

Commission on Equal Opportunity and Diversity  
Monday, December 8, 2003

Minutes

**Present:** Pat Hyer, Valerie Hardcastle, Helen Crawford, Edd Sewell, Jean Elliott, Linda Woodard, Brandon Bull, Meredith Katz, Darleen Baker, Devi Gnyawali, Kimberly Philpott, Kim Beisecker, William Dougherty, Laura Hickerson, Trey Church, Hayward Farrar, Betty Fine, Ben Dixon, Lois Berg, Mike Two Horses, Bill Greenberg

**Absent:** Ray Plaza, Lanny Cross, Susan Willis-Walton, Susanna Rinehart, Mary Madis, Peggy Quesinberry, Hassan Aref, Gavin Luter, Ellen Plummer, Jean Brickey, Amer Fayad

**Guests:** Diane Bell, Jennie Reilly

**I. Adoption of Agenda**

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the agenda as presented. The motion carried.

**II. Old Business**

**A. Draft Resolution on Civil Liberties**

Betty Fine introduced the resolution and provided some background on its development. Betty, Helen Crawford and Kim Beisecker looked at existing resolutions and decided that the City of Charlottesville resolution was a good model to work from. Copies of that resolution were distributed. There was considerable debate on the resolution. In response to what the resolution might accomplish, members offered that it could help the university become aware of the Patriot Act and remind the university of constitutional rights, raise the consciousness of the university and ask the university to underscore its commitment to constitutional rights, and educate the community. There was concern that while the university should do something, the resolution is political and the commission is not an appropriate body to be passing it. Questions were also raised about the backlash that might occur if the resolution was passed in the current political environment. Some members were interested in knowing how other universities have dealt with this issue. Ben Dixon suggested the format of the statement be changed to a "position statement," instead of a "resolution." There was significant concern that even if the resolution was passed and it went on to university council, the university would be unable to act on it. Finally, it was suggested that the commission needs to be explicit about what its goals are and then decide the most effective ways to meet those goals. Some members are interested in education and others in policies. The question was called to end the debate and a motion was made that the commission adopt the resolution and forward it to university council with a friendly amendment to have members take it back to the bodies they represent and ask them to take action. There were seven individuals in favor, nine opposed, and four abstentions. The motion failed.

Helen Crawford asked that the commission not completely drop the resolution but draft it into a position statement. She asked that the commission consider a position statement under new

business. There was then a request for a revote on the motion which was eight in favor, eight opposed, and four abstentions. The motion still failed.

## **B. Committees**

A list of committees and members was distributed. Edd asked that each committee determine who the chair will be and then begin working as a group.

## **III. New Business**

### **A. Diversity Summit**

Ben Dixon asked commission members for input on what the format should be for the Diversity Summit which is scheduled for sometime in the afternoon on Monday, January 19. A suggestion was made to have a panel as part of the program. Another recommendation was that in the future the commission takes a lead role in the organization of the summit as one way to increase awareness of the commission. In response to the article written by Jeff Corntassel that was distributed to commission members, Michael Two Horses suggested that the diversity summit reflect true diversity and that the university acknowledge that it owes much to the American Indians on whose land the university rests. Six tribes are about to be federally recognized. He was assured that the diversity summit is, in fact, one place where true diversity is present. Diane Bell suggested that some statement be made at the beginning of the summit which recognizes that Virginia Tech sits on holy land and also lists the tribes who originally lived on this land. There was also mention of addressing the fact that many individuals are feeling that Virginia Tech, the administration, and the Board of Visitors will take as narrow an interpretation of the Supreme Court decision and will do as little as possible to promote diversity. The summit might be a good place to try to dispel those ideas. Finally, it was suggested that it might be time to revisit the grading of the university's progress on diversity as was done at some of the first summits.

### **B. Position Statement on Civil Liberties**

Helen Crawford presented a position statement on civil liberties which was based on the previously discussed resolution, with some deletions and changes. After a few other recommendations for changes, a motion was made to vote on the position statement with the changes noted. There were 14 in favor, two opposed, and five abstentions. The motion passed. It was asked that the position statement with changes be sent to commission members.

## **IV. Next Meeting**

There will not be a meeting on January 12 as classes are not yet in session and many members will not be available to meet. The next meeting is January 26 from 10:30 – 12:00.

## **V. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 12:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Alicia P. Cohen, Secretary to the Commission on Equal Opportunity and Diversity