

## **Minutes of the Student Life Committee**

Meeting of November 9, 2011

Wheelock Student Center, Room 208

Attending: Mike Segawa, Lisa Ferrari, Bruce Mann, Cameron Ford, Rebecca Kuglitsch, Nathan Little, Sierra Phillips, Geoff Proehl, Hannah Smith, Nila Wiese. Guests: Kim Bobby, Czarina Ramsey.

Bruce Mann called the meeting to order at 9:07am.

Minutes from October 26, 2011 were approved as distributed.

Bruce introduced our only agenda item for today: Diversity issues on campus. This is in line with one of the committee's official charges as approved by the Faculty Senate. Mike introduced Kim Bobby and Czarina Ramsey who had been invited to update the committee on diversity efforts directed at students on campus.

Kim Bobby provided a short review of the role of diversity as part of our overall strategic plan. She shared with the committee a 'cultural competence' self-diagnostic instrument which was developed based on findings from the 2006 climate survey. This is a work in progress, and the document has been shared with faculty and staff at various venues, and she was looking for feedback from the Student Life Committee (SLC) on how to engage students in the fine tuning of this document. Kim commented that Kim McDowell has suggested the diagnostic be added to student staff orientation. At the suggestion of Lisa Ferrari, all committee members completed the survey and a discussion followed. Bruce asked whether there were resources someone could access to get further information or help after taking the 'test.' Kim responded that some of those resources were probably available throughout the campus, but that at this time, they had not been put in place in a structured way. Discussion also addressed questions of privacy as responses to some of the questions could be deemed personal and not necessarily issues that people would be willing to discuss.

Geoff and Nila opined that the document felt a bit prescriptive and too specific and questioned whether it was aligned or consistent with the University's mission. Cameron indicated he was hesitant about having student leaders and RA's try to apply this tool during orientation because they may or may not be able to provide enough discussion, as students are already overwhelmed with lots of paperwork. Sarah stated that cultural competence should be an ongoing conversation and wondered about relying on one document, applied once. Hannah, Cameron, and Nathan thought the document may alienate people who personally do not believe in these protections and therefore may feel excluded or marginalized for having beliefs that are not aligned with the stated values of the institution. Lisa and Bruce questioned whether then the University should not admit students who do not believe in our ethos. Lisa and Czarina offered that people evolve over time as they gain knowledge and experience. Discussion ensued about the tension in our campus about respecting and accepting those in our campus community that may not fully share the institution's stated values.

Czarina then provided a quick summary of resources provided by Multicultural Student Services (MCSS) and of current programs under way related to strengthening 'cultural competency.' The MCSS has also revised its mission statement, charges and target student outcomes. She shared

some incidents where conflicts had arisen due to students various beliefs and values regarding religion and sexual orientation. She also shared that the Student Diversity Center (SDC) had made great progress over the last year in terms of creating a more welcoming and engaging climate for students with various identities, and that some of the inter-groups conflicts of the past were being replaced by a greater sense of community. A recent SDC council retreat which focused on cultural competency and leadership seemed to have been instrumental to improving collaboration between student diversity groups.

At the end of both presentations, several committee members expressed their thoughts about our campus community's need to develop skills to engage in 'difficult conversations.'

The meeting was adjourned at 10:05am.  
Respectfully submitted by Nila Wiese