

**Commission on Equal Opportunity and Diversity
Monday, May 10, 2004**

Minutes

Present: Edd Sewell, Pat Hyer, Helen Crawford, Linda Woodard, Jean Elliott, Laura Hickerson, Ben Dixon, Ray Plaza, Jean Brickey, Betty Fine, Valerie Hardcastle, Susanna Rinehart, Bill Greenberg, Mary Madis, Meredith Katz, Kimberly Philpott, Devi Gnyawali, Susan Willis-Walton, Stefanie Linden (for Gavin Luter), Hayward Farrar, Brandon Bull, Keohi Council, Kim Beisecker

Absent: Trey Church, Jon Wooge, Ellen Plummer, Darleen Baker, Lanny Cross, Sam Cook, Lois Berg, Hassan Aref

Guests: Diane Bell, Jennie Reilly

I. Adoption of Agenda

Helen Crawford and Bill Greenberg asked to be added to the agenda. Edd said would add them under announcements since there is no section for new business. A motion was made and seconded to adopt the revised agenda. The motion carried.

II. Election of the Chair

A question was raised regarding the open at-large position. The committee met and forwarded Edwin Larroy and Christina Brogdon to the President to select. There has been no notification from the President's office yet. Edd was asked to remain as chair. He declined but Ray Plaza volunteered to serve in that capacity. He was approved by acclamation. The vice chair will be elected in the fall.

III. Committee Reports

All committee reports appear at the end of the minutes.

A. Staff Report – Jean Brickey and Linda Woodard presented the staff committee report. The committee worked with the faculty committee on exit interviews. A small group of individuals have continued work on that and anticipate sending out the survey next month to 830 faculty and staff who left the university between Spring 2002 and August 9, 2003. This number is large because it includes special research faculty and staff funded on research grants. After this pilot group, they will survey people from August 10, 2003 – August 9, 2004 and will then administer the survey annually. The second stage is to survey new employees during their first year of work. They also have piloted a computer literacy program with several dozen housekeepers as part of the goal to increase computer access and literacy to employees who don't work in traditional office settings. They hope to fully implement computer access across campus by fall 2004. Finally, Sue Ellen Crocker, President of the Staff Senate, has sent a letter to the President which has been forwarded to the executive committee of the BOV requesting a staff non-voting member be added to the board.

B. Faculty Report – Devi Gnyawali presented the faculty committee report. There was some conversation regarding the need to communicate with individuals working on the ADVANCE grant to see what kind of information they receive from the surveys and interviews they have conducted and will continue to conduct. There were concerns about the level of support for processing H1B visa and permanent residence applications. Kim Beisecker responded that through some restructuring, employee immigration paperwork will be done in S.K. De Datta's office. As part of the changes, though, support for international employees has expanded with a permanent welcome center at Cranwell International Center. There was also discussion on gathering information on faculty experiences through informal discussions. Susanna Rinehart shared information on a project that she is working on to collect multidimensional artistic images of diversity university-wide to culminate in a theatrical production in spring '06. She requested that any commission members interested in participating with this effort let her know.

C. Student Recruitment and Retention – Kimberly Philpott summarized the committee report. While it may be too late to impact the process for new BOV member selection, it was suggested that the commission be mindful of this in the future. Bill Greenberg recommended that the commission contact the new director of admissions (once hired) and work with that individual to obtain yield data and determine ways to improve the recruitment of underrepresented students. Jean Elliott informed the commission that an article on the incoming VT freshman class including SAT scores and other demographics would be in Tuesday's paper.

D. Best Practices – It was suggested that Peggy Meszaros be invited to speak to the commission in the fall about her benchmarking report. Susanna Rinehart distributed a report on Best Practices Regarding Domestic Partnership. She requested that this be put on the CEOD agenda in the fall.

