

Diversity Committee Meeting Minutes

October 9, 2009

In attendance

Bobby, Dahl-Veenstra, Drakos, Ferrari, Hong, Owen, Rocchi, Soule, Sousa, Tiehen

I. The minutes of the previous meeting were approved without amendment

II. Consideration of charges from the Senate

Rocchi expressed concern that there was little of substance in the charges, observing that they seem to charge us to talk about many things but to actually do very little. Several members of the committee responded that there is considerable substance to the charges, and lots of choices to make about the work to do under those charges.

1. Ferrari observed that the committee is now charged (see Charge #5) with oversight of BERT, and that the committee will have to make choices about what oversight entails.
2. Ferrari observed that the committee's charge (#2) to "continue to develop and implement a program for including diversity issues as a permanent element of faculty development and to assess and refine that program" is substantive, and that in fact the work of last year's subcommittee will be incorporated into this year's mid-year orientation sessions for new faculty members. We will have to assess the effects of that work and to make choices about next steps.
3. Owen noted that there is ongoing work under Charge #4, "to maintain a website...that displays courses...with significant diversity content." This work is now being led by Professors Matthews and Ostrom, and the committee will have to make choices about how to build on their work.
4. Several committee members noted that reviewing the language of the Diversity Statement (Charge #1) will be hard, substantive work, first requiring the committee to determine how to approach this work and how to involve the larger university community in the conversation about the language of the statement.

Sousa, knowing the answer to his question, asked it anyway: "Do we really want to begin the process of deep revisions to the Diversity Statement, given that the statement is relatively fresh (roughly five years old?) and that this work could easily consume the entire committee (and then many other committees) for a year or more?"

Owen responded that we need to do this work to respond to the student body, noting that the revisions under immediate consideration were proposed by the student group, CAIR and arguing that we need to be responsive to these student concerns. Ferrari, in no way suggesting that we should not take up the Diversity Statement language, noted that the committee has been responsive to CAIR in other areas—for example, CAIR

demanded some diversity training and we are working to put this in place, and BERT was also in part a response to the group's concerns. There was brief discussion of the CAIR group's longer list of demands, and Dahl-Veenstra noted that for those interested the document was probably still available on the Tacoma Students for a Democratic Society website.

The committee then turned to a discussion of how to go about reviewing the language of the Diversity statement. No decisions were made, but several members of the committee suggested that this must be a campus-wide conversation, so the question before us became, "How do we involve the campus community in this conversation?" We spoke briefly about the process that produced the current Diversity Statement, and several members suggested that the formal representative bodies across the campus, including student groups, should be included from the very start of the process.

Soule, one of the student representatives, observed that he did not think that CAIR necessarily represented all student groups, and he was apprehensive about moving forward on its demands without involving other student campus diversity groups. Dahl-Veenstra observed that she thought that the CAIR demands were responses to particular events and problems on the campus, but that it was important moving forward to hear from more student groups on these issues. Owen asked about how the campus diversity groups did coalition-building; Drakos, Soule, and Dahl-Veenstra suggested that they could have student leaders bring the diversity statement issue to their own groups for discussion, and then there could be a larger discussion among the leaders of all the student groups. Owen emphasized that the committee needs and welcomes input from students on these and all diversity matters.