreditation for our work, or delivery of step-change initiatives. I fully expect that by the end of the calendar year we will have taken further steps on our journey to keep our community a rich and inclusive melting pot of diverse talents, beliefs and cultures with everyone united and engaged in making our University a great place to work, live and study. I look forward to sharing news of these next steps with you in the months ahead.

Paul Stephenson
Vice-President Human Resources

The University of Surrey has signed up for the Race Equality Charter Mark

The sign-up process started with Max Lu writing a letter to ECU to ask to join the Race Equality Charter Mark, this request has been granted, we now start the process in earnest, with an application deadline of Spring 2018.

The University of Surrey's Race Equality Group has become the Race Equality Charter Mark Self-Assessment Team. It will be their responsibility, with support from various colleagues from across the University, to deliver a strong application.



We do need to expand this group though, it needs to truly reflect the diversity of our student, academic and staff body, therefore we would welcome volunteers to join this team. Please contact [Michael Hassell](#) (Equality and Diversity Adviser (Charters Coordinator)) if you are interested or would like more information.

The Equality Challenge Unit's Race Equality Charter (REC) looks to improve the representation, progression and success of minority ethnic staff and students within higher education. It provides a framework through which

institutions work to identify and self-reflect on institutional and cultural barriers standing in the way of minority ethnic staff and students. Member institutions develop initiatives and solutions for action, and can apply for a Bronze or Silver REC award, depending on their level of progress. The REC covers professional and support staff, academic staff, student progression and attainment and the diversity of the curriculum.

The Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) began developing the REC in 2012 following the impact Athena SWAN has had in gender equality. There was a growing appetite for a race-specific charter within the sector, and many of ECU's key stakeholders were actively supportive of the development.

ECU consulted on the concept of a race equality charter, developed a draft framework, and then consulted again with the sector. Following this development, we trialed the framework with volunteer institutions, resulting in 21 applications and eight institutions receiving a Bronze award. Those institutions are: De Montfort University, King's College London, Kingston University, Royal Holloway University London, Staffordshire University, University of Hertfordshire, University College London and University of Manchester.

As with Athena SWAN, REC is an evolving charter. Institutions are expected to start at Bronze level and progress to Silver. In the longer-term, we also anticipate the charter criteria changing as the sector progresses and race equality is advanced.

SAVE THE DATES

- **Thursday February 9th 2017**
The Inaugural Athena SWAN Lecture
with Paul Walton (University of York), an expert on Gender Equality and Athena SWAN
- **Wednesday 8th March 2017**
International Women's Day
- Look out for more details of events at lunchtime and the evening

Sexualities Interdisciplinary Research Group

Building on the research strengths and interests that exist across the University, a group of us have come together to create an Interdisciplinary Sexualities Research Group. The main aim of the group is to provide a space for staff and doctoral students from different disciplines, Schools and Faculty to come together and discuss our own and others research about sexualities. Since the group first came together, in Professor Peter Hegarty's office in late January 2016, we have met regularly. This academic year we have operated primarily as a reading group – readings have been decided collectively and we explicitly seek ones that will appeal across disciplines. It has been an excellent way of engaging with a wide range ideas and ways of doing sexualities research. One reading, for instance, focused on the Edward Carpenter Archive, a collection created in 1982 to document the development of gay (and more recently LGBT+) activism in the UK since the publication of the Wolfenden Report in 1958.

Coincidentally, this coincided with a presentation Andrew King gave at Manchester University for LGBT History Month on everyday queer activism – so proved to be very useful. The group have also discussed more challenging theoretical readings and those related to intersex and gender identity. After one discussion, members of the group (especially Katherine Hubbard and Laura Harvey) organised a screening of the film *Pride* (about the group Lesbian and Gays Support the Miners), which resulted in a well-attended screening on IDAHOT day and included a talk by an original member of the LGSM group. Ultimately, the group could become a hub or centre for interdisciplinary sexualities research at the University, but these are still early days and we are keen to hear a wide range of ideas and suggestions for moving the group forward. If you're interested, please contact: andrew.king@surrey.ac.uk



Vigil on campus remembering those members of LGBTQI+ community who lost their lives in the attack in Orlando, Florida.

In September's Issue

» Spotlight on **Raphaelle Winsky-Sommerer**, Surrey's lead of the women's group for European Sleep Research Society and **Jo McCarthy-Holland**, our Equality and Diversity Adviser

