

Diversity Committee Minutes

October 27, 2006

Attending: Rosa Beth Gibson, Ed Cole, Monica DeHart, Heather Clifford, Janet Marcavage, Mike Valentine, Kim Bobby, Jim McCullough, Nila Wiese, Harry Velez-Quinones

Meeting was called to order at 8:05 A.M.

Chair Nila Wiese asked for comments on or corrections to the October 13th meeting minutes. There were no changes and the minutes were approved. (M/S/P)

The Chair called for announcements. Highlights from the busy diversity activity calendar include:

- Nov. 9th 8pm, Kilworth Chapel, Susan Owen lecture: White Benevolence and Cultural America
- Oct 26th 7:00 pm, SUB 201: Race Readers Group Meeting, Student discussion of Cornell West's book Race Matters

Rosa Beth mentioned that the Race and Pedagogy Faculty-Staff book club is expected to meet in early December.

Jim mentioned that a CWLT session on Race and Pedagogy in the Classroom is coming up on Nov. 1.

Rosa Beth will forward information about an upcoming spotlight on The Pacific Rim program for faculty and staff.

Rosa Beth reported that the Diversity Planning Task Force is moving forward in completing its report to President Thomas.

Agenda Items:

1. Discussion of Bias and Hate sub-committee's proposal

There is nothing to report yet for BHERT. Yoshiko is working on a draft that she will share with other sub-committee members, then present to the Diversity Committee.

Discussion of the draft will be an agenda item for the Nov. 10 meeting.

2. Update on student groups by liaisons

Nila plans to attend the International Club meeting on Monday Oct. 30. Monica met with JSO. She brought up a question raised by JSO: Is there an academic policy regarding the observance of religious holidays?

Rosa Beth suggested reviewing the statement of principle from Chaplain Dave Wright. Janet reported that he emailed this statement to the campus this semester. There was further discussion that left the question unanswered about whether there is an official faculty policy regarding holiday observance. Heather brought up a concern about feeling uncomfortable celebrating Christian holidays on campus, but not other holidays.

Jim suggested there should be symbols and celebration of all the holidays in the SUB. We will issue an invitation to Chaplain Dave Wright to increase our understanding and voice our concerns regarding the issue of religious holidays and observances.

Ed reported difficulty in getting in touch with the Pagan Student Alliance. Jim mentioned that they might be re-organizing.

Mike mentioned that the Muslim student group is also re-organizing.

3. Discussion of self-assessment

Nila, Jim and Carrie met as a subcommittee to discuss the committee's self-evaluation that will be reported to the Senate. The subcommittee received responses from other committee members and met to discuss and draft the self-assessment.

Jim presented a draft of the self-assessment. He discussed how we are unusual in the sense that as a Faculty Senate committee, we have many non-faculty members, whose input and contributions are certainly valued and appreciated. Jim expressed that some of the newer committee members were unable to answer some of the questions. It was noted that our latest charges can be found in recent minute meetings online. Charge #6 is new this semester.

Jim asked us to consider the more substantial questions about committee responsibilities in the self-assessment:

Is the domain of charges to this committee adequate and appropriate? What additional work might this committee include among its charges? Is its work sufficiently narrow that it could be merged into a different committee or group? Do committee members feel that this committee should be sunsetted? What charges are rarely addressed or seem peripheral to this committee? How else might the responsibilities be logically divided?

A lively discussion followed.

Nila and Jim expressed that the subcommittee's opinion is that there could be a stronger role for the Diversity committee in terms of consultation and insight with other diversity groups on campus, for example the Race and Pedagogy Conference Planning Committee and the process of diversity-related initiatives by the Diversity Committee, that we should be more involved in the forming of these groups and the shaping of diversity initiatives on campus. Kim reported that she previously had asked the diversity committee about how they wanted to be involved with R & P. Jim felt that our involvement should be more formal with official representation from the Diversity Committee in diversity related activities.

Rosa Beth felt that diversity initiatives should be initiated from wherever they emerge from on campus and wants people throughout the university to embrace these goals without the Diversity Committee having too much authority over other groups.

Harry expressed a concern over perception of the Diversity Committee as not having a decisive, visible role regarding diversity on campus.

Rosa Beth mentioned that the DPTF was birthed in the diversity committee and the committee was also a prompt for the climate survey.

Jim expressed that while there are members of the Diversity Committee also serving on the DPTF and R & P, they are not official representatives of the Diversity Committee.

Mike expressed that we can be more involved in diversity efforts.

Rosa Beth spoke of the committee's involvement with diversity issues in the past, as she is the longest-standing member present. The committee has been engaged in faculty selection in the past and has asked search committees for statistics and other information.

Nila felt that we currently have no say on admission efforts or faculty recruitment and we should consider institutionalizing our involvement, making it a truly strategic concern not an ad-hoc process. She wishes us to be part of the process of increasing diversity on campus diversity, not hear about diversity-related plans afterwards.

Mike reported that at the recent Chairs' meeting, the problem of diverse recruitment was raised, without mention of the Diversity Committee. He mentioned that the discussion of recruitment was probably due to some of our efforts.

Rosa Beth suggested, due to a concern with time and workload, biting a few major issues each year, as it would be too time-consuming to address all of our charges simultaneously.

Mike brought up the approval process of the curriculum committee. Should we have a similar role and protocol, where diversity-related initiatives need to be consulted with the Diversity Committee?

Jim raised the importance of these issues as related to how much authority we have.

Nila asked if we felt that we had enough governance?

Rosa Beth mentioned that the president will decide on more work to be done as a result of the DPTF work and survey. This work may be charged to the diversity committee.

Monica expressed that there were two issues at hand, one was the Diversity Committee serving as a clearinghouse for diversity related projects or activities, and the other was the authority the Diversity Committee should have on university policies and initiatives related to diversity.

Nila mentioned that if we are more involved, we could offer suggestions to increase diversity on campus, such as recommending to Development the raising of funds designated to minority faculty hiring.

Janet expressed that we could be more involved through engagement and support, but not necessarily authority. The committee could serve as a clearinghouse for all diversity-related initiatives and offer advice.

Jim mentioned that just as diversity groups need an advisor, perhaps before diversity groups are created, they should also be asked to find a liaison in the Diversity Committee.

Jim asked, what do we do for the Senate as a faculty committee?

Rosa Beth expressed concern about us having a possible veto power over other groups' activities and practices.

Jim reminded us that the self-assessment report is due Dec. 1. Members are to email wording about committee responsibilities to Jim by next Friday and anything else to be changed in the report. The subcommittee will provide a revised draft at our next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00.

Respectfully submitted,

Janet Marcavage

The next meeting of the Diversity Committee is Friday, November 10 at 8 A.M. in the Student Diversity Center.