

Commission on Equal Opportunity and Diversity  
Monday, October 31, 2005

Minutes

**Present:** Ray Plaza, Michael Goode, Sue Ellen Crocker, Jean Brickey, Debbie Morgan (for Linda Woodard), Anna LoMascolo (for Ellen Plummer), Edd Sewell, Carlos Evia, Ross Edmonds, Ruth Grene, Sam Camden, Ben Dixon, Kevin McDonald, Craig Brians, Zenobia Hikes, Tina Harvey, Rick Shingles (for Susan Anderson), Pat Hyer, Kris Tilley-Lubbs, Susan Willis-Walton, Tapsavi Bhargava (for Aisia Haque), Kim Beisecker

**Absent:** Maxine Lyons, Richard Benson, LaChelle Waller, Aaren Salido, Marilyn Kershaw, Valerie Hardcastle, Sumeet Bagai, Ann Kilkelly

**Guests:** Jennie Reilly, Laura Gillman, Akilah Chopfield, Chad Disharoon, Jonathan McCloud

**I. Adoption of Agenda**

The agenda was adopted as amended to include diversity strategies for 05-06 added after task force update.

**II. Chair Report**

Ray announced the establishment of a blackboard site for CEOD. When members miss meetings they can go there for meeting handouts and documents. The hope is to establish an ongoing discussion thread and also to provide a way to get quick feedback on items when needed. Please check it once a week. Its usefulness is dependent upon how frequently members access the site.

Copies of the Lee Hall Recommendations were passed out with the President's responses to those recommendations. Please share these with constituent groups. Marilyn and Ray will work on reviewing the items and prioritizing them.

A flier for the Third Annual Mid-Atlantic Conference on the Scholarship of Diversity was distributed. The deadline for submissions is December 1, 2005. Please share with colleagues and emphasize the broad nature of diversity, this is not just about race and ethnicity. Ben encouraged individuals not only to submit proposals but also to attend.

There was a lunch this past Wednesday with Dr. Steger, select administrators, and some students. The main issue that seemed pertinent to students was the lack of communication about what is happening at the university. There is also an issue about approachability of administrators. SGA is planning to create site to have both information on what is happening on campus as well as which offices and administrators to go to for various issues. Zenobia suggested it might be better to have the university administration take responsibility for the management of the site instead of SGA. Pat asked if University Council could be the place to ask questions about issues since there are so many students there. Zenobia is meeting with Sumeet later on today and can discuss this with him personally.

**III. Event Update - Diversity Summit and MLK Planning**

Michael provided some background information on last year's diversity summit. One thing they would like to do this year is focus on ACTION. They want people to leave with actual things they can do and ways to involve departments. It will be in Owens Banquet Hall and the Multipurpose Room in the Graduate Life Center is also reserved if needed on Friday, January 20, from 2:00-5:00 P.M. There have been conversations on how to get students and staff involved who typically haven't been. Some thought has been given to the possibility of having a raffle to entice students to attend. The hope is to have facilitator guides ready by the December 5 CEOD meeting. Ruth Grene talked about the challenge of getting some people from certain colleges to participate. Publicity should begin next week with a survey. There will also be MLK activities prior to the Diversity Summit which will help in publicity for the summit.

There was some conversation about diversity as it appears in evaluations. Some departments do not take it seriously (both faculty and staff). Pat shared that the diversity block of information was instituted by the P&T committee two years ago to see what items people list. There is a CEOD task force that will focus on this. No one is being held accountable right now but there also hasn't been information given on what is appropriate and how to report on it. There is a need to educate people and it needs to be tied to the university strategic plan. Laura suggested that college diversity committees might be able to address this issue within the colleges. Ray suggested that sample staff and faculty forms be brought to the November 14 meeting for continued discussion.

