

## **Diversity Committee Minutes December 5, 2003**

**Present:** Devon Biggerstaff, Kim Bobby, Julie Christoph, Marie deBenedictis, David Macey, Blaire Notrica, Margi Nowak, David Scott, Carrie Washburn

Chair David Macey called the meeting to order shortly after 3:30.

The draft Minutes of the November 21 meeting were discussed in terms of how detailed the Committee wishes the Minutes to be. Chair David Macey will request the Minutes-taker (David Sousa) to expand on the draft 11/21/2003 Minutes. They will be considered for approval at the first meeting of Spring semester.

During the Minutes discussion, the committee focused a bit on the question of whether the university can or should have targets for enrollment of underrepresented groups. Kim Bobby reported that the Admission office does not have benchmarks, targets, or other "desired" numbers to guide their work in recruiting students from underrepresented groups. David Scott suggested that at times such numbers allow us to measure how well we are doing and give us a sense of when or whether we have reached a desired level.

David Macey has been collecting information about available meeting times of various committee members in order to set a Spring semester committee meeting time. Once he has all the data, he will conduct a poll via email on the best time for a scheduled meeting.

The discussion then moved to the Student Concerns Committee (STC) and their response to the anonymous letter shared with the committee at the 11/21 meeting. The STC drafted a letter for the *Trail* but it was not published as expected in the December 5 edition. He mentioned that the STC hopes the letter will be published in the first *Trail* of Spring semester. He explained that the STC letter was sort of a summary of the original letter, in the sense it conveys the message of the original letter but does not quote from it. The STC tried to avoid sounding "incendiary." He will email the Diversity Committee the text of the letter. To the question of whether the original anonymous letter had been circulated around campus, he clarified that it had not.

David Macey then moved the discussion to the question of how the Diversity Committee should proceed on the question of benchmarks. He reminded the committee of the mailing all had received from Kris Bartanen detailing recent efforts at Puget Sound concerning diversity. He then handed out information from the Whitworth College (Spokane) web site about their Diversity Commitment (thanking Hans Ostrom for pointing out this source). He suggested that the committee take up both of these documents at a meeting in Spring semester.

Then ensued a discussion about other ways to proceed with this question:

David Scott suggested that the committee should take up the issue of recruitment of faculty of color. From there the discussion focused on how to get information about faculty retention issues from current faculty and faculty from underrepresented groups who have left Puget Sound. The purpose would be to find out what leads to such faculty leaving Puget Sound and to ask them about their experience while here. Blaire Notrica echoed the general idea and suggested it also apply to staff.

David Scott also suggested that the modes of inquiry used to assess climate issues could be looked at by the committee. We could start with Randy Nelson's data and see what questions it does not answer for us.

Macey concurred suggesting we think about what we want to find out. He suggested a general survey of faculty about climate and retention followed up with talking with selected faculty about their experiences here. He also agreed it would be a good idea to talk with faculty who have left.

Margi Nowak agreed that a general survey is important, in order to contextualize the information gathered in conversations.

David Macey suggested the committee's final report to the Faculty Senate could be a list of steps that we think would be worthy of consideration in determining how to go forward with increasing the diversity of faculty, staff, and students. Our intention would be to suggest these steps are part of the strategic planning in realizing the Goal for the Decade regarding an increasingly diverse campus.

Marie deBenedictis suggested that we might want to suggest that a wider net be cast in terms of comparison. Our numbers look good in comparison with peer institutions. Perhaps we want to exceed that mark and distinguish ourselves as a national liberal arts college that is way ahead of the curve in terms of recruitment and retention of a diverse faculty, staff, and student body.

Blaire Notrica pointed out that such a reputation is already building in terms of GLBT students. Puget Sound is becoming known as a gay-friendly campus. Margie Nowak pointed out that "gay friendly" has a positive connotation for more than GLBT students. She said it resonates with students who have had to deal with "differences"; they find a more open and accepting environment when it is "gay-friendly."

