

Meeting Minutes Committee on Diversity - April 6th, 2020

Present: Tim Beyer, Sandra Braedt (visitor), Joel Elliot, Lea Fortmann, Christina Mills, Ariela Tubert, Carrie Woods, Steven Zopfi (Chair)

Chair Zopfi called the meeting to order at 12pm. Minutes from the March 26 meeting were approved.

Sandra Braedt (Deputy Title IX coordinator, Interim Title IX coordinator, Interim Equal Opportunity Officer) was invited to discuss the current process for investigating complaints from students about situations in the classroom. Sandra explained how her role had changed since she joined Puget Sound last summer and that she was now handling both Title IX complaints (about gender discrimination) and Equal Opportunity complaints (about other protected classes, like race, ethnicity, national origin, etc.) Sandra explained that if someone complains that one of our policies was violated whether the [Campus Policy Prohibiting Harassment and Sexual Misconduct](#) or the more general [Campus Policy Prohibiting Harassment and Discrimination](#) then the complaints are handled by her. If a student files a complaint about a situation that took place in the classroom using one of the online forms (found [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)) or in other ways (in person, via email or phone call), Sandra checks on whether there is a potential policy violation at stake. If there is a potential violation, then she follows through with an investigation. If the complaint does not indicate that a potential violation then it is forward on to a someone else. A discussion ensued with members of the COD asking Sandra questions about the reporting process.

Are faculty notified when there is a complaint against them? Sandra responded that if a student complains and no potential violation is found then in some cases faculty may get notified but often they do not. If there is an investigation, then faculty would get notified that the investigation is in process. Sandra indicated that no complaints against faculty have yet gone to the investigation state during her time at Puget Sound.

How is information on how to report publicized? Sandra responded that the link gets sent by email periodically and that any related search terms on the website would lead to one of the forms on the university website. She also mentioned that many of the reports are second hand reports, coming from friends and others who witness a situation involving other people.

Do you have a sense of what outcome students are looking for? Are they looking for some sort of action even if it doesn't raise to the level of policy violation? Sandra responded that it depends on what the issue is. Sometimes students just want to get it on record in case something else comes up, sometimes students are seeking for a conversation. In Title IX cases, it is usually a different situation but a good number of the cases are complaints involve microaggressions that do not raise to the level of discrimination and that may be protected by academic freedom.

After Sandra left the meeting, the committee engaged in a discussion of the reporting process for situations involving incidents in the classroom.

Among the points raised is the importance of student voices being heard and validating student experiences. While the experiences may not rise to the level of policy violations, they are still not just feelings that can be dismissed. While one of the incidents may seem small to others, students of color in particular are often experiencing repeated instances of microaggressions in the classroom and are negatively affected by those experiences.

The members of the committee agreed that there seems to be a hole in the process: how do we handle those situations that are not policy violations? More transparency about the process for those cases is needed so that students know what is happening with their complaints. Could we perhaps collect these and share with faculty properly anonymized? Perhaps the incidents during the year can be collated and used in a training for faculty each May.

The committee also discussed the possibility of including a discussion of diversity in review files. We already ask for diversity statements in hiring faculty, wouldn't it make sense to have a similar statement for reviews? An advantage of adding such a requirement is that it would encourage faculty to attend trainings and perhaps turn their attention to the ways in which they support the diversity efforts of the university and our increasingly diverse student body.

The committee also considered what kind of training is/can be offered to new faculty. Ariela and Jairo did a 4 hour workshop for new faculty in January, including discussion of inclusive pedagogy, syllabus design, and dealing with conflicts in the classroom. New faculty tend to already be more aware as they are currently likely to receive some training in graduate school but it would be good to get all faculty eventually involved in such trainings. Trainings need to be offered often and regularly enough so that all faculty have an opportunity to attend over time.

The committee left with the following ideas for future work for the COD:

Help to find a way of addressing and sharing with faculty complaints that do not rise to the level of possible policy violation, specifically when it comes to incidents in the classroom or incidents involving faculty and students? Students are still experiencing these issues and the COD may be especially well placed to think about how some of these issues can be addressed.

Collaborate with Office of Diversity and Inclusion, the Associate Deans' Office, BHERT, Title IX/EOO Office to design ongoing training opportunities for faculty. Perhaps by department? Perhaps based on the complaints that came up during the previous academic year on our campus?

Collaborate with PSC to consider the inclusion of a discussion of diversity in faculty review statements. Diversity statement are already required for new hires, we ask faculty review

statements to update the teaching and research statements that faculty provided when they were hired, why not ask for a similar update to the diversity statement?

Look for ways to make sure that students feel like they have an avenue for complaining, that their complaints are being heard, and their experiences validated, and in addition, that students of color are not constantly facing micro-aggressions in the classroom.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:50pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Ariela Tubert