

Committee on Diversity Minutes for March 23, 2007

Committee Members Present: Kim Bobby, Ed Cole, Monica DeHart, Janet Marcavage, Jim McCullough, Mike Valentine, Nila Weise (Chair)

Meeting was convened at 8:10 A.M.

Mike Valentine appointed minutes taker.

Nila asked about changes to the minutes from the 2/23/07 meeting. No changes were needed. Minutes accepted as offered M/S/P.

Announcements:

- There will be several presentations and activities in association with Women's History Month
- There will be a presentation on Doing Business in India on April 2

A discussion began on data provided by Admissions on Diversity applications, admissions and retention for the last 3 years. Retention rates for minority students are not as high as those for students overall, and the gap between financial aid and expenses contributes to this. Other factors make the true gap even greater than the numbers suggest. UPS cannot offer more aid than the cost of tuition, and other costs come into play. Another factor strongly affecting retention is academic preparation. Many minority students enter at the lower end of the "admissible range". Even if we can draw students with generous financial aid, if they are not sufficiently prepared, we lose many of them after the first year. Thus, we are not attaining our goal of a more diverse campus. It was also observed that we have the average financial aid numbers for all minority students, but we may need more detail to decipher what we're currently doing well, and where we need to improve. It was also noted that even when a student gets the full tuition aid package, that makes more difficult to obtain other need-based aid to cover other expenses. Lack of academic preparation also makes it more difficult to get merit-based aid.

It was remarked that admissions numbers show that diversity has increased if only the overall numbers and percentages are considered. When one looks at the details however, it's plain that Asian and Hawaiian numbers had increased over 2005, but that African Americans and Hispanic numbers are down. An opinion was voiced that the University needs a clearer statement of its diversity goals, not just that we are committed to increasing some vague notion of diversity. It was observed that we need to break the numbers down to look at real diversity and establish a "critical mass", not just for minority students as a whole, but for all individual minority groups. Student responses to the Campus Climate survey indicated that a large percentage of students feel that UPS is less diverse than their high schools and home communities. There were also few responses from minority students, which may raise questions about the welcoming and diverse climate UPS should strive for.

The committee then listed some additional information we may need to obtain in order to evaluate diversity on campus and report to the Faculty Senate.

- We need to identify barriers to minority students and increasing diversity at UPS. Barriers to creation of a more diverse campus include:
 - Liberal Arts education is probably not the first choice of many minority students.
 - The "brightest" minority students are probably able to pick and choose their schools and end up elsewhere.
 - Admissions lacks quantitative objectives that can provide strategic direction and performance measurements regarding recruitment of diverse students.
 - Even when UPS provides what we consider generous financial aid to students, there remain serious financial and academic issues that inhibit increased diversity at the University.
- Data we have only lists admission, not retention. How many minority students from each group are on campus right now?
- Can we break down diversity further by program, ethnicity, and other characteristics so we can see what's working and what's not?
- Can we get average GPAs for various minority groups? We need to assess how well minority students are doing once they're here.
- How much support do minority students get through advising once they are here?

Several committee members observed that we need a holistic approach to this problem. Many people on campus are working hard on this, but the efforts are rarely integrated. One group does not often know what others are doing. How can we coordinate academic preparation, financial aid, advising support, and mentoring? It was proposed that we need to keep incoming minority students as a cohort moving forward together. A number of committee members emphasized that we need to get faculty more involved in this issue through commitment, training, and rewards. How can UPS recognize and value contributions toward diversity and diverse student support? Again, we need more than a general statement of commitment to diversity on the campus.

It was noted that in business, when there are limited means, that is when care must be taken to focus efforts narrowly to achieve maximum benefit from inadequate resources. UPS should do the same. The University has been able to very successfully promote diversity on campus with regard to sexual orientation; why not in regard to racial diversity? It was asked if faculty generally welcomed differences brought to classes by minority students. It was expressed that faculty diversity is critical and that faculty often don't know how to help diverse students. The importance of improving academic skills to make students eligible for merit-based aid as they progressed through their careers at UPS was noted. It was reiterated that we need to integrate the various aspects of striving toward diversity at UPS. We need a common and more specific goal. Should this committee charge itself next year with the task of working toward an integrated effort towards campus diversity? As a faculty committee, we should focus on faculty involvement in this process and how it fits in with the bigger picture. It was decided that a subcommittee would examine this and summarize its findings at the next meeting on April 6, 2007.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:03 A.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Mike Valentine