

Diversity Committee Minutes November 15, 2007

Committee Members Present: Heather Clifford, Janet Marcavage, Yoshiko Matsui, Mike Valentine, Monica DeHart, Judith Kay, Marcos Goldstein, Nancy Nieraeth, Carol Lentz

The meeting was called to order at 8:05 by co-chair Valentine. DeHart volunteered as the minutes-taker for the day. Members presented reviewed and passed a motion to approve last week's Minutes.

Announcements

It was noted that the New Orleans Monologues and the Madame F showings this last weekend have had sell-out crowds, demonstrating a good campus participation in these events.

Valentine mentioned that the BHERT group had met for the first time last Tuesday in order to begin to define the method and goals of that initiative.

Discussion on the Bylaws

Co-Chair Valentine passed out copies of the revisions to the Diversity Self-Evaluation drafted by subcommittee members Kay, Valentine, Wiese, and Bobby, and then opened discussion on the draft.

Upon question, subcommittee members clarified that there was no particular order to the "duties" listed on the draft and that in fact several of the items might be folded together and/or further disaggregated according to the Committee's conclusions. Items 6 and 7 in particular were identified for this reason. Those items speak to the issue of (a) preparing a framework for assessing diversity-related efforts; and (b) contributing to the Campus report on diversity.

By way of clarification, it was noted that the "framework" refers to the idea of establishing a common language and set of concepts relating to diversity issues that might provide a structure for conversations across campus groups and initiatives. It would operationalize definitions to clarify a specific rubric of diversity. The framework would thus be the product of campus debate and consensus. It was suggested that we might draw on products from the Race and Pedagogy Committee, the Diversity Audit, the Diversity Task Force, etc. as starting points/resources for this process. Based on this framework, different units could set up goals and means of evaluating progress in relation to the unique character of each area.

The subcommittee members distinguished six main areas/units in which they saw the Diversity Committee participating in the construction of this framework. It was suggested that the Committee might tackle one area per year, providing an assessment of

diversity progress in these areas that could then be highlighted in the Campus Diversity Report.

1. Admissions
2. Student retention and advising
3. Recruitment and hiring of faculty and staff
4. Faculty and staff retention
5. Student Life
6. Curriculum

The question then arose of what the specific function of the Diversity Committee would be in relation to these different areas. Would its role include helping each unit to define its goals or would it be evaluating each unit's progress toward meeting its goals? If an evaluative function is included, would the Diversity Committee then be assessing the performance of non-academic units on diversity-related issues?

In response to these queries, one suggestion was that the Diversity Committee would help in setting goals and creating a space of dialogue around diversity issues. Each unit would set its own goals and evaluate its own progress. The Campus Diversity Officer prepares the Diversity Report, not the Diversity Committee. Therefore, the role of the Diversity Committee's would be to help construct the "framework" and disseminate information about it to the rest of the campus community to initiate a process of commentary and dialogue.

This again raised the issue of the Diversity Committee's authority. Given that it is a uniquely-hybrid Committee, where can it do the most good? Should its purview extend to all areas of campus activity, in which case it might need to be reconstituted as something other than a Faculty Senate Committee, or should it restrict its activities to solely faculty and curricular issues?

Ultimately, it was decided that the Committee is at a unique juncture to define itself and set a course that would give the Committee clear direction and authority. It was decided that the Committee needed additional dialogue on this issue to really consider the contours of a variety of different models. The following emerged as three potential trajectories to consider.

1. Faculty Committee. Based on its identity as a sub-committee of the Faculty Senate, the Diversity Committee would be reconstituted to consist solely of faculty and would direct its efforts only toward faculty and curricular issues.
 - a. It was noted, for example, that the Diversity Committee's progress on getting new language into the Buff Document was a process that, while useful, nonetheless, required non-faculty members of the committee to participate in a long process that had little relationship to them. If the Committee decided it wanted to focus on more activities like that one, how useful is the mixed membership?

- b. If the Diversity Committee were relegated to purely faculty issues, some members noted that the staff might need its own diversity committee to speak to its particular needs.
2. Connective-Coordinating Committee. Based on its current hybrid identity, the Diversity Committee would attempt to perform a connective role, coordinating various diversity efforts across distinct campus units, including both academic and non-academic.
 - a. Here, it was noted that it had been useful to talk to the admissions office last year and that more conversations of this kind might be useful in terms of connecting up efforts across various areas. The mixed composition of the Committee would be an important element of this configuration.
 - b. However, this same example also raised the question of what has happened to the reports produced by this Committee. For example, what has been done with the report on retention from last year?
 - c. Some members wondered whether this connective function now comes under the purview of the Chief Diversity Officer.
3. Presidential Advisory Committee. In order to alleviate the contradiction in the Committee's base and mandate, the Committee would be reconstituted as a Presidential Advisory Committee.
 - a. This configuration would reflect the implied intent of the composition of the current Committee, making the Committee responsible for setting up the diversity framework and giving it authority to work across units.
 - b. In both this conception and the previous, some members worried that the broader focus might stretch the Committee and promote a lack of sustained attention on faculty issues.

Committee members agreed to ponder these various configurations and continue conversation at future meetings with the goal of using the rest of this year to hammer out the contours of a clear path forward for the Committee.

Scheduling

Before closing the meeting, co-chair Valentine noted that since there appeared to several Committee members who could not attend our next meeting scheduled for Nov 29, he would send out an e-mail to inquire about the possibility of scheduling it for Dec 6 (three weeks away) instead.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:55.