The planning group for the MLK celebration has met three times and is planning weeklong celebration. The goal is to be creative and inclusive. Some of the potential events include service activities, a kick-off/featured speaker, lunchtime speakers, brown bag/teach-ins, the Diversity Summit, and a culminating speaker. A question was raised about how this fits with Black History Month. The committee has been in touch with the Black History Month steering committee. They are also looking at corporate sponsorship and are aware that this will set the stage for future celebrations, so there is a need to not be extravagant if that cannot be sustained in future years. It was commented that one headliner for the week would be good. There was some concern regarding having speeches, poems, etc. read outside during the week. General consensus was to move those into building with lobby areas and atriums to reach more people. The committee hopes to have an initial wave of publicity right after Thanksgiving.

#### **IV. Task Force Updates**

The College Diversity Committees did not meet since a number of members were unable to attend. There was some email correspondence across the group. The Faculty Diversity Task Force is meeting Wednesday at 11:00 in 325 Burruss. The Exit Survey group met but they are not at any point to share anything. Susan Willis-Walton brought some materials for the task force to look at and determine what they want. Members will actually review several surveys and data sources, so it was suggested to rename as the Data and Research Support Task Force. The Policy Task Force met and looked at policies and talked about ways to publicize them. They are continuing their discussion in a meeting later today.

There was lively discussion at the Campus Climate meeting. Ross shared information on the new SafeWatch Project and brought examples of the website he is working on. There has been concern that it not just is about policing but also includes education and is a one-stop place to go.

Discussion also focused on sanctioning including what and how sanctions should occur. Laura stressed the need to be able to direct students to resources, including courses for credit that deal with some of these issues. Conversations about the Diversity Certificate Program and increasing awareness of it also occurred. The website will be up and running soon. Ross is waiting on a domain name. It will likely be linked from the university diversity website. It was stressed that SafeWatch is for all communities on the campus. Ray will put on blackboard the SafeWatch information. There will be a marketing campaign emerging around SafeWatch. Pat suggested that the group look at the marketing around Stop Abuse since it was marketing heavily. Rick discussed the need for socialization/education for faculty. The group discussed whether or not something like FDI could be done for faculty in the area of diversity education. Ross informed members that the Campus Climate Check-up is November 14 from 5:45-7:30 p.m. in Commonwealth Ballroom. If you plan to attend, send a note to [stulife@vt.edu](mailto:stulife@vt.edu). Kim raised the issue that there are some campus climate issues that aren't discreet, so students might not consider it an "incident" since it occurs all semester long. This led to some comments about class evaluation forms. Edd will check on status of the review of course evaluations.

#### **V. Diversity Strategies for '05-'06**

Pat shared some background information on the Academic Affairs Committee of the BOV. Last year they chose faculty issues, diversity, and graduate education as their three areas of focus. It was recommended they continue to focus on these topics but add undergraduate education. A handout of diversity strategies that will be the focus for this year was distributed. Members were asked to review the list and send any additional items to Pat. These should be things we are actually doing and will be presented at the November board meeting. Members asked for more information on SCALE-UP and the Tinner Hill Project. Ben shared details on those projects and the national memorial for Martin Luther King, Jr. He reminded members of the university's involvement in the international design competition and stressed the need for a campaign on our campus to help raise funds for the memorial. Edd raised the question of Wake Forest and recent excavations in Kentland farms. Jennie shared the status of projects and new initiatives related to the Virginia Assistive Technology Grant. Kevin informed members that there has been a pilot with College of Agriculture and Life Sciences of the on-line training programs. They will be rolled out for entire university and provide opportunity for smaller business in the community to also participate shortly. These can serve as opportunities for faculty and staff to "participate" in diversity.

#### **VI. Announcements**

CISO has Dance of Nations tonight at 6:00 p.m. in Commonwealth Ballroom. Grants are available for faculty to do work on diversity related topics and range from \$3-5,000. Proposals will go out this week and are due back in early December. This is the third year of this program. It is not restricted to teaching faculty and provides a way to fund projects that can be pilot for major grants.

No vice chair was elected since no one stepped forward. Meeting adjourned at 11:59 a.m.