

Committee on Diversity

Minutes of 21 March 2011 Meeting.

Committee Members Present: Kim Bobby, Dan Burgard, Lynnette Claire, Lisa Ferrari, Mark Martin, Czarina Ramsay, Susan Owen, Michel Rocchi, Amy Ryken.

The meeting was called to order at 12:02 PM.

I. Announcements:

Kim Bobby announced that she was working on the Diversity and Inclusion report (reflecting the actions of various departments on campus). She is also collecting “Voices” essays from across campus.

Amy Ryken reminded the committee to continue to solicit “Narratives” from colleagues (or committee members) reflecting “teachable moments” involving diversity issues in the classroom (to be sent to Kim Bobby, anonymously). It is hoped that ten more essays could be collected by the end of the month. Several members of the committee reiterated the anonymous aspects of these essays (as several of the sample essays mentioned areas of study or other possible identifiers).

Kim Bobby read a student Narrative (from an RA or peer advisor trainee), discussing a diversity exercise during on-campus training. The exercise underscored issues of privilege and difference. The student narrative stated that the exercise was uncomfortable but important in reinforcing that all voices needed to be heard and respected. Various faculty members commented on the exercise’s value and purpose (along with the self-disclosure aspect).

II. Minutes of the Diversity Committee 28 February 2011 meeting: Amy Ryken suggested that Faculty Narrative 6 be added to the last set of minutes.

Motion was made and seconded to accept the 28 February 2011 Committee minutes.

III. Committee Business:

Discussion began on faculty hiring/retention. First was a discussion of the patterns observed, and then thoughts about a “next step.” An excerpt from the book, “Diversifying the Faculty” was provided, including a checklist of “Best Practices.”

Data was provided by Kris Bartanen, and was focused on ethnic diversity (Puget Sound does not systemically collect data regarding social diversity). A persistent pattern was identified, finding a 50% retention rate among faculty of color (4/8). This was markedly different than that identified for White faculty (50/52 retained over a similar time frame).

The point was raised that the only measures of diversity we have access to relate to ethnicity; Amy Ryken asked if perhaps Puget Sound should begin to systematically collect faculty data of this type. Czarina Ramsey suggested that “exit surveys” given to faculty in the process of leaving the University might be useful. Kim Bobby pointed out that staff did have opportunities for exit interview opportunities.

Michel Rocchi stated that, when he served on FAC, there was something like an exit survey/interview process in place; it was easier to collect data from faculty choosing to leave. Lisa Ferrari offered to ask Kris Bartanen about such data.

Dan Burgard, looking over the data, suggested that we could not compare Puget Sound data to national statistics from academic institutions (as the national data did not have a “decline to state” category). Lynnette Claire recalculated the numbers in the data set provided to determine ethnic categories in a way that allowed more accurate comparisons.

Michel Rocchi agreed that the goal was to provide greater diversity among the faculty, and wondered if there were financial concerns involved in this issue (compared to other institutions).

Michel Rocchi stated that he believed all departments would be welcoming to a diversity candidate. Lisa Ferrari discussed some barriers to increasing diversity, based on how merit is measured, and how various aspects of academia may act to enhance uniformity. Lynnette Claire pointed out that most institutions tend to select new members with whom the department feels comfortable. In addition, she repeated that diversity has many measures.

Czarina Ramsey said that diversity is generally defined as relating to race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation. She went on to ask if Chairs were able to “track” measures of diversity during faculty searches. Kim Bobby wondered if an optional survey would be helpful.

Michel Rocchi described how Kris Bartanen interviews departments regarding the process by which the final interviewee lists were assembled.

Czarina Ramsey wondered if an aggregate interview demographic could be put together.

Michel Rocchi thought it was possible in specific academic areas to obtain data relating to diversity issues during an application process, but this was discipline-specific.

Amy Ryken repeated the question: should we inquire about the possibility of collecting demographic data of existing faculty?

Michel Rocchi urged the Committee to identify a specific task, hopefully for the Senate to act upon.

Czarine Ramsey thought that we could compile thoughts about the trends identified, and look into how demographic data is collected.

Susan Owen agreed that we should formulate some specific questions regarding hiring and retention practices.

Amy Ryken concluded by saying that we would need to return to this topic.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:57 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Martin