

August 31, 2018
Committee on Diversity (CoD) Meeting Minutes

Present at the Meeting:

Sarah Moore, Gwynne Kuhner Brown, Carrie Woods, Rachel Pepper, Kirsten Wilbur, Mary Aquiningoc, John Lear, Steven Zopfi, Michael Benitez, and Melvin Rouse

Note taker: Melvin Rouse

1. Meeting called to order by Brown at 3:05pm
 - a. Those in attendance were called to introduce themselves giving their name and department affiliation
2. Election of chair
 - a. Brown mentioned that ideally the chair would be a tenured senior colleague and self-nominations were solicited.
 - i. It was decided that the duties should be split among two tenured members by semester: Wilbur (Fall; previous chair of the committee) and Lear, Moore, or Zopfi (Spring)
3. Setting meeting schedule for the semester
 - a. Pepper and Rouse voiced that Friday's are difficult to schedule in the afternoons (concurrent by Moore who noted deliberative meetings of Fridays for the psychology department)
 - i. Benitez proposed using a doodle poll to align schedules
4. Topic of discussion - revisiting the charges to the CoD
 - a. Brown circulated a handout of the Faculty By Laws highlighting role/purview of the CoD. It was remarked that the CoD is the direct mechanism by which faculty have input on issues of diversity around campus even though there is crossover with the Diversity Advisory Council (DAC).
 - i. It was clarified by Brown that one of the key difference between CoD and DAC is that the CoD is faculty led as opposed to DAC which is composed of broader range of stakeholders including staff, administrators, etc.
 - ii. Brown described her role as faculty senate liaison and cited broader goals related to CoD including study abroad and increasing the number (and access) of students from traditionally underrepresented groups. She then asked which CoD members served as liaison to committees where CoD's input would be useful.
 1. Wilbur asked to clarify if Gunderson was a current DAC representative to which it was affirmed.

2. Rouse stated that he served as liaison to the Sex and Gender Violence Committee (SGVC).
 3. Woods volunteered to serve as liaison to the Bias-Hate Education Response Team (BHERT).
- b. Benitez then clarified DAC's formal charges and function with regard to campus climate, diversity and strategic planning, etc. Benitez then noted that though it is somewhat difficult to disentangle CoD charges from DAC charges, the CoD focuses the needs/concerns of faculty *specifically* on issues of diversity.
- c. The discussion then shifted to revisit the recommended self-charges presented in end-of-year (EOY) report for the 2017-2018 academic year.
- i. There were three recommendations: 1) review the history of CoD, 2) study the campus climate survey and 3) highlight areas related to campus climate and diversity with regard to priorities and resource allocation.
 - ii. Brown noted that the second recommended charge may be too broad and needs to be focused around more measurable tasks. Brown also noted the recommended charges are, at least in spirit, covered by current charges to the CoD (particularly charges one and two).
 - iii. Brown then remarked on the issue of question 6 and the CoD noting that it is a true sticking point with the CoD. Brown then suggested that the CoD develop a recommendation around question 6 rather than have the full faculty deliberate the question (as was suggested in the EOY report for 2017-2018).
1. Zopfi then requested the EOY 2017-2018 report be circulated for review. Wilbur and Brown concurred.
- d. Moore noted that the time between curriculum reviews is too long considering the quick pace of demographic changes on campus with regard to *both* faculty and student diversification. Moore then noted that there are ways to address the role of diversity in curriculums but this would be require more contemporaneous action across departments to thoroughly assess, "what are they doing that is working."
- i. Benitez then noted that changes need to be made to the framework so as not to circumvent conversation, but to use alternative channels to address issues brought about diversification of the student and faculty body. Benitez and Rouse then discussed current efforts with regard to faculty mentorship for junior faculty overall as well as faculty of color in particular. Rouse cited work by Jennifer Utrata (former CoD member) in this area with focus on all junior faculty colleagues. Benitez and Rouse then clarified that their collaboration will focus on junior faculty of color.

