

Fall 2020

Professional Clothing Task Force

Membership:

Robert Frederick (Chair), Career Services

Alisanne Struck, Student

Parker Daniels, Student

Mason Fritz, Student

Rachel Koop, Student

Rocio Castrejon, Student

Keyah Levy, CME

Nick Sullivan, Student Support Services

David Glen-Burns, Three House

Paula Knudson, VP Student Affairs

Fall Update/Summary:

The Professional Clothing Task Force was initiated by Dr. Knudson during the fall term of 2020 and is made up of five students and five staff. The Task Force's purpose is to investigate the aspects and functions, operations, needs and feasibility of a professional clothing program at UNI and to prepare and deliver a recommendation to the UNI senior leadership in the Spring of 2021. The task force is using the following principles to guide the development of recommendations:

- That all recommendations ensure a viable, long-term approach to meeting needs;
- That both the need for any professional clothing resource and the operational viability of any programmatic recommendations be assessed through the systematic collection and analysis of data;
- That the recommendations are student centered and explicitly outline how utilization can be maximized by students;
- That any recommendations not unnecessarily duplicate existing resources throughout the community;
- That the recommendations enable equitable clothing options and choices for students, and affirm dignity.

To date, the task force has conducted two formal meetings with numerous small group or one-on-one consultations. During our initial meeting, the task force determined that we would not start with the assumption a professional clothing program was needed and we would approach this in two phases, 1) Research Phase & 2) Analysis and Report Phase.

Research Phase agenda for the fall:

- 1) *Review existing research and develop a survey.* The task force was informed by Dr. Knudson that Institutional Research had a survey instrument associated with this area of interest. Alisanne Struck and Rocio Castrejon volunteered to communicate with IR regarding the possibility of an existing instrument, as well as to review and create an updated or new instrument with IR with the goal of conducting a student survey in early spring of 2021.
- 2) *Gather information from institutions that have a professional clothing program.* Parker Daniels and Mason Fritz volunteered to reach out to staff at the University of Iowa, Iowa State University and the University of Nebraska to ascertain “lessons learned” from their efforts.
- 3) *Review off-campus alternatives and options to avoid duplicative services.* Rachel Koob and Robert Frederick volunteered to research off-campus options that already exist for low cost or no cost professional clothing.
- 4) *Learn from colleagues who have tried a clothing closet.* Keyah Levy, Nick Sullivan and David Glenn-Burns all have some type of clothing program they have run or are running.

The task force also developed a list of leading questions (not an exhaustive list) to frame our conversations:

How do you determine need?

How do we collect?

Who collects?

Who reviews the appropriateness of the clothing?

Do students keep clothing or checkout clothing?

What barriers / hurdles did they encounter?

What is the usage rate?

Where do items come from? Main source?

Storage?

Cleaning?

Frequency? Pop-up?

Volunteers?

Any funding needed?

Pros? Cons?

Would another approach be as helpful?

How are you addressing the contextual elements around diversity, equity and inclusion?

Important lessons learned.

As of November 12, 2020, 11 off-campus options have been communicated with and five were deemed worth following up with in the spring including The Main Street Exchange, Bonita Things Quality Consignment, Clothes Closet, Goodwill Stores, and NWT Consignment.

Both the University of Iowa and University of Nebraska responded to Parker and Mason's inquiries and a Google document has been created that they are adding their notes to be shared at our next task force meeting.

Keyah and Nick have shared with the task force their experiences and David Glenn-Burns plans to share his experiences at our next meeting. These individuals have added great insights on the running of a clothing program. Elements discussed by Keyah included the importance of scope limitations and education around professional dress as well as challenges faced including collection, cleaning processes, places to try on items, storage, limited data collected, and a need to establish policies regarding frequency/limits. Nick's insights included many of the above and he found his focus quickly becoming students who needed specific basics like coats, hats, gloves and other winter gear. Also, he noted a need for developing a cleaning system and a formal tracking system and that they did receive clothing items that they simply transported to Goodwill Industries.

As we approach Winter Term, we anticipate one more Research Phase meeting and then will begin our Analysis and Report Phase with the start of Spring Term with a goal of a recommendation being submitted not later than mid-March.