V. Announcements

Helen Crawford distributed the following statement:

According to the Athletic Comprehensive Action Plan of Virginia Tech, the athletic director has the sole and serious responsibility of determining how to deal with athletes found to be in trouble with the law. The Commission on Equal Opportunity and Diversity urges the athletic director to consider not only the athletic program, but also the university as a whole and Virginia Tech's commitment to hold ourselves to the highest standards of human dignity. Submitted for consideration and voting upon by Helen Crawford, May 10, 2004.

It was determined that it would be inappropriate for the commission to consider this at the last minute as the meeting was about to end. It was recommended that individual members who support this statement send it or something similar to President Steger and Jim Weaver. Some also suggested the Comprehensive Action Plan will likely be reviewed.

Bill Greenberg closed the meeting by informing members that he chose not to run again in part because of his disappointment in the lack of accomplishments by the commission. He believes the commission could have done much more. Edd responded that his perspective differs and that the committee reports provide members with a map on where to go next year and specific issues

to focus on. Kimberly Philpott made a motion to give the chair permission to call a special meeting of the commission over the summer if need arises. It was seconded and passed.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 noon.

Respectfully submitted,

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

**Commission on Equal Opportunity and Diversity
2003-04 Report for the Staff Sub-Committee**

The sub-committee met in January with representatives of Personnel Services to identify and discuss issues relating to staff recruitment and retention. A number of issues were identified, with the following issues potentially relevant to the work of CEOD:

1. Lack of awareness of the support services that the university offers and where they can seek assistance (e.g., ADA, Women's Center, Employee Dependent Scholarship fund)
2. Need for further supervisory development and training (to provide opportunities for advancement for employees as well as to improve effectiveness of supervisory practices)
3. Under-utilization or under-employment of staff
4. Reluctance of employees to share concerns with supervisors or managers, and supervisors may not know how to respond to concerns or answer employees' questions
5. Perceptions and treatment of staff as "second class citizens" within the university community
6. Perceptions that age discrimination may be occurring with respect to opportunities to be assigned to work on projects, be provided training opportunities, be included in meetings, etc.
7. Literacy (including English as 2nd language and computer literacy)
8. Need for more opportunities to recognize staff accomplishments

The staff and faculty sub-committees met to discuss common issues, one of which was a shared interest in the development of an exit interview process. The two committees reviewed and provided input on the draft faculty and staff exit surveys, which had been developed by representatives of Center for Survey Research, Personnel Services, Provost, EO, and Multi-Cultural Affairs, with the expectation that the survey will be implemented this year in two stages. The first stage will be to survey the faculty and staff who resigned between Spring 2002 and Summer 2003; the second stage will be an annual survey. An annual survey of new employees will be developed for implementation in Fall 2004.

Members of the staffing sub-committee have also been working with Personnel Services and the Commission for Staff Affairs on a computer access and literacy project, which has been piloted. This initiative has several primary components: identification of work areas or labs where computers can be made available for staff use, development of a basic training module for computer use (e.g., email, web navigation, important university websites), and development of employee guides for appropriate use.

Commission on Equal Opportunity and Diversity
Report from the Faculty Recruitment and Retention Committee (5/10/04)

The committee engaged in three primary activities:

First, issues surrounding faculty recruitment and retention and overall climate of Virginia Tech and Blacksburg were discussed. Some members of the committee shared results of informal discussions held with various faculty members to gather insights on the issues faced by faculty in general and underrepresented faculty in particular. Some minority/underrepresented faculty expressed concerns that because they are a minority, they are asked to serve on many committees and to participate in diverse activities and thus are loaded with extra work with little or no added returns. Lack of employment opportunities for spouse seems to be an overriding concern. Several faculty members stated that the lack of spousal employment is likely to be a key reason for them to leave Virginia Tech. Other issues mentioned included lack of facilities for child and parental care and limited opportunities for socialization. Some international faculty expressed concerns about the level of support provided by the university for processing H1B visa and permanent residence applications.

