

**Commission on Equal Opportunity and Diversity**  
**Monday, March 21, 2005**

**Minutes**

**Present:** Ray Plaza, Pat Hyer, Susanna Rinehart, LaChelle Waller, Ben Dixon, Jean Brickey, Susan Willis-Walton, Michael Goode, David Travis, Ross Edmonds, Monika Gibson, Mary Madis, Valerie Hardcastle, Linda Woodard, Susan Anderson, Devi Gnyawali, Maxine Lyons, Ruth Grene, Craig Brians, Jon Wooge

**Absent:** Cynthia Bonner, Laura Hickerson, Leon Geyer, Marilyn Kershaw, Shamiso Rowley (for Hayward Farrar), Darleen Baker, Jeff Mann, Hassan Aref, Sam Cook, Edwin Larroy Rodriquez, Patcharee Phongsvirajati, Kim Beisecker, Brandon Smith

**Guests:** Mary Grace Campos, Jennie Reilly, David Ford, Fain Rutherford

**I. Adoption of Agenda**

The agenda was approved as presented.

**II. Chair Report**

- A. University Council Realignment**– the report and recommendations sent to the president were accepted and it has passed the faculty and staff senates. The first reading at University Council will be on April 4, 2005.
- B. Recommendations on Dealing with the Lee Hall Name/Situation** – there is a draft of a response from the President which should be finalized and sent to Ray shortly.
- C. Virginia Tech Principles of Community** – the principles were signed last Monday at the BOV meeting.
- D. Position Vacancies** – there are two at-large positions that will be available for fall 2005. A committee of at least three commission members will need to be formed to review the applications and send forward four names to the President’s Office by April 15. Michael Goode volunteered to serve as did Pat Hyer. There are four positions that will need to be filled by the following constituent groups/offices: ADA Coordinator, Cranwell International Center, American Indian Studies, and the Women’s Center.
- E. Commission Chair** – a new commission chair for 2005-06 will also need to be elected before April 15. Interested individuals should talk with Ray for more information.

**III. Faculty Orientation Processes at Virginia Tech**

**Dr. David Ford, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs**, shared information on the two major programs initiated by the Provost’s Office. The first program is a half-day session on the Friday before classes start in the fall. This leaves the afternoon open for colleges and departments to do more specific orientation/meetings with new faculty. The purpose is to create identity with as many areas as possible. They used to follow-up with monthly lunches but they got to the point where they were not well attended, so they were cut during budget reductions. They have been replaced with a spring program where a book is used as a focus for discussion. Typically they have 1/4 -1/3 of the new faculty attend this (25-30). One other program that was discontinued with budget reductions was the Commonwealth Connection, a four-day bus trip that took individuals around the state to various centers, etc. It was a costly program at \$17,000. Both Devi and Craig discussed the benefits of the program despite its cost. These included meeting other faculty and staff from around the university and developing a great understanding of the scope and breadth of Virginia Tech across the state.

The question arose as to how to help faculty come to grips with the issues of diversity. It was suggested that workshops like the diversity awareness one should be strongly recommended. While workshops may address some issues, Valerie shared the need to have a departmental climate that encourages participation in workshops. There was also concern over the issue of time. One member suggested that there be more detailed programs throughout the semester. Pat suggested that some of these issues are better dealt with at the departmental or college level. The College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences has a significant orientation program. However, there was not a good sense of what other colleges are doing.

There was some consensus to the value of doing the more substantive orientation after the first year here. A number of members voiced their opinions over the need to have session be mandatory. Susanna suggested if they aren't, those who elect to participate are often not the ones who need to. Another member commented on the importance of community building and the need to have a variety of venues throughout the year and give individuals some choices.

Michael stressed the importance of policy and practice and the need to do things all year round. He also suggested that it would be helpful to have opportunities for students to talk with faculty about issues. It was also recommended that this be part of the Faculty Activity Report. Diversity has been introduced as part of the Promotion and Tenure process this year, so we will be able to see what people are doing on that topic.

Ben shared the importance of leadership on this issue and the role that department heads and diversity committees can play. There is a diversity leadership mini retreat on April 22 that will cover many of these issues.

#### **IV. New Business**

##### **Policy 1025 Anti-Discrimination and Harassment Prevention**

David Travis introduced policy 1025 which has been a work in progress for awhile. The hope is to get it passed by the commission and then on to university council and ready for the BOV meeting in August. Ben asked how close the policy resembles other universities' policies. David shared that they looked at peer institutions and the majority have revised their policies.

Valerie voiced concerns over graduate students being treated as faculty but not necessarily having the same support as faculty. Considerable discussion followed on the issue of graduate students. Ray concluded the discussion by asking members to submit specific suggestions for changing the language in the policy to David by Wednesday. This will then be on the agenda for voting at the next meeting.

#### **V. Old Business**

##### **Virginia Tech Principles of Community**

Ben shared that there will be framed copies for the Vice President and Vice Provost offices. Additionally, department heads can request framed copies of the document and there will be tent cards in the dining halls. There has been a recommendation to have a framed copy in every instructional area. There will be postcards printed with the document on one side – these can be mailed out or distributed. There will also be a series of discussions about the principles and the foundation upon which they were formed. Faculty will be encouraged to discuss them as part of the introduction to their courses and have it referenced in their syllabi like the honor code.

#### **VI. Announcements**

Graduate Education Week is this week. Linda shared that one of the candidates for the Director of Equal Opportunity will be on campus April 6-7. The Mid-Atlantic Conference on Diversity last week

was successful with 130 registrants. March 31<sup>st</sup> at 6:30 p.m. is Take Back the Night. Please encourage everyone to attend, it is not an event only for women.

**VII. Next Meeting**

The next commission meeting is March 28. The meeting was adjourned at 12:03 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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