

President Gibson Responds to “Mass Exodus” of Faculty, “Microaggressions” to Students at State of University Speech

Q&A Session

By: Erwin Lopez Rada,
News Editor

Photo Credits: www.neiu.edu

NEIU President Gloria Gibson defended her administration’s handling of NEIU’s Human Resources department and addressed Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) concerns of the community as she answered questions to her Fall 2021 State of the University address.

Faculty Senate Chair Dr. Nancy Wrinkle released Dr. Gibson’s answers to public questions by an email to all NEIU community members on Jan. 31 that explained the late release of the document with the President’s responses.

Dr. Wrinkle said she wanted more members of the community to engage with the information provided in the Q&A session since Dr. Gibson’s response to the public was handed to the Faculty Senate by the end of Fall 2021.

The main point of discussion after Dr. Gibson’s speech was about the understaffing in the Human Resources department and how this situation is affecting university employees.

The department has gone through a recommended reorganization and modernization process that left just 5 seasoned staff—NEIU’s website lists 12 HR staff, mostly directors—to handle paper-

work and requests of 553 faculty and hundreds of employees in other positions.

Some of the questions directed to President Gibson reflect on the Human Resources issue.

An anonymous attendee asked the President, “What efforts are in place to provide compensation and elevation to talent that has remained during the pandemic and through the mass exodus?”

Another person referred to alleged unfair payment practices suffered by employees saying, “Existing staff are generally overlooked for equity adjustments to that of the current market and work per-

formed.” The person continued, “New hires are often paid more with less or equivalent experience. That is very demotivating.”

At least two people lamented in their questions to Gibson the lack of a remote work policy, one of the commentators said, “If we do not integrate a remote work plan, we will see more faculty and staff quit.

What no one seems to mention is that the office environment is not a conducive happy place to be.” Some others were asking Dr. Gibson if NEIU, “has been conducting exit interviews to staff that have left the past year?” This question led to ano-

other in which an attendee wanted to know if NEIU was researching why employees were dissatisfied with work.

Dr. Gibson answered that since Spring 2021 the university went through a revision process of its Human Resources Office with the goal of implementing solutions that “foster a culture of employee engagement, modernization of systems and productivity.”

She also said that by mid 2021 NEIU started implementing a reorganization plan that creates five units within the HR department: recruitment and employment, compensation and classification, HR

Cont. to page 9



Continued from page 8

services, employee and labor relations with training and Human Resources Information Services.

Dr. Gibson also mentioned that hiring of directors for HR's subdivisions was underway and Yolanda Aguilera was named deputy director of recruitment and employment.

She also said that as soon as the school hires a director of compensation and classification, this person will provide "strategic consultation for salaries and position related actions."

Dr. Gibson explained that Human Resources, through its new director of employee and human relations, was offering exit interviews to resigning staff but that these interviews were voluntary.

She said that the data collected from the interviews will be used to improve staff retention but justified the "mass exodus" of staff and faculty by saying that the higher number of resignations were "in large part due to the impact of the pandemic" nationwide.

Yet, the impact of a pandemic into its second year had not prompted NEIU to implement a remote work policy. Dr. Gibson responded to the first question about remote work that the school "has assembled a strong team" to draft a remote work policy.

But then in a second response about the same topic she changed the grammatical tense to "The University is committed to assembling a strong and diverse team" to do the same.

NEIU Community voices DEI concerns

Another point of discussion

was the retention of BIPOC personnel and students. Eduardo Cristiano-Hernandez, a MA Counseling student asked, "Why do BIPOC students in the Counseling MA program at NEIU continue to experience microaggressions in their classrooms?"

Then he added "Another BIPOC professor leaves, and there is hardly any other faculty that look like us. Why do we continue to have no representation?" Dr. Gibson answered that NEIU made a commitment to join the National Consortium on Faculty Development and Diversity.

She added that this membership will give the community "free access to a series of expert webinars, cross-institutional mentorship and strategies for sustaining a supportive infrastructure for diverse students, faculty and staff."

Data provided by NEIU in 2020 showed that 58.3 % of faculty were White, 11% were Latino, 9% were Asian and 8.7% were African American. 13% of faculty belonged to other categories or did not recognize themselves within a race.

In comparison, Spring 2022 NEIU student body is composed 70% by minority students while White students represent just 30% of the population.

President Gibson said that DEI committees were forming across colleges within the school to address these issues and that all search and screen committees for new candidates will receive training to address implicit bias during the hiring process.

She condemned any microaggressions and said that syllabi

are going to include statements that explain students how to report mistreatments through the Student Bias Response Team and directed people with interest in further discussing DEI matters to communicate with the executive director of equity, diversity and inclusion Dr. Shireen Roshanravan at s-roshanravan@neiu.edu.

Scan this QR Code to access Dr. Gibson's communication to the Faculty Senate





NORTHEASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY'S

INDEPENDENT

Current News
Spring 2022

Interested in working for the Independent?

NEIU Independent is a complete student-run newspaper who are always looking to find new students who are interested in:

writing, photography, editing.

We also need some new Section Editors:

News Director, Opinions Editor,

Arts & Life Editor

Several stipend paid positions open.



Students 'unafraid' to talk about free speech