

January 19, 2023

Dear Diversity Section Members:

It was not my intent to start a letter to the section this way, but this announcement does fit in with the theme. Barbee Oakes has retired from the AAA to concentrate on her health. I ask that you send healing thoughts/wishes/prayers her way. In an unretirement, she joined as Chief Diversity Officer at the AAA. In her short time at AAA, she has brought a welcome light along with tremendous experience and expertise.

The tool she developed in the DEIB Certificate places much of that expertise into a series of modules that I encourage you not to merely view passively and earn the certificate, but to embrace and use as a tool for starting conversations among your colleagues. You may ask (and I have already been asked/challenged), “Why do I need a DEIB certificate?” As Diversity Section members, we think about these issues more than most already. However, I am struck by the words of Billy Williams, KPMG Houston Partner and DEI Leader who spoke at the joint Diversity/TLC Midyear in October, when he said, “Nobody is a diversity expert.” So, while you may not need it, I guarantee you will learn something from it. And I encourage you to form a “book club” and work through the modules one at a time and discuss with your club. We have been doing this at Oklahoma State and our conversations have gone far beyond diversity as we think about equity, inclusion, and belonging for us, our students, our corporate partners, and the community we serve. The AAA DEIB Certificate is not a superficial, check-the-box compliance tool like we have all seen. It is a wealth of information that I believe follows what we should be as an association in educating our members on critical issues we all face regularly in academia.

In conjunction with the DEIB Certificate, the other major initiative I have been thinking about is our membership. How many of you are the only or one of very few Diversity Section members at your school? While we had a few, I asked why that was the case. Angela Spencer as Head of the School of Accounting at Oklahoma State jumped on this immediately and paid for all AAA member faculty and doctoral students to join the section. Maybe Oklahoma State is just supporting me as the President of the Diversity Section, but I don't think it is just for me. I think it makes sense as the right thing to do, of course. But I think it also makes sense when you hear or read Mark Dawkins' *Declining Enrollments- A Call to Action*. We had a big membership push to become a section in the first place, but I think now is the time to make another push. I will be challenging other schools to follow Oklahoma State in both embracing a great tool in the DEIB Certificate and offering Diversity Section membership to all AAA faculty and doctoral students.

The ideas above and a few more for how to heed Mark's call and support the Diversity Section:

- DEIB Certificate completion- For you and possibly as a book club with your colleagues.
- Diversity Section Membership-Encourage your AAA colleagues/doctoral students.
- Submit your work to the Diversity Section for the AAA Annual Meeting! (BTW, it doesn't have to be diversity-related and there is room for at least one panel!)
 - Volunteer to review, discuss, moderate too!
- Volunteer for the Diversity Section! Log your interest here: https://ttu.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_e3Wriui5gNAoFDw
- Tell us, specifically me, what ideas you have for the section! I am certainly not an expert, but I will listen and share with our amazing officer team.

Happy New Year and have a great spring while you finish the academic year strong!

Sincerely,

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