

Commission on Equal Opportunity and Diversity
Monday, February 25, 2008

Minutes

Present: Ann Kilkelly, Rick Shingles, Sam Camden, Guy Sims (for Zenobia Hikes), Sue Ellen Crocker, Ross Edmonds, Maggie Sloane (for Kelly Oaks), Jean Brickey, Ray Plaza, Sheila Carter-Tod, Kim Beisecker, Judy Ridinger, Pat Hyer, Brad Klein, Ruth Grene, Carlos Evia, Virgilio Centeno (for Elisa Sotelino), Daphne Rainey, Maxine Lyons, Patricia Smith, Jack Davis, Deborah Morgan

Absent: Mikhelle Taylor, Stevan Jackson, Kevin McDonald

Guests: Claude Steele, Jane Ann Williams, Jennie Reilly

I. Call to Order

Daphne called the meeting to order.

II. Caucus Reports

Sheila reported that the Black Caucus has been discussing Black Constituency Conference since the caucus will be responsible for providing the leadership for the conference if it continues next year. There have also been student concerns from the Black Graduate Student Organization regarding the lack of support they receive. There has been discussion about finding ongoing sponsorship for Ebony Affair rather than having to focus so much energy each year on securing funds for that event. Finally, the caucus has been talking about ways to assist the implementation team.

Ray reported that May 8 is the 4th annual Hispanic achievement ceremony. The Latino Alumni Gathering is March 28-29 in partnership with Latin-American Theatre Conference. The caucus is in state of transition and is looking for new leadership. They are also concerned about potential issues of retention of Hispanic/Latino faculty. The plan is to engage faculty in a formal survey to see what their thoughts are. They also want to improve the visibility of the caucus. The Hispanic students are concerned about promotion of Hispanic Latino Heritage Month and want to raise the profile of the celebration.

Ross shared that the LGBT Caucus in conjunction with the Women's Center and as part of Women's Month is sponsoring another showing of "For the Bible Tells Me So" on March 22 at the Lyric. It is free. The Safe Zone Program 10th anniversary celebration luncheon is on March 21. The caucus is receiving some requests from outside the university community dealing with sexual orientation issues in workplace. There will be a second community gathering in May.

III. Taskforce on the Needs of International Students Report

The taskforce wants to create a deliverable – a list of available resources for students but especially for international graduate students who may have language and culture issues. They are meeting with Dr. DePauw this week to see if there are any resources to assist with these efforts. They are also looking for ways to promote resources to students.

IV. Implementation Team Report

Pat shared some of the activities that are underway. Susanna Rinehart developed small interactive theatre piece on search processes that was used during the Advancing Diversity Conference in January. Additionally, AdvanceVT and the Office for Equal Opportunity have funded an undergraduate student to create database on potential faculty members. These are examples of some of the things going on that are small and not very visible. The Recruitment Enhancement Grant draft was shared with members. A

question was raised whether you have to do these special receptions for all candidates? The answer was no. This supports opportunities for candidates to interact with caucuses and other appropriate individuals when they are on campus interviewing.

Pat went on to review three other proposals that were developed. Kelly did a lot of the background investigation necessary for the creation of these. The VT Visiting Scholars Program is a pre-search strategy which focuses on developing relationship with candidates even before a position may exist. This is being used with AdvanceVT. Jennie recommended adding the ADA statement to these documents. The goal is to find strategies that spend money in ways that are constructive. Guidelines are wide open for all. Kim added that Visiting Scholars is a J-1 program and is concerned that international faculty might get confused. She suggested perhaps including language indicating this is not a J-1 Department of State Program. This is a doable program that can be started immediately. The diversity cluster hire is more expensive. It could occur as a match basis with colleges with some university level committee that would review proposals. This then makes recruitment a bigger deal; it becomes a university-wide recruitment not just departmental recruitment. Jennie suggested the encouragement of departments to build in some funds should there be some need for accommodations. The Future Faculty Initiative was the last proposal reviewed and was done during summer 2006 by Tonya Smith-Jackson through AdvanceVT. NC State is doing this now on a small scale of only five to six participants. The idea is to announce through listservs and invite these individuals to two-day, all expense paid visit to VT. Each invited scholar would have a host department which expressed interest in their visit and credentials. All of these proposals are about building relationships. Pat will have legal counsel review these proposals. These programs are about affirmative recruitment. A question was raised about whether these proposals have been prioritized. As indicated earlier, the visiting scholars is doable. Diversity cluster hires are permanent appointments so it is more problematic. We need to be creative about how to implement these and seek additional sources of funds. These proposals will be shared with the implementation committee this week and will then be more widely distributed.

V. New Taskforces Update

There was some discussion about the creation of a new taskforce to assist with these efforts. Pat indicated that what would be most helpful is if someone wants to go with her to meet with the Development Office with regards to finding funding. There is also a potential to look at the retention of faculty and staff.

VI. Announcements

Thursday is the Black Constituency Conference: Success Runs in Our Race.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:55 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Alicia P. Cohen, Secretary to the Commission