

Diversity Committee Minutes
October 28th, 2008

Committee Members/Representatives Present: David Sousa, Kim Bobby, Margi Nowak, Stacey Weiss, Zaixin Hong, Judith Kay, Angelina Nockai, Harry Vélez, Lisa Ferrari, Jan Moore, Yoshiko Matsui, Justin Tiehen, Paula Meiers

The meeting was called to order by chair Judith Kay at 8:05 a.m. Justin Tiehen was appointed as the minute-taker. The minutes of the previous meeting (October 7th) were reviewed and approved.

Discussion Item: An Open Forum on October 8th, sponsored by BERT and devoted to the topic of campus media. Lisa Ferrari, who attended the open forum, reported the following.

- The meeting was well-attended, with the audience mostly consisting of students.
- The discussion at the open forum focused on two articles run in the *Trail*: a satirical piece run in the “Combat Zone” and a student opinion piece.
- Some concern was expressed by those attending the open forum that its purpose had not been made clear enough in advance: the discussion ended up focusing not on campus media generally (as the forum title led one to believe) but on the *Trail* in particular.
- Also, some concern was expressed about how the open forum was advertised. More specifically, it was suggested that a better balance could be struck between setting up such a meeting in a quick and timely manner and distributing information regarding the meeting far enough in advance that attendees are given a fair chance to prepare and arrange their schedules accordingly.

Main Agenda Topic: Possible revisions to the bylaws specifying the duties of our committee. First, there is a question of whether the proposed bylaws should include an alternative definition of “diversity.” In preparation for discussion of this topic, Judith Kay distributed by e-mail 4 different potential revisions.

- #1: Define “diversity” in terms of *historically under-represented* throughout the document.
- #2: Define “diversity” in terms of *diverse populations* throughout the document.
- #3: Define “diversity” in terms of *promoting equal opportunity*, where this phrase is in turn understood in terms of the university’s Equal Opportunity Statement.
- #4: Define “diversity” in terms of *socially diverse populations*, where this phrase is in turn understood in terms of the university’s Diversity Strategic Plan.

Second, there is a question of whether the bylaws should be streamlined and revised so as to omit reference to things that might not exist in ten or fifteen years (e.g., five-year reviews). Such a revision was suggested by the chair of the Faculty Senate and the Dean.

In preparation for discussion of this topic, Judith Kay distributed by e-mail a (fifth) potential revision.

Discussion: Regarding the first question, how to define “diversity,” there was general agreement that option #2 was too vague and otherwise problematic. Harry Vélez contended that option #3 would render the committee’s duties redundant, given that the university is already committed to promoting equal opportunity by the Equal Opportunity Statement. In connection with option #4, Lisa Ferrari objected to talk of *enabling* the university to do this or that (taken from bylaw 2 on the revision proposed by #4), on the grounds that the university is already *able* to hire/retain faculty from socially diverse populations; David Sousa suggested in response that on a suitably broad understanding of “enabling,” such language was appropriate. In connection with option #1, Margi Nowak noted a tension that was plaguing our different attempts to define “diversity”: on one hand there’s a pull toward adopting overarching language that covers multiple dimensions of diversity without attempting to provide a comprehensive list of such dimensions, while on the other hand there is a pull toward providing such a list to make as clear as possible which sorts of diversity the committee is concerned with.

Ultimately, the group was drawn toward option #1. Stacey Weiss noted that option #1’s talk of *historically* under-represented groups seems to exclude from the discussion groups which might come to be under-represented or discriminated against going forward, but which do not have a history of such treatment in their past (e.g., groups discriminated against on some genetic basis). In response, Judith Kay noted that the language from the definition of “social diversity” used in option #4 could be used to address this problem – there, the definition speaks of characteristics that *could cause* groups or individuals to be systematically excluded. David Sousa recommended deleting “actively” because participation by definition is active. Taking these concerns into consideration, Lisa Ferrari proposed an amendment to option #1. On the amended version, bylaw 1 would read as follows:

1. Actively participate in the development of initiatives that enable the university to hire new faculty from historically under-represented populations, and that better support the retention and success of such faculty. The committee’s aim is to serve the university’s goal of increasing the social diversity of the faculty. “Social diversity” refers to the Glossary of Terms from the University Diversity Strategic Plan.

Yoshiko Matsui objected on the grounds that the amended bylaw would be running together two separate things: historical under-representation and social diversity. Harry Vélez suggest in response that while these are two separate things, the proposed revision was not conflating them in a problematic way.

Wrap-up: The meeting adjourned at 8:55 a.m. The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, November 11th at 8:00 a.m.