

UNIVERSITY OF PUGET SOUND
1995-96 DIVERSITY COMMITTEE

April 3, 1996

Minutes

Members Present: Florence Ariessohn, Beth Bricker, Tim Hansen, Rosa Beth Gibson, Rafael Gomez, Henry Johnson, Bret Kiehl, Pat Krueger, Paula Meiers (for George Mills), Freda Savage, Carrie Washburn.

Guests: Julie Neff, Jack Roundy

Pat Krueger called the meeting to order at 9:05 am.

Much of the meeting focused on the discussion of recruitment and retention of African American students and other ethnic minorities. **Roundy** opened the discussion by providing information on graduation rates of African American students and other compelling reasons for retention problems.

- Graduation rate and gpa lower than that of the general student body.
- We tend to lose the 2.1 gpa students, graduate the 2.9 gpa's, with the 2.5 gpa's as the average.
- Economics plays a role in many cases because of the need to have 1-3 jobs outside of school. "UPS is just one stop in their day" which is not good for success academically.
- Students feel "marginalized" on campus.
- "Early Alert System" has not provided resolution as to how to prevent students from leaving, it simply allows us to know sooner that they are leaving.
- Bowdoin College has a house specifically for African American culture; a place in which to live, to discuss issues, celebrate holidays, and where other interested students can drop in and learn about the culture.

Johnson listed the efforts and opportunities on behalf of the Dean of Students Office:

- Mentor program headed by Narissa Patrick; works with BSU and ethnic groups.
- First year students linked with upperclass students is a proactive way in inclusion.
- Theme years, lecture series
- Multicultural Theme Houses
- Resource Center - in the planning for persons of color, women, lesbian/ gay/ bisexuals.
- ABC program.
- NCBI workshops for incoming students in Fall '96 plus ongoing workshops.

In addition, **Johnson** stated that in recruiting African American students, we're "creaming the top" students and cannot relate to people because of color as a reason to recruit.

Neff, who is the Director of the Writing and Learning Center, stated the mission of the Center as "to assist students to achieve their academic goals." All students - any level, for any reason - are encouraged to utilize that assistance and the staff has reached out to African American students (through the BSU). The difficulty is that, in general, middle class, white students have the confidence to enter and take advantage of the services. Students of ethnic minority appear to be reluctant to approach because of the myth that they will need more help.

Several exchanges were made between **Neff** and **Ariessohn**, about ways to bring in the African American and other students: student tutors from specific ethnic groups; a tour of the Center; publicize a list of offerings; disseminate information at First year Orientation; include new faculty (FT & PT) on Center tours. All of these methods have and are being used.

Washburn and **Roundy** discussed the assignment of advisors: advisors assigned by academic interest of student; advisor could push students towards utilization of the Center; there may be the accusation that an assumption is being made that African American students need the Center more than others. **Roundy** then mentioned that there is a list of "enhancements" that goes to all advising classes explaining the diagnostic tools available. It was suggested that the Director to Access monitor the first year students of color, especially in the first 2-6 weeks of school, to improve retention and provide a peer advisor.

Hansen suggested a current plan, short term plan, a five year plan, and a wish list in hopes of determining what the Diversity Committee can do to help. Perhaps looking at the numbers of students that fall into categories and how that may be changed.

Roundy indicated that the students who are most at risk, drop out; those who are excellent students, transfer, and those who are average, remain. The numbers are too small to be significant in developing theories. **Hansen** suggested that at least it would bring attention to the issues. **Johnson** offered that staffing and money are major issues.

Krueger mentioned that she has attended the student forums and that most of the students are not focused on diversity. **Washburn** pointed out that the curriculum offers two new majors in African American Studies and Latin American Studies which, as **Gibson** interjected, provides a great opportunity for all students.

Meiers submitted information about the increased efforts by the Admissions Office to recruit African American students, but there has been little increase in the pool. There is a system in place which provides for telephone calls to all students of color by a compatible current student.

Savage mentioned ways in which changes could be made to improve the conditions and numbers of African American students here at Puget Sound:

- Need more African American administrators and faculty.

- Puget Sound has been working on acceptance.
- More emphasis on self-development.
- Theme years to develop the group.
- Require first year students to live on campus - establish a campus community.
- Bring Greek organization for African Americans.
- "Black Family Days" or multicultural event.
- Resource Center - mixed bag may not work.
- Place a multicultural house in a centrally located place on campus.

Next meeting: Multicultural Center and Administrative Position

Meeting Dates

March 27 and April 10

April 3 and 17

Sub-committee meetings

Full committee meetings