

## **Director of Diversity Efforts**

**Candidate:** Rachel Smithers

### **Questions:**

1. For the communities that you are not a part of and that you do not personally identify with, how will you make sure you serve their needs as a Director of Diversity Efforts?

While serving and collaborating with diverse communities, my priority is divesting my own privilege to center the voices of students marginalized by oppressive, westernized power systems. I aim to adopt this approach within the communities I'm part of as well as those that I don't personally identify with. I am a Black, multi-racial, queer, disabled woman. However, students who hold any of those identities also have unique intersectional experiences.

As Director of Diversity Efforts, I plan to facilitate an inclusive environment where students feel comfortable sharing their voice and are authentically respected and validated in the work I do. This includes being transparent about my own experiences and ensuring confidentiality and compassion towards students' courageous stories. In determining what needs different communities have, I will default to the leaders, intellectuals, and members of communities to inform me about their most pressing needs. In order to limit the emotional labor of students, I will continue to do my due diligence to research the powerful community voices that have already been vulnerably shared. I will continuously accept criticism as a chance to grow and challenge my own biases to ensure equitable practices that include every voice and actively celebrate diversity.

2. What is your current involvement with the ECC and diverse communities? (Q Center, D Center, different commissions, etc etc.) What is your biggest weakness in that relationship? What do you hope to do more of if elected?

Being a non-traditional first-generation student has made it challenging, and a bit daunting, to access many resources. I've been part of the OMA&D Mentor Power for Success mentorship program for three years connecting students to resources and creating meaningful relationships. As an intern for the Black Student Commission, I worked across diversity commissions to program intersectional events with and for underrepresented students. I worked with the Student Advisory Board to share constituent concerns and connect important resources to my community. I've been a member of the Black Student Union for three years, which has taught me the importance of open dialogue in a self-affirming environment. I've also enjoyed working with the OMA&D advisers personally as an EOP student as well as professionally during Advising and Orientation.

I intend to continue improving and establishing my relationship with entities such as the Intellectual House, Q Center, D Center, Women's Center, etc. I want to spend more time being physically present in these spaces, having open dialogue, and respectfully observing to learn from

the customs and practices of different communities. I want to increase collaboration among leaders of RSOs associated with the ECC and JCC through more intentional, accessible, and intersectional events.