

The Committee on Diversity Minutes  
02/25/2009, Wednesday

In attendance: Kim Bobby, Monica DeHart, Zaixin Hong (secretary), Judith Kay, Paula Meiers, Jan Moore, Margi Nowak, David Sousa, Justin Tiehen, Harry Vélez, and Stacey Weiss.

Chair Judith Kay called the meeting to order at 8:05 am.

The committee reviewed and approved the minutes of the previous meeting (02/11/2009).

### **Announcement**

Judith reminded committee members of the Faculty meeting on April 6 for an important vote on the Diversity Committee Bylaws.

Monica reported on the Faculty meeting of February 17. Although the attendance had been low, the discussion of bylaw revision for the Diversity Committee had gone well. After the meeting Martin Jackson sent an email to Judith discussing article six, the consideration of which has been included in today's agenda.

### **Old Business**

#### **A. Discussion of the faculty meeting response to the proposal; consideration of Martin Jackson's friendly amendment.**

As far as BERT is concerned, BERT examines where problems occur, but is still figuring out its objectives. BERT has not been and will not be a hearing board. The question of the procedure of making reports to BERT remains unanswered.

However the faculty eventually votes on article six, Judith argued that being proactive is an important function for this committee. There are already some existing ways to deal with complaints. Kim pointed out that untoward things are happening in our community as seen in some graffiti in Trimble, the library, etc. BERT can make the community aware of such things and respond to them to further the spirit of diversity.

Discussion ensued about the fall forum with the conclusion that it was not a model event. David pointed out that BERT is invited to the weekly free discussions that are related to *The Trail*. Discussions in that forum include promotion of diversity and serves as guideposts to preserve diverse values and perspectives. Kim reminded us that every year there is evidence of intolerance in the *Trail*, which justifies the existence of BERT. Monica pointed out that Combat Zone in the *Trail* is an example of free speech, but there is no forum for members of the group misrepresented to discuss how the jokes or sarcasm affect them. The *Trail* does not always print letters to the editor about such concerns.

One faculty member at the full faculty meeting raised concerns about using a definition of diversity that is contained in the University Strategic Plan that did not require approval by a three-quarters vote of the faculty. Committee members discussed the possibility of resorting to the existing definition in the existing bylaws, if necessary. Monica expressed the desirability of maintaining this committee as a space where disagreements about definitions could be discussed freely; she advocated that the definition be university-wide and defined elsewhere. Harry argued that diversity is a concept in flux, variously detailed in the recent decades. We should not bind ourselves to a static definition in the bylaws. Judith encouraged us to ponder why a fall-back position might be if significant faculty opposition to using the definition in the Strategic Plan.

Martin Jackson suggested the following language for article six: “To activate, oversee, collaborate with, and report to the Faculty Senate annually on an education-focused group that will address manifestations of prejudice or bigotry within the campus community, including promotion of academic freedom and freedom of expression.”

In regard to Jackson’s proposed amendment to article six, members expressed different opinions. The primary change that Jackson makes is shifting the responsibility for promoting academic freedom directly to BERT from this committee that oversees BERT. Some spoke against shifting this responsibility. David, on the other hand, insisted that the activities outlined in proposal would define a fundamental role for BERT. Members exchanged opinions on different wordings and phrasings of the amendment, arriving at:

6. To activate, oversee, collaborate with, and report to the Faculty Senate annually on an education-focused group that will address, as needed, manifestations of prejudice or bigotry within the campus community through activities that include the promotion of academic freedom and freedom of expression.

Monica suggested that maybe the committee’s responsibility for promoting academic freedom could be moved to another article, such as article five. This duty did not need to be coupled with or limited only to BERT.

## **B. Charge Two –report of subcommittee**

Subcommittee members Justin, David, and Kim reported that they talked to people individually and collected data and planned to have a meeting with the chair to share the narratives.

## **C. Charge Three – responses to proposed CAIR language**

Judith explained that this charge will be for the whole university community, and that any changes we recommend will ultimately need to go to the Board of Trustees. We agreed to examine the language individually; Judith will ask for recommendations for changes in the next meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 8:55 am.