1. It was then noted that there is no formal mechanism for department heads to see what is going well (or even just happening) in other departments and that though reports are produced, they are not necessarily disseminated, leading to silo's of information across campus.
 - a. Aquiningoc then asked, in response to Moore's original remark, what current structure exists to relay information in this area?
 - ii. Woods mentioned the work of student group visible spectrum in this area (Aquiningoc is a member) and suggested perhaps more resources for these sorts of student groups.
 - iii. Likewise, Woods reviewed the some of the individual actions the biology has taken to address issues of diversity including hiring an external consultant.
 - iv. Wilbur then mentioned the annual Professional Development and Enrichment Conference (PDEC).
 - v. Benitez then discussed the faculty retreat and conversation in response to faculty feedback from the '17-'18 POSSE plus retreat.
 1. Faculty in this effort are developing a proposal of sorts to go to President Crawford and Provost Bartanen to address some of the issues brought to the surface after the POSSE plus retreat.
 2. One possible outcome would be a retreat for all faculty to address student concerns presented during the POSSE plus retreat.
 - a. Benitez then clarified two concerns that will shape this current effort; 1) what is most pressing (i.e. urgency of the need) and 2) what will institutionally be of benefit.
 - vi. Moore then clarified that, in terms of policy, there is nothing required and that individual efforts differ by department (with varying degrees of success).
 - vii. Brown and Benitez then echoed the concern underlying Aquiningoc's question summing that an organization structure may be needed in this area.
 - e. Benitez then queried, "how do we leverage what is already going on?"
 - i. In response Aquiningoc discussed student led efforts including the new student organization Multi-Identity Based Unions (MIBU) which is an effort to reduce redundancy in student-led diversity programming and to prevent the recapitulation of unsuccessful efforts previously tried.

- ii. Benitez then mentioned that faculty concerns around diversity policy/ programming often falls into repetitious cycles where no progress is made precisely because of lack of feedback both interdepartmentally and with student leadership.
- f. Brown then circled the discussion back to the charges.
- i. Lear then mentioned the strategic plan stating that this may be an opportune time to assess where the CoD can insert itself to actively carry out the current charges to the committee. Lear linked this opportunity with a current concerns students have, in particular, DACA. Lear clarified that students don't necessarily feel that there is concerted thought and effort with regard to the current crisis for undocumented students.
 - 1. Benitez then suggested CoD invite the working group (or a representative) to meet with this body to illuminate what work has been done and to share what recommendations we have to build or rupture this work around the DACA crisis.
 - 2. Lear then noted that students and the various working groups/governing committees are not communicating well and CoD could potentially help in that area specifically.
 - ii. Wilbur then connected the DACA discussion with the overall concern of minoritized students with regard to the CoD's previous review of persistence and retention rates, as well as the summary of the previous campus climate survey. Wilbur reiterated that strengthened communication interdepartmentally, etc. would encourage sharing of data that may give important details about how our teaching practices influence these numbers specifically. She suggested we could use these hypothetical data to build recommendations for structural changes as related to campus climate and minoritized student retention and persistence.
 - 1. Benitez then cautioned that research shows that increases in diversity are often associated with increases in attrition, specifically, when there are no structures in place to *support* the increase in diversity.
 - a. Pepper then noted that 1st to 2nd year retention could likely big piece of data necessary to address this concern.
 - iii. Lear then remarked that there was no campus-wide discussion, reflection, or full processing of the death of a student from last academic year. That student was previously a Tacoma public schools student. Lear noted that the next steps are unclear.
 - 1. Benitez concurred and stated that, as a campus, we have not had a real conversation about how this tragedy unfolded and what we as a community can do better re: institutional protocol and efforts.

- a. Brown then queried if this were a potential space for student life to intervene and address student concern?
- b. Wilbur then clarified that we (faculty) often don't get the full story and are unclear of the full context.
- c. Aquiningoc cautioned CoD to not tokenize this one case, but rather to place efforts into a thriving model for PoC students. Lear concurred and stated that we must learn from these mistakes and actually create a learning moment from the incidents
 - i. Moore noted that no such learning moment has occurred in the aftermath of recent incidents. Moore then noted that this may be indicative of a larger cultural problem with regard to lack of transparency and lack of learning from mistakes.
 - iv. Lear concurred and recalled that from his years here he could one example where a learning moment clearly took place. Lear cited the example of a student who tried to form a white nationalist group on campus and recounted the events that resulted from that action.
 - v. Benitez agreed and reiterated that transparency across each level of decision-making is key, and that institutionally, we seem to be moving towards more of a culture of silence.
 - vi. Moore noted that BHERT has often played a role in sparking discussion and is a place for the liaison to play a critical role in that conversation
 - vii. Benitez remarked that though BHERT is a player in this discussion, it does not have the expertise to fully occupy that role and that we must tap into faculty knowledge to reframe the fallout from damage-control to learning moments.
 - viii. Aquiningoc agreed and stated that a lot of marginalized students, particularly, students from Tacoma public schools, are hurting and that more needs to be done to settle these issues (issues including but not limited to res. life, student-to-student interactions, etc.). Aquiningoc then clarified that many of these students just don't get that some faculty *do* care and are advocates for them with the administration.
 1. Benitez echoed Aquiningoc's point and stated that institutional decisions often do not match individual faculty effort and more could be done to highlight that work for students. Aquiningoc agreed.

5. Brown then summarized the final discussion points, noted the time, and adjourned

the meeting at 4:05pm.