Second, the committee met jointly with the staff recruitment and retention committee and extensively discussed the Exit Survey and suggested improvements on the draft. It was decided to have two separate exit surveys for faculty and staff with some overlapping questions on both surveys and many questions unique to faculty and staff. Since the details of the survey are included in the report put together by the Staff Recruitment and Retention Committee, they are not repeated here.

Finally, the committee is in the process of identifying a few important issues for its focus next year. More informal conversations will be held with various faculty to get more insights on issues and concerns related to faculty recruitment and retention. Here is a list of some suggested areas for next year:

- Go through the benchmarking report based on the research conducted by Peggy Meszaros and Karen Joest on faculty recruitment and retention and identify areas for the committee to address. The report investigated Virginia Tech's peer top 15 NSF-ranked institutions and tried to discover strategies used by these institutions to recruit and retain underrepresented faculty. It is possible that some immediate action steps could be identified based on that report and recommended to the university administration.
- Some research seems to suggest that people with certain personality traits (e.g. "hardy personality") are more likely to stay in the environment such as Virginia Tech and Blacksburg. It may be worthwhile to understand current research in this area and explore how such research could be appropriately used in improving recruitment and retention of underrepresented faculty.
- Continue informal conversations with minority and underrepresented faculty and gather further insights and recommendations on the concerns of excessive service loads, spousal employment, and visa processing mentioned above and other relevant issues.

**CEOD Student Retention & Recruitment Committee
Recommendations to the CEOD from February 23, 2004**

The Student Subcommittee met on February 23rd after a CEOD meeting to discuss some recommendations for our area. We discussed areas that we knew needed reform, such as the scholarship deadlines, BOV vacancies, etc.

Future plans: Efforts will be made to keep up to date with other schools and investigate what services, programs they are offering in regards to student retention and recruitment. Some initial research has been conducted this semester using resources from Pat Hyer's office.

Below are the recommendations we came up with for this year.

I. Scholarships, Grants, Fellowships, Graduate Assistantships and Foundation Funds

If possible, adjust internal scholarship deadlines to dates after students have been offered admission to the university (sometime between April 1 – 15). As this may expand the initial scholarship pools to comprise mainly students who have been offered admission to the university. Most deadlines were prior to the date admissions offers are given.

Scholarships listed below were found by using the Virginia Tech Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid's Scholarship Database Search:

<http://www.finaid.vt.edu/scholarshipsearch/scholarDBsearch.html>

Scholarship Type	Deadline
General (VT) 89 Need & Merit Based	3/11/2004 Except: Weyerhaeuser/United Negro College Fund Corporate Scholars Program, 3/15/2004
General (VT) 28 Neither Need Nor Merit Based	3/11/2004
Departmental (VT) 1 Need & Merit Based Pamplin Scholars Program for Virginians	Postmark February 2 (Leader Award & Pamplin Scholar Award)

II. Institutionally define the term "diversity" and state it is a compelling interest at VA Tech

- The university's mission and strategic plan should state and support "diversity" as a compelling interest. Such an interest should be applied to recruitment and retention of

students (undergraduate, graduate and professional; between and within academic and non-academic disciplines). University departments, programs, and various entities of the university will have access to available federal, state and private funds that support the recruitment and retention of a diverse student body. Any entity of the university whose mission is related to this compelling interest can develop and enact strategic recruitment and retention programs that support this compelling interest. At any time a concern related to such retention and recruitment efforts and/or programs should be questioned the program and/or event will be reviewed by the CEOD. The CEOD constituency may seek advisement, as needed, utilizing university and non-university information sources to develop a consensual response plan.

- In June of 2004, there will be 4 openings on the University's Board of Visitors (BOV). The Commission should develop and suggest a list of possible candidates to apply for appointment by the Governor.

