Middle Eastern/North African Racial Category Timeline

February 2016: The Islamophobia Working Group's report, "Including Muslim, Arab, Middle Eastern, and North African Students in the University's Strategic Plan for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion" identifies the lack of a MENA identity category as a DEI issue and suggests implementing one to collect data on faculty, staff, and students and to acknowledge this population as adding to diversity initiatives.

January 2017: Conversations within the Islamophobia Working Group occur regarding the lack of institutional memory, documentation and recognition regarding the historical presence of the Middle Eastern/North African community on campus further illustrates the severity of the issue and disempowerment of ME/NA community. Learned about the Southwest Asian/North African (SWANA) implemented in the University of California system in 2013.

February 10, 2017: Jad Elharake (student), Abby Chien (Program Manager, Office of Multi-Ethnic Student Affairs) and Will Sherry (Director, Spectrum Center) meet to brainstorm and learn about the policy work Will has led related to pronouns, gender and sexuality related to data collection and implementation of new policy-based initiatives.

February 21, 2017: Jad Elharake, Ibtihal Makki (student), Nadine Jawad (student), Silan Fadlallah (student), and Devin Jones (student) propose a Central Student Government resolution to implement a ME/NA racial category. The resolution to support the creation of a Middle Eastern and North African racial category on all University of Michigan documents passed unanimously.

MESA Graduate Intern Max Mendez benchmarks other institutions regarding data collection and confirms that the University of California system is the only peer institution to collect SWANA/MENA data. Benchmarking also reveals that students on college campuses across the United States are advocating for a racial demographic category that captures ME/NA information.

Michigan Daily article: https://www.michigandaily.com/section/student-government/resolution-recognize-mena-racial-category-passes-unanimously-csg

February-May 2017: Jad Elharake, Evelyn Alsultany (Professor and Director, Arab and Muslim American Studies), Max Mendez and Abby Chien organize meetings to create a proposal addressing the historical context, rationalization, proposed use, critical population, and examples of current sources that collect demographic data regarding ME/NA communities. Both documents were sent to the Office for Enrollment Management and Kedra Ishop, Vice Provost for Enrollment Management, and was told that the conversation is occurring within the

administration. The office was initially responsive, but we have yet to receive any recent updates.

Evelyn Alsultany informs the Provost's Faculty Advisory Committee and Rob Seller's Faculty Advisory Committee about the initiative to implement a MENA category.

May 2017: Jad Elharake sent an email out to Dr. Robert Sellers. Not identifying ME/NA student, staff, and faculty is problematic for a number of reasons that impact campus climate, including but not limited to: tracking student recruitment and retention rates; having the ability to reach the community on key issues that directly impact it; identifying trends in the hiring of faculty, staff, and administration; and bias incident reporting. For the University, the ability to ascertain who identifies with the ME/NA community is a necessary step in developing programs and interventions to address any disparities and to achieve Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) goals.

As cited by the DEI strategic plan, UM strives "to broaden its diversity and strengthen its inclusiveness" and "our strong tradition of student activism and striving for change" has "led us to this next concerted effort to create a diverse, equitable and inclusive environment for our entire campus community." We have to call into question our ability to achieve inclusion when we overlook and misrepresent a community with a distinctive history and experience at UM and in the state of Michigan. about the ME/NA initiative and was in complete support.

July/August 2017: Jad Elharake sent an email to the Interim Provost, Dr. Paul Courant, about our concerns and the lack of response from the Office for Enrollment Management. He set up a meeting with Evelyn Alsultany to learn more about the issue. While, he was supportive at that meeting, UM was at that time in the transition phase of Dr. Courant leaving his position and Dr. Martin Philbert (former Dean of UM School of Public Health) stepping in as the Provost.

Stephanie Riegle (Chief of Staff, Office of the Provost) continues to reassure Abby Chien throughout the summer that Enrollment Management is exploring options, citing a need to consult data experts regarding data collection. No follow up occurs after this point from the Office of the Provost (as of Oct. 2017).

Early-September 2017: Abby Chien, Dr. Rob Sellers, Vice President for Student Life Royster Harper, Dean of Students Laura Blake Jones and Interim Multi-Ethnic Student Affairs Director Linh Nguyen meet to discuss ideas to address ways the University could respond to this ask. This is the first time that representatives from the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and Student Life representatives come together to discuss the proposal.

Jad Elharake, Evelyn Alsultany, Abby Chien, and Nadine Jawad meet with provost, Dr. Martin Philbert, who made it clear that he was not knowledgeable about the ME/NA community and racial category. Meeting concluded with his full support, and many unanswered questions about how the University collects demographic information.

Michigan Daily article: https://www.michigandaily.com/section/administration/new-provost-martin-philbert-welcomed-students-and-faculty

Mid-September 2017: Jad Elharake, Evelyn Alsultany, Abby Chien, and Nadine Jawad connect with Dr. Sally Howell, Director of the Center for Arab American Studies at UM-Dearborn. Jad Elharake meets with Dr. Howell and other student ME/NA leaders about ways to include UM-Dearborn. UM-D student government proposes and unanimously passes the ME/NA resolution.

