

Diversity Committee Minutes
October 7, 2004

Members Present: Terry Beck, Devon Biggerstaff, Kim Bobby, Alexandra Bronson, Nancy Bristow, Marie DeBenedictis, Rosa Beth Gibson, Becca Herman, Priti Joshi, Yoshiko Matsui, Jim McCullough, Carrie Washburn.
Visitor Present: Rachel Safran

The meeting was called to order by Nancy Bristow at 8:00 a.m. in the Diversity Center.

Announcements:

- Jim McCullough noted that the Faculty Senate has passed the charges for the Diversity Committee.
- Carrie Washburn announced that the Diversity Committee has been awarded a budget of \$500 for the year. This money is accessed through Carrie's office.
- Rosa Beth Gibson congratulated Occupational Therapy's representative, Marie DeBenedictis, on the 60th anniversary year of the school.

Sub-Committee Reports

Liaisons to Student Groups: Devon Biggerstaff presented the suggestion of Diversity Committee liaisons to student groups at the last meeting of the Governing Council. Becca Herman reported that the council responded favorably and noted that they understood the issue of faculty time. The council suggested that liaisons attend one meeting per semester to allow Diversity Committee members to serve as liaison with two different groups.

Crisis Response Team: Julie Christoph and Yoshiko Matsui met and had a preliminary discussion about how to go about creating a plan. They will keep the larger committee informed as their sub-committee's work progresses.

New or Re-forming Groups: Kim Bobby and Yoshiko Matsui called students and sent letters inviting students to talk about currently inactive student groups. Some students said that they had not received the email sent earlier. Others said they would prefer a lunchtime meeting. A meeting with interested students will be held this evening (10/ 7/ 04) at 5:00 and a lunchtime meeting will be scheduled for sometime next week. Nancy Bristow expressed her willingness to help with the lunchtime meeting if she is needed.

Yoshiko reported that she was approached by a student interested in forming a Native-American student group. Fliers have been distributed, personal contacts

have been made, and an interest meeting is being held (as per guidelines) to assess the interest level before formally proposing the club.

Phone Project: Nancy Bristow said that our phone project contacts with Admission are Melanie Reed and Paula Meyers. Nancy noted that Melanie Reed (Director of Freshman Admission) is out of town until November. Jim McCullough announced that Admission has agreed to pay for a representative to travel on a trip to recruit international students.

It was agreed that representatives from Admission would be invited to a Diversity Committee meeting in November.

Diversity Statement and on-going education:

Marie DeBenedictis reported on the 90-minute professional development session offered in early January of last year. The session included a wide-variety of activities and a discussion focused on the University's Diversity Statement. Participants were those who are already relatively well versed in Multicultural issues.

Rosa Beth Gibson said that the University's professional development and training program is moving to a new level. Tracks are being established. For example, there will be a track for those supervising others. Diversity programming is a priority for the Human Resources Department and they plan to infuse issues of diversity in every track. Rosa Beth suggested that the developers of the professional development programs be invited to speak with the Diversity Committee as they are planning these new programs. Terry Beck spoke in support of such an invitation and the committee agreed that the invitation should be extended. Rosa Beth agreed to coordinate such a meeting for next Diversity Committee meeting (October 21, 2004).

Alexandra Bronson noted that each residence hall has to put together a diversity program and might benefit from assistance that the Diversity Committee could offer.

Terry Beck spoke about the experience offered at the orientation of new tenure-line faculty.

Marie DeBenedictis agreed to locate the materials used for last January's professional development session and Terry Beck agreed to locate the materials used at last summer's new faculty orientation. The Diversity Committee can then consider if one, both, or a combination of the two might be appropriate for a student audience.

Institutional Research: Devon Biggerstaff briefed the committee on the history of the current charge to work with the Office of Institutional Research to institutionalize the collection of data regarding staff and faculty member' s attitudes toward and experiences of diversity as an element of campus climate.

The question was raised whether it is better to have a few items on already administered surveys or if a survey specific to campus climate would provide better information. Carrie Washburn noted that it is ultimately a Cabinet decision about how such research would happen. She suggested that we hear from Randy Nelson directly as we consider these questions. Nancy Bristow will check with Randy about meeting with the Committee.

Carry Washburn raised the question of the inclusiveness of our definition of diversity. The committee discussed if it was better to stay with the 10 protected classes for purposes of educational programming or if other markers of diversity such as social class should be introduced.

A rousing discussion ensued. Included in the discussion were considerations of maintaining some boundaries for the purposed of educational programming, allowing the context of the campus (a place where class is often salient) to inform our choice of topic, and the possibility that discussions of class might both inform people' s understanding of diversity generally and distract from the difficult work of understanding the experience of various minority groups.

Jm McCullough moved that the meeting be adjourned. Meeting was adjourned at 9:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Terry Beck