

Commission on Equal Opportunity and Diversity
Monday, February 2, 2009 – Cascades Room – The Inn
Meeting Minutes

Present: Craig Brians, Jean Brickey, Shirley Cline, Ross Edmonds, Pat Hyer, Hal Irvin, Kathy Lloyd (for Sheila Carter Todd), Anna LoMascolo, Maxine Lyons, Kevin McDonald, Jonathan Moore, Karina Pipes (for Tricia Smith), Ray Plaza, Daphne Rainey-Wittich, Richard Shingles, Guy Sims, Debra Stoudt (for Sue Ott Rowlands), Mikhelle Taylor, Dennis Welch

Absent: Kim Beisecker, Carson Byrd, Virgilio Centeno, Stevan Jackson, Aditya Johri, Brad Klein, Yolanda Machado-Escudero, Deborah Morgan, Taris Mullins, Ingrid Ngai, Kelly Oaks, Ashley Smith, Patricia Smith, Elisa Sotelino, Tamim Younos

Guests: John Browder, Elizabeth Gilboy, Sylvia Ramos-Cotton, Virginia Reilly, Susanna Rinehart, Maggie Sloane

I. Call to Order

Daphne called the meeting to order at 10:03am. Minutes from the December 8th, 2008 meeting were approved.

II. Welcome – Guests

Daphne welcomed guests to the meeting.

III. Guest Speaker – Maggie Sloane – Resolution on Policy 1025 & Violence Prevention Committee

Maggie Sloane presented on Policy 1025 and presented a proposed resolution to amend the antidiscrimination policy to include protections for gender identity and expression as well as including protections against bias due to genetic information.

Maggie indicated other committees have been supportive of this amendment. One concern that has been raised has been that raising this issue might invite a backlash by some against protections that are already guaranteed in the antidiscrimination policy.

Maggie also reported that VCU is now including this in their Affirmative Action statement.

After commission review of the proposed changes to the policy by the commission, Rick Shingles made a motion to approve the amendments. Pat Hyer seconded the motion. Policy revisions were then approved by the commission by voice vote.

Maggie as well informed the commission of a new violence prevention committee that has been formed from multiple areas. Committee is focusing primarily on violence prevention and promoting resources for individuals who wish to identify potential problems. The committee is chaired by Police Chief Wendell Flinchum. Daphne asked about how this committee relates to other committees. Maggie indicated that this committee is in addition to a threat-assessment team and a CARE team. This committee will focus on interventions to violence.

Rick asked about the diversity of the committee and spoke about the need for various cultural groups to have opportunities for a voice. Daphne reported that some multi-cultural fellows have expressed that some groups felt isolated and don't have enough representation in some of these efforts. Susanna Rinehart spoke about the need for greater acclimation into the community by international students. Kathy as well indicated a need for a greater awareness of resources to assist with the acclimation process.

Susanna discussed the perception that universities have to guarantee a safe location when the reality is that complete security cannot be guaranteed. Discussion followed over the need to how to utilize orientation to help students learn how to respond to possible indicators of future violent acts.

Rick asked about the Safewatch program and whether it was being utilized. Guy indicated that the Safewatch program is used by everyone to raise concerns over behaviors. This process allows for anonymity. Pat indicated that the Dean of Students Office has a formal process in place to respond to threats and concerns. Daphne asked about how these various committees link together. Pat asked if Guy could provide some overview about how the orientation process and programs dealing with international students cover issues related to violence. Discussion was held on bringing in future guest speakers to discuss these topics.

IV. Task Force Reports

Diversity Summit: Guy reported on Diversity Summit. Summit had been postponed because some had raised concerns that the Summit could be more impactful and needed further thought and planning time. Summit planning is held in the fall and is held at the start of the school year which makes for a challenge for students to be involved.

Anna spoke on having more planning time to be sure that speakers are fully vetted. Ray indicated that the event has been moved further into the semester from previous years to allow for more student awareness. Ross asked about having more continuity to plan the event by electing a VP for CEOD in the spring as the VP chairs the committee overseeing the program. Discussion was held on challenges of filling offices until new commission members are on board for the fall.

V. OEI Update: Ray Plaza – Diversity Initiatives

Ray reported on recent activities in the Office for Equity and Inclusion. Ray reported on the move of some staff to different physical spaces on campus. He introduced Susanna Rinehart, who has been recently hired as the Director of Education for Inclusion and Diversity and he reported on shifting roles within the office.

Ray highlighted the ongoing efforts related to the Diversity Strategic Plan and the Implementation Team.

Ray highlighted recent events related to Diversity Initiatives including the Advancing Diversity Conference and MLK celebrations. Ray all highlighted upcoming events for Black History Month. He also reported on potential programs with the Indian Student Community as well the upcoming First Annual Hispanic/Latino Constituency Conference & Encuentro Latino III in May.

Ray also reported on ongoing initiatives of the office that work with student success and access, diversity education, and outreach to other institutions.

Pat asked about Mosaic and the nature of its demographic makeup. Ray indicated that there was not a heavy focus on quantifiable numbers on diversity.

Pat also asked about PCEG and its connection to Mosaic. Ray indicated that PCEG is a separate partnership with Financial Aid and that it doesn't require living in a specific dorm and has different programming.

Daphne asked about what assessments are used related to diversity initiatives. Silvia Ramos-Cotton responded that different