Michigan Daily article: https://www.michigandaily.com/section/administration/look-how-dei-plan-has-progressed-one-year

End of September-October 2017: Nadine Jawad and Jad Elharake reach out to the University Council, which includes all of the student governments (including the graduate councils), to pass a ME/NA resolution. Michigan Daily article: https://www.michigandaily.com/section/student-government/university-council-meets

Dr. Sally Howell shares that administrators at UM-Dearborn are in discussion regarding the addition of a MENA category.

Nadine Jawad meets with Center for Campus Involvement (CCI) staff to ask that data collection conducted by the CCI include a ME/NA category.

October 9th, 2017: Evelyn Alsultany informs Rob Seller's Faculty Advisory Committee about the MENA box initiative and its importance to DEI initiatives. It is met with widespread support from faculty on the committee.The administration is considering how to collect this data via the MCard. They are trying to figure out whose data is collected and how it can be legally used since demographic data are tied to federal mandates. The data collected could not be used to reach out to MENA students about resources because of FERPA/privacy issues –a student who identifies one way on a form might not want to be identified as such beyond the form and the university cannot provide this information due to privacy. Faculty insisted that we think further about how to allow that this data to be used to support community building, given that this is central to DEI initiatives. They suggested that there must be a way for students to opt in if they want to, for example, when obtaining an MCard, perhaps they could check another box about whether they would want to receive emails about opportunities related to their identity or particular aspects of their identity.

October 11, 2017: Abby Chien emails Amanda Karel and Mina Hong (Student Life Assessment specialists) to discuss the implementation of a standard race/ethnicity question on all Student Life surveys and data collection. Amanda and Mina respond enthusiastically and schedule a meeting to discuss further.

November 21, 2017: #WeExist campaign launches on social media and faculty/staff support statement is released with over 710 signatures:
Support statement google form: https://goo.gl/forms/ZVixMvL9FQ6908143

Michigan Daily article: https://www.michigandaily.com/section/campus-life/weexist-campaign-launches-support-adding-mena-category

November 25, 2017: 15 student government support statements and/or resolutions unanimously passed, including Central Student Government (CSG), LSA Student Government (LSA SG), Rackham Student Government (RSG), Engineering Student Government (ESG), Residence Halls Association (RHA), Law School Student Senate (LSSS), Ross BBA/MBA Councils, Medical Student Council, and Undergraduate Public Policy Council.

Op-Ed from The Michigan Daily: https://www.michigandaily.com/section/editorials/daily-support-weexist-mena

November 30, 2017: Meeting with President Schlissel - the President mentioned that this conversation already occurred among the executive vice presidents. The general counsel and the provost office has took the lead to identify routes for the initiative. He also brought up some of his concerns, which includes surveillance, inclusivity, response from the public, etc.

December 4, 2017: On a phone call conversation, Martin Philbert mentioned that the General Counsel created a document regarding what we can and cannot do as a University.

December 7, 2017: Meeting with the Regents. Jad Elharake, Evelyn Alsultany, Sally Howell, Sara A., and Yahya Alami Hafez presented to the Board of Regents. Mark Bernstein voiced his support and said he is fully behind it. Then, University Regent Andrea Fischer Newman said she possesses concerns about making the change and would like further discussion before reaching a final decision. “Just so we're clear, and with all due respect to my colleague, I do have some concerns, and would like to have this discussion before coming to a conclusion. I just want to make that clear, that there is a difference of opinion, potentially.”

December 8, 2017: Jad meets with Dr. Robert Sellers. Dr. Sellers mentions that he will be meeting with Martin Philbert, Royster Harper, Kedra Ishop, and the general counsel about the

best way to implement the ME/NA category. They, names mentioned above, will set up a meeting with us to discuss next steps. Meeting is set for January 25th.

Michigan Daily: https://www.michigandaily.com/section/administration/weexist-campaign-calls-recognition-regents%E2%80%99-meeting

MLive:
http://www.mlive.com/news/ann-arbor/index.ssf/2017/12/um_students_want_new_identity.html

VP for Student Life Royster Harper's take on the ME/NA box:
https://www.michigandaily.com/section/administration/if-given-choice-thats-not-where-i-would-spend-my-time-e-royster-harper

Other things to include: data from the DEI sampling survey (2% of undergrad and 2% of grad students identify as ME/NA), anything else?

January 25, 2018: Jad Elharake, Nadine Jawad, Dr. Evelyn Alsultany, Dr. Sally Howell, and Dr. Daniel Birchok met with Provost Martin Philbert, VP of Student Life Royster Harper, VP for Enrollment Management Kedra Ishop, Vice Provost Robert Sellers, and Maya Kobersy & Christine Gerdes from General Counsel. The purpose of the meeting was to go over a document created by General Counsel to discuss the “concerns” the university may run into if the box is implemented. The conclusion of the meeting was that the ME/NA box will be implemented and Provost Philbert then assigned Vice Provost Robert Sellers to figure out the implementation process and next steps.