In the past year, OU-Tulsa renewed its dedication to diversity, equity, and inclusion by creating the position of Director of Diversity and Inclusion. Though that position, many new programs have been created and former initiatives have been reworked to fit the current goals of the university. Our goal is to become a leader in modeling and demonstrating our commitment to equality and inclusion. The Tulsa campus has hosted several programs and events with the purpose of reaching that goal. We have increased our outreach to staff, faculty, students, and the greater Tulsa area.

As stated in our strategic plan, we intend to develop a full complement of diversity programs and services to foster community that models inclusive excellence. In order to foster that community, we have focused on ways that we can recruit and retain students, faculty, and staff from diverse backgrounds. In order to achieve this, we have made it a goal to make it possible for departments to collaborate with each other in their diversity and inclusion efforts. The Tulsa campus has a unique culture. A large part of 2018 has been learning about that culture and identifying diversity, equity, and inclusion gaps. The needs of our various departments are different but working to address and alleviate them serve the same goal.

In 2018, OU-Tulsa we changed the name and the purpose of the Diversity Coalition. The newly formed Equity Coalition is an active group of students, faculty, and staff who are dedicated to identifying issues and concerns to engage all the OU-Tulsa family in developing ways to enhance understanding and inclusivity. The Equity Coalition averages 30 participants per meetings with our highest attendance being 90 people. The format of the meeting changes to meet our needs. Speakers from the Tulsa community, such as representatives from the Mayor’s office, are invited to inform us of their work and how we can be a part of it.

We have found success in hosting lunch and learns about diversity topics. Our Discussion on Diversity series allows for the participants to be more engaged than our other lunch and learns. During the program, we introduce a topic, divide the participants into small groups, and give them discussion prompts about the topic. We currently have had programs that discuss gender identity, intersectionality, Title IX, personality differences, and undocumented status. Our average attendance for our lunch and learns is 45 people. They are a mix of students, staff, and faculty with most attendees being staff members. We also have had evening programs, but they have not been as well attended. In celebration of Women’s History Month, we hosted a movie screening of the film Grey Matters that documented the work of Ellen Stackable and Poetic Justice as they taught poetry writing to incarcerated women in Oklahoma’s prisons. We opened this program to the Tulsa community and had over 150 people in attendance.

OU-Tulsa has taken many steps to create an atmosphere of belonging for historically underrepresented students, faculty, and staff. Former one stall restrooms have been converted to all-gender restrooms with signage. A space on the website has also been created for diversity and inclusion that has a new diversity statement and message from President Schumann. Our community has also noted that the photos on the walls are not representative of our population.
We are currently working to replace those photos with images that show more racial and gender diversity. In February of 2019, we will distribute our first Campus Climate Survey. This survey will help us understand our diversity, equity, and inclusion weaknesses and give us the data to start addressing them in more effective ways.

In conclusion, our hope in the coming year is that we will take the next step in our programming and move beyond education and into creating a strategic plan for our efforts. Completing a strategy for diversity and inclusion will give us the tools needed to allocate resources and time. We plan on using the Theory of Change to guide us in that effort. We hope to bring other Norman programs such as the Freshman Diversity Experience and the Diversity Ally Training to Tulsa so that our students are having a similar experience as their counterparts. The past year has identified areas for improvement, but also the willingness and eagerness of the OU-Tulsa campus to step into its role as a leader for social change and justice.