

## **Diversity Committee Minutes**

### **October 9, 2002**

**Present:** Kim Bobby, Nancy Bristow, David Macey, Andrew Miller, Randy Nelson, Blaire Notrica, Margi Nowak, Eric Orlin, Jac Royce, Eboni Treco, Carrie Washburn

**Absent:** Joey Barham, Kris Bartanen, Rosa Beth Gibson, David Scott, Lori Walters, Ivey West

Chair Jac Royce called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m.

#### **Announcements:**

- Kim Bobby reminded Committee members of the Urban League Dinner at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, October 17. R.S.V.P. to hr@ups.edu if you are interested in attending.

#### **Old Business:**

- Review and Adoption of Minutes of September 27, 2002. **Motioned/Seconded/Passed**

#### **New Business:**

- Randy Nelson presented data culled from a variety of MIRS (Management Information Reporting Service) reports dealing with diversity on campus.
  - MIRS has initiated two new annual reports addressing questions of campus diversity:
    - ethnicity of students, sorted by academic major
    - ethnicity of students, sorted by degrees conferred
  - MIRS is also undertaking two new information initiatives:
    - a retention database, including data from a variety of different areas of Cascade
    - a locally developed survey of enrolled students, to be conducted online
      - topics will alternate on a three- to four-year cycle
      - provision will be made for topics of immediate or special interest
  - In reviewing data on the ethnic composition of the student body at UPS and at national peer institutions, the Committee noted that the number of African American students has dropped considerably since the late 1970s and that the number of racial/ethnic minority students as a whole dipped perceptibly in the late 1980s.
    - Carrie Washburn noted that total enrollment at UPS was considerably higher in the 1970s and included large numbers of graduate students.
    - Carrie Washburn also noted that the number of transfer students, who once contributed considerably to diversity on campus, has declined significantly over the last twenty-five years.
      - Andrew Miller pointed out that the current transfer student orientation program assumes that students transferring to UPS are coming from outside the region and are, in general, of traditional college age.
      - Margi Nowak commented on the difficulty experienced at UPS by older students, students with spouses and families, and students who live and work in the wider Tacoma community. She noted that it is very clear to would-be applicants that UPS has prioritized making ours a residential campus, and this emphasis further alienates people living in the Tacoma community.
      - Nancy Bristow emphasized the importance of diversity in ethnic and socio-background and in age and experience in the classroom and within the campus community as a whole; while UPS may not be so dependent today on transfer students from the local community to make ends meet financially, we need those students in a new way now that the student body has become more homogeneous.
    - The Committee then discussed the importance of adequate financial aid to support students from the local community, including transfer students, ethnic and racial minority students, and older students.

- The Committee then turned its attention to data concerning faculty ethnicity:
  - While the number of international faculty (i.e., those who are not United States citizens) is increasing, faculty diversity in other categories is either stagnant or decreasing.
    - Eric Orlin noted the need to break down the numbers for international faculty by race/ethnicity.
    - Kim Bobby noted the need to disaggregate the data so as to track more clearly the change over time in percentages of faculty within specific racial/ethnic categories.
- Next, the Committee examined data concerning staff ethnicity:
  - Eric Orlin pointed out that a disproportionate number of racial/ethnic minority staff members at UPS are employed in Food Services and Facilities Management.
    - The Committee discussed the adverse impact on students of seeing racial/ethnic minority staff members employed primarily in food service and maintenance positions.
  - Kim Bobby noted that the lack of diversity on campus leads children of racial/ethnic minority staff members to enroll at other institutions rather than at UPS.
    - Jac Royce raised the possibility of recruiting children of staff members at peer institutions.
  - Blaire Notrica pointed out that the figures in the table “Faculty Ethnicity at Puget Sound” do not correspond to the Puget Sound figures in the table “Faculty Ethnicity at Comparison Institutions.”
    - Randy Nelson suggested that different instruments may have been used to calculate the figures in the two tables.
- The Committee next examined the results of the Assessment Self-Study Survey of Graduating Seniors and Five-Year-Out Alumni:
  - The Committee noted that graduating seniors were more often dissatisfied than satisfied with the climate for minority students on campus.
    - The Committee also noted that the question was posed to all graduating seniors; graduating non-minority seniors, however, may well have difficulty assessing the climate for minority students.
    - Blaire Notrica observed that student attitudes about the climate for minority students fluctuate week to week and day to day, based on events on campus.
  - The Committee observed that five-year-out UPS alumni are markedly less satisfied than their counterparts at comparison institutions with the extent to which their college experience enhanced their “capacity to relate well to people of different races, nations, and religions.”
  - David Macey suggested that the lower level of satisfaction with the presence and experience of ethnic/racial diversity on campus among UPS students, when compared to students at peer institutions, may reflect a sense that inadequate progress is being made in enhancing the diversity of the campus community.
    - Nancy Bristow remarked that students often express the sense that we aren’t making much progress toward increasing diversity on campus.
  - Kim Bobby emphasized the importance of ethnic and racial diversity on campus in order to create a sense of community for racial/ethnic minority students, staff, and faculty and to combat the sense of isolation that causes racial/ethnic minority students, staff, and faculty to leave the university.
- Finally, the Committee examined data on retention patterns and graduation rates:
  - The four-year graduation rate for African American students, the Committee noted, is 10-12% lower than the four-year graduation rate for all students.
    - Randy Nelson noted that UPS’s attrition rates are similar to those of public research universities with which he has been associated.
    - Blaire Notrica and Andrew Miller asked about the usefulness of exit interviews in assessing the causes of attrition.

- Randy Nelson noted that exit interviews can be undependable because exiting students do not always offer frank or detailed responses.
- The Committee noted many instances of students who have withdrawn or entertained the possibility of withdrawing from the university because of increases in tuition.
- The Committee resolved to continue at its next meeting its discussion of the data presented by Randy Nelson, thinking in particular (1) about what further information it requires to assess that data and (2) about what steps it should take in response to this data.

**Next Meeting:** 3:00 p.m. on Wednesday, October 23, in the Misner Room of the Collins Library

The meeting adjourned at 3:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
David Macey