Carrie Washburn suggested that the committee also talk with those faculty who have headed up search committees in the recent past to see what their experiences has been in recruiting candidates from underrepresented groups.

David Macey returned to the fact that our higher numbers than peer institutions should be seen as a strength. Kim Bobby suggested it be part of what distinguishes Puget Sound.

Julie Christoph pointed out that our "aspire-to" schools with better numbers in terms of diversity also have more diversity in the curriculum (courses, programs).

At this point in the meeting, Margi Nowak reported on her conversation with Michael Pavel (Native American alumnus). Her report sent to the committee via email earlier is inserted here.

Start Insert:

*It's impossible for me to capture in words the effect Michael Pavel had on me when we met this morning. The good news is that you will all have an opportunity to see what I mean sometime next semester, when he is very willing to come to meet with and speak to the entire Diversity Committee. He is extremely articulate and I would strongly recommend that we not try to sandwich in any other business for that occasion. In fact, we might do well to plan on giving him more than one hour.*

*Michael is currently on leave from WSU and is living on the Skokomish Reservation in Shelton (so his family can live on a reservation), so he is now closer to us than he was when he was in Pullman. His first thought about meeting with all of us was, in fact, to invite the entire Diversity Committee to Skokomish, but we both reluctantly recognized that the logistics of such an endeavor would doom it to a non-happening.*

*In any case, I did print out for him the letter to ASUPS that Marie passed on to me (reproduced below):*

*"How about the real general problem w/ UPS- the fact that generally, the school is a racist/homophobic institution?"*

*The fact that the school cares more about building new towers but not about making its clients the students comfortable.*

*How about addressing the real issues that make this institution uncomfortable for many people. If we are a "community" then the concerns of one should be the concerns of many.*

*The only thing "associated" about this school is ASUPS. You the student government can do something to make this a better place - so why not address the fact that this school is drenched in whiteness??"*

*Michael spent a long time reading and thinking quietly about this, and I won't even begin to try to replicate all his thoughts. But he does have ideas -- starting with the recommendation that, before we move in favor of any grand plan to achieve more diversity, each of us very personally examine our own personal motives for saying "we want more diversity", and continuing with the idea that the trustees must be a vital part of any attempts to recruit and retain students from underserved populations.*

*I'll just let this brief email serve as a teaser, for I really could not begin to do justice to the depth and range of his ideas. And yes, he remembers acutely how lonesome he felt here at times when he was a student here in the late 70's. And it wasn't just race that figured into that experience of feeling "left out": it was also money and cliques...  
End insert.*

Margi Nowak reported that Pavel does want to meet with the committee in the Spring. The committee discussed one of Pavel's suggestions: Get to know Trustees on a personal level. It did not seem clear just what Pavel may have been driving at. Nowak thinks he was trying to point out how power works and that personal contact is one way to influence those who make decisions.

Carrie Washburn pointed out that the trustees actually did pass the Statement on Diversity and urged the committee to always be attentive to the fact that departments, offices, and people all over the university are committed to increasing the diversity of the campus and to work cooperatively with them all. Her sentiments were echoed by David Scott.

A few queries regarding the trustees followed: Is knowing people on a personal level a cultural behavior? Should knowing the trustees be a strategy that is adopted? What sorts of decisions do the trustees make? How can you get to know a trustee (a brief explanation of the faculty hosted trustee dinners was provided).

As the hour was growing late, David Macey closed the trustee discussion and called for announcements. He mentioned that he had the book from the Southern Poverty Law Center on "10 Ways to Fight Hate on Campus," which he is willing to share among members of the committee. Marie deBenedictis mentioned that she, along with David Macey and Jane Brazell, will be doing a session during the professional development conference in mid January entitled "Demystifying Diversity."

The members present expressed a strong desire that the meetings in the Spring be on Thursdays at 9:00 (currently an open time). With a promise to try, Chair David Macey wished everyone a great break, and adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,  
Carrie Washburn