

Commission on Equal Opportunity and Diversity
Monday, April 12, 2004

Minutes

Present: Edd Sewell, Devi Gnyawali, Pat Hyer, Helen Crawford, Linda Woodard, Jean Elliott, Laura Hickerson, Ben Dixon, Ray Plaza, Susan Willis-Walton, Jean Brickey, Jon Wooge, Bev Watford (for Hassan Aref), Ellen Plummer, Betty Fine, Stefanie Linden (for Gavin Luter), Hayward Farrar, Susanna Rinehart, Darleen Baker, Lanny Cross, Mary Madis

Absent: Meredith Katz, Sam Cook, Trey Church, Lois Berg, Valerie Hardcastle, Brandon Bull, Keohi Council, Bill Greenberg, Kim Beisecker, Kimberly Philpott

I. Adoption of Agenda

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

II. Announcements

The following announcements were made:

- April 11-17 is Holocaust Awareness Week. A detailed flier was distributed.
- The Joint Committee on Diversity and Multicultural Affairs is sponsoring Diversity Week April 18-23. Sunday is bowling at the breakzone, Monday is Tearing Down the Wall at the Dietrick field, Tuesday is a Poverty Simulation, Wednesday is movie night, Thursday is a forum, and Friday there is a potluck in the BCC.
- This coming Friday-Saturday is the Gateway weekend for African American, Hispanic American, Native American and first generation, low-income students who have been offered admission to VT. It is a program designed to increase the yield of these students.
- Helen Crawford reported that the panel on the USA Patriot Act last week had over 150 people in attendance and lasted from 7:30-10:00 p.m. There was a presentation by the FBI, then John Brownlee spoke, Helen read the position statement, and Diane Bell shared her personal experiences. There was also a speaker from GSA followed by an open dialogue. In retrospect, there should have been a representative from the INS. The international students seemed greatly appreciative of the opportunity to ask questions and get information.

III. Feedback/Discussion on Managing Programs that Contribute to Diversity in the Current Legal Environment

Pat Hyer reported on the workshop that was held on April 7. There were 83-84 people signed up and about 75 present. The speakers on the panel were: Rosalind Fuse-Hall, Executive Assistant to the Chancellor, North Carolina Central University; Camille Hazeur, Assistant to the President and Director of University Equity and Diversity Services, George Mason University; and William Thro, General Counsel for Christopher Newport University and Deputy State Solicitor of the Commonwealth of Virginia. There was good conversation in a very public setting. William Thro had the impression that more was being communicated to the university than was happening in reality. A question regarding the accord was raised and he said it is a public document and therefore available to the public. Dr. Dixon now has a copy of that document for those who are interested. There are clearly things that the administration needs to address in the

broad scheme of things and people need to know what is permissible and how to navigate through the system. Many folks seem to be risk-averse. There needs to be a quicker response from the university administration than there has been in the past. The follow-up workshop is Wednesday, April 28 from 2-5 pm in Hillcrest Dining Hall.

A question was raised regarding the Gateway program and why it was changed. Ellen responded that it was targeted in the OCR complaint, and so the university is responding accordingly. One of the questions regarding targeted programs is whether they provide a benefit that doesn't exist for others. Targeted programs also need to be open for all students. Right now the legal issue is race. Language is still being worked on for scholarships.

IV. Process for Filling Vacancies on the Commission

The following seats need to be filled for the 2004-05 year: CSA, Appalachian Studies, Hispanic Caucus, CCSA, CFA, one Faculty Senate representative, one Staff Senate representative, one At-Large representative, CISO, SGA, and GSA. The three positions the Office of Multicultural Affairs needs to advertise are the Appalachian Studies and Hispanic Caucus (as community representatives) and the At-Large position. These will be announced through an e-mail to the DDDH list and applications will be available on the OMA website. There was a question about whether or not individuals could serve consecutive terms. Alicia will check the University Council constitution to see what is permissible.

V. Discussion of Chronicle of Higher Education Article

Edd shared the article as information. There was some discussion. Some people did not realize the author was serious. What is presented is a different point of view. This view might be similar to one held by members of the National Academy of Science (NAS) professional association. It was suggested that it might be good to contact members of NAS at Virginia Tech to have a dialogue.

VI. Discussion of Revised Standards Document

Pat Hyer shared a more revised standards document. She shortened the background section and the majority of changes made were to the legal and inclusion standards. There was still considerable discussion about some of the language in the document and a debate about whether or not the student development standard was necessary. There was also a suggestion that if that standard remains, perhaps a standard for staff and faculty development should also be included. A vote was taken and more members felt the need to keep the standard but work to make it fit better. A concern was also raised about some who feel in the curriculum the diversity of ideas is all that is needed. That concept could be more clearly addressed in a statement on the educational benefits of diversity. Pat agreed to work some more on the language and distribute a final copy for electronic voting. Dr. McNamee has seen the standards document and his recommendation was to attach it to the minutes (once approved) so that all of University Council can see it.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 noon.

Respectfully submitted,

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