

Members Present: Justin Tiehen, David Sousa, Harry Velez-Quinones, Margi Nowak, Paula Meier, Lisa Ferrari, Zaixin Hong, Kim Bobby, Judith Kay, Pat Moore, Nancy Nieraeth, Monica DeHart

1. December minutes were reviewed and approved. January 25th minutes reviewed and approved.
2. No new announcements.

Reports and Discussion

Faculty Senate Meeting and Bylaw Revisions

Judith Kay, Monica DeHart, and Justin Tiehen reported on the outcome of the recent faculty senate meeting, in which the Diversity Committee's proposed bylaws were endorsed. It was noted that Senate debate of the proposed bylaws took up only point six of the proposal (regarding BERT); none of the other points was discussed. A friendly amendment of point six was recommended so as to change the position of the first "as needed" to more accurately indicate that the Diversity Committee would activate BERT, but that BERT would mobilize to action on an "as needed" basis. With this Senate endorsement, the revised bylaws will now be submitted for reading at the Feb 17 faculty meeting and later come before faculty vote on April 6. Three-fourths of the faculty vote will be necessary to endorse the proposed bylaws.

Anticipating discussion on the bylaws at the upcoming faculty meetings, committee members next discussed what issues might frame debate over the proposal. One potential issue may be the definition of diversity. Some faculty colleagues have expressed concern over the definition of "diversity" in light of the proposed inclusion of language about "physical appearance." Committee members agreed that the debate should not center on a particular definition of diversity; but rather that that term could be the subject of other discussions.

Another issue will be what is at stake in the new proposal. In other words, how will the committee make the case for the revised bylaws? Committee members agreed that they should be able to articulate concrete examples of how the new charges might manifest in terms of specific contributions or new areas of authority/purview. Judith Kay noted that she had begun more research on the committee's history as a way of providing that overview.

The committee discussed additional potential changes to the bylaws, including demoting point three to a place further down the list of charges in order to indicate that hiring issues and classroom inclusivity are bigger priorities for a faculty committee. In the same vein, committee members agreed to try to produce concrete examples of what role the committee might play in hiring processes, so as to ameliorate potential fears about policing departmental practices/decisions. At the next meeting the committee will

take up specific ideas/examples/strategies in more depth. In the meantime, it was agreed that this process has generated productive conversations with colleagues, allowing the opportunity allay fears and clarify misconceptions about the proposed role of the committee and BERT.

New Business

Progress on Charge 2

Report from Kim Bobby, Justin Tiehen, and Lisa Ferrari on their efforts to develop a faculty diversity educational experience. Subcommittee members reported that an initial conversation on this issue had occurred, but no concrete progress to report. Julie Neff-Lippmann had assisted in scheduling a Wednesday at Four session devoted to diversity in the classroom (Feb 18). As for how to configure educational opportunities for new faculty advisors, the subcommittee had discussed the possibility of pursuing more “homegrown” initiatives in light of the unsuccessful recruitment of an outside consultant group to lead last fall’s event. In particular, they asked what might serve as incentive for faculty participation in an educational event around diversity. What kind of format would allow for the sharing of experiences about efforts to deal with diversity (or its lack) in the classroom? Many colleagues have noted the value of the Aronson presentation on stereotype threat (in 2007) because it gave people concrete take-aways. What elements of that event could be emulated? By way of follow-up, it might be good to solicit data from participants in that event to illuminate successful strategies they had employed in the classroom as a result of things they’d learned in that forum.

Rather orienting educational experiences toward a “diverse” classroom, it was suggested that what faculty might need is a way to deal with a more common situation at UPS, wherein faculty face one or two students of color in a classroom. How does one create a productive atmosphere in a proactive way, rather than simply responding to incidents? How to deal with different dimensions of the teaching/learning process, including student papers that include offensive content that percolates into the classroom discussion/atmosphere?

The committee agreed that an event that could take up issues like these and maintain a focus on pedagogy would be well-received. The question is thus how to include faculty and student experiences and invite the sharing of experiences, rather than be seen as “training.” One strategy might include asking participants to contribute teaching problems they’ve encountered in the classroom, instead of promoting a program that makes people feel like *they* have a problem. In this sense, it would be useful to have experiences from across different disciplines, not just in social science, arts, and humanities courses that take up questions of diversity. For example, Judith Kay and Kim Bobby noted that new faculty orientation had included a conversation of the production of knowledge in the natural sciences—i.e., who can enter the field and how diverse levels of preparation shape that field. Another issue might be how to work with unequal student performance that seems to be tied to different cultural backgrounds—i.e., good test-takers

versus good critical inquiry skills. How do create a classroom that encourages different types of learning/achievement?

Members of the subcommittee agreed to reconvene to explore the possibility of piggy-backing some diversity component to the spring new advisor training, or to wait for the fall. The issue will be raised again at the next meeting.

Additional Issues

It was noted that Yoshiko (not present) had agreed to find a replacement for the student representative to the committee. Faculty recommendations are welcome.

David Sousa offered to relinquish his position in BERT to another interested committee member. No one accepted the offer, so David remains on BERT for the spring semester.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:00.