III. Educate and Expanding the Knowledge Base of Members on the Issue of Recruitment & Retention (national/VA Tech)

- Invite off-campus quest speakers to explain some of the terms, issues, policy and practices the commission faces
- Invite key on-campus program areas and/or departments which have experienced a change due to the use of the terms "race neutral" and "narrow tailoring" and/or have been identified in letters written by the Center for Equal Opportunity as being race based programs. Have these areas to share the affects on their program and/or department's mission related to retention and recruitment efforts (especially, underrepresented groups such as Black, Hispanic, Native American and women). Our committee suggests: Karen Sanders, Director - CAEE Academic Enrichment & Excellence; Ray Williams, Jr., Assistant Director for Undergraduate Admissions; John Muffo, Director of Academic Assessment Programs; and Bevlee Watford, Director- Center for the Enhancement of Engineering Diversity

IV. Use our own methods that some departments use to try and get the word out to students.

- Utilize some of our own ideas/Best Practices to get students interested and motivated about VT. From what I understand Admissions sends our very little literature to prospective students being everything is on the web now. Little things like sending a postcard to remind students that a scholarship deadline is coming up, or an Open House is next month, could do a lot for students. They look at the materials they get and if one school sends them a lot of materials and others send nothing, they may feel unimportant and that they are just a number.
- Of course budget is always an issue, but postcards mailing are fairly cheap and mean a lot to students.

CEOD Best Practices Subcommittee Spring 2004

The CEOD Best Practices Subcommittee met in late February to discuss our role as a subgroup of the Commission for Equal Opportunity and Diversity and to develop some criteria for best practices in regards to diversity.

We discussed some comparison schools and ones we should try and model ourselves after. We discussed looking at the Top 30-50 research schools list, our SCHEV peer institutions, most diverse schools (US News & World Report ranking), etc. The committee also discussed utilizing the CASS standards because they include a diversity component.

It was decided that once we established criteria for best practices, we would split up among the other subcommittees and assist them in researching best practices. Below is the breakdown we decided upon.

Laura: Student Retention & Recruitment Sub-committee

Jean: Climate Sub-committee

Brandon: Curriculum Sub-committee

Jennie: Staff & Faculty Recruitment & Retention Sub-committee

Below is the Best Practices criterion we came up with and circulated electronically to the other CEOD members.

What makes a Best Practice a Best Practice?

Questions to consider as you research ideas or programs at VT or at other institutions.

1. Does it have a clear statement of what it was trying to accomplish?
2. Does it have a departmental or university policy that it fits into?
3. Is it part of a consistent and purposeful plan?
4. What was the outcome or impact?
5. How long has it been in existence?
6. How is it funded? Is there an adequate resource or funding strategy to support it?
7. Will it work at Virginia Tech? (consider geographic location, size of school, mission etc.)
8. Is there an assessment component to it? How can you measure it?
9. Consider assets and liabilities (or pros and cons) of program.

Items to consider:

- What schools/universities stand out when you think about diversity issues related to your sub-committee area?
 - Perhaps we can all consider which schools stand out and then try and visit them. (hopefully there will be some overlap among the sub-committees, which will help with travel and costs).
- We suggest sub-committees limit Best Practice suggestions to 3 at the most. We don't want to be considering so many programs that we run out of time and aren't able to work with any of them.

- Remember to look both internally and externally for Best Practices. There may be some departments at VT doing great things that others are unaware of.

Suggestions:

Invite Dr. Peggy Meszaros to address the CEOD early next year on her benchmarking research with regard to "Improving Campus Climate to Support Diversity and Retention."

Report on Actions Taken:

- Formulated criteria to assess Best Practices
- Met with Lanny Cross and collected:
 - CAS Professional Standards for Higher Education 2003 pertaining to Diversity and Ethics
- Reviewed "Diversity Indicators in the Top 30 Research Institutions" – DRAFT from Ben Dixon
- Collected benchmark reports and diversity materials to read from Pat Hyer
- Obtained the list of top 50 institutions for comparison
- Obtained the Peggy Meszaros and Karen Joest report, "Improving Campus Climate to Support Diversity and Retention" Benchmarking the Top 15 NSF-Ranked Institutions"