

Diversity Committee Minutes

October 23, 2003

Present: David Macey, Randy Nelson, Ivey West, Blaire Notrica, Jac Royce, Margi Nowak, Rosa Beth Gibson, Eric Orlin, Eboni Trico, Kris Bartanen, Kim Bobby

The meeting was called to order at 3:05 p.m.

The Minutes of the October 9, 2002 meeting were approved as amended.

Announcements: Jac Royce reported that the Diversity statement will be taken up by the Faculty Senate on Monday. After the statement is endorsed by the Senate, it will then need affirmation by the Board of Trustees. Then the committee will have to consider the best ways to communicate the statement throughout the campus community and create a conversation on diversity.

Jac also announced that Lori Walters will be out for the remainder of the fall semester recuperating from surgery. The members of the committee expressed their wishes for a speedy recovery and decided that with only three meetings remaining this fall it was probably not worthwhile asking the Staff Senate to send a temporary replacement in her absence.

Old Business:

The committee returned to its discussion of the data presented by Randy Nelson at the October 9 meeting, and in particular considered the question raised by Nancy Bristow in an email of whether it would be productive to have a discussion with a representative from the Admissions office about the data and undergraduate enrollment.

Jac Royce began the discussion by asking how we might connect Randy's data with what the Admissions office does. Randy's data primarily concerns the situation as it exists on our campus once students arrive, but Admissions is concerned with bringing students to our campus, so how might the data lead to a productive discussion with the Admissions office?

Blaire Notrica asked whether admissions material might include a question about diversity to gain a sense of people's attitudes before arriving on campus. That led him into the follow up question of asking what the Admissions process was.

Jac Royce raised a series of questions that we might consider asking Admissions about their process:

- How do they target groups of students, and which groups do they target?
 - This brought Jac back to the issue of age-targeting – are we primarily targeting 18-year olds now as opposed to transfer students?
 - How has the recent emphasis on turning UPS into a residential campus affected the way we target local groups? Are local students being cut out of the 'target groups'?
- Is it possible for us to recruit from other groups or groups from which we have not traditionally recruited?
 - Considering what Dean Cooney said about attracting faculty of color without roots in the area to our campus, it might be useful to recruit students with roots in our area to increase retention.

Discussion then centered around how the admissions office recruits students, what suggestions we might make for new approaches, and how we can increase retention by being more attentive to the needs of students of color.

Rosa Beth Gibson summarized the question of increasing minority enrollment by highlighting three key questions.

1. How do we get minority students here?
2. How do we keep them here?
3. How can we encourage them to continue their education by going on to a post-graduate degree?

There was some discussion about how encouragement of students of color towards graduate school might help down the road in alleviating the problem of low numbers of minority faculty on campus.

The general sense of the committee was that we did need to have a discussion with a representative from the Office of Admissions, but we also needed to make more progress in figuring out what kinds of questions we could ask most productively at that meeting. Early December was suggested as a possible time for such a meeting.

The committee briefly discussed other issues of diversity raised by looking at Randy's data, such as age, faith, and disability, for which we have no statistics.

Kim Bobby raised the question of how to recruit from the Washington State Achievers Program as students in that program move along the pipeline. Other committee members raised the question of increasing the number of transfer students, but Ivey West noted that historically transfer students struggle when they arrive here; we can bring transfers students here, but we can't always keep them. Kris Bartanen noted that we now offer more in the way of housing and academic support to transfer students than we have in the past.

At this point discussion turned to the incident that had occurred the previous evening involving the Biznautics and one member of the band who appeared with mud on his face. Kris Bartanen described the event, which several students took to be a reference to blackface, and described the events that her office was planning in the next few days to address the issue. Eboni Trico contributed her view that what was most disturbing about the incident was the lack of awareness displayed by people present; she noted it took seven students one hour and fifty minutes to convince the band member to clean his face, and that his apology left people with more questions than understanding. The committee talked about what its role might be in any response to this incident, and Kris Bartanen suggested that committee members could help most by encourage participation in forthcoming discussions of this incident. The committee was left to ponder the question raised by the students present at the meeting: Why is our campus perceived as a place where such behavior is acceptable?

Unable to answer this question, the meeting adjourned at 4:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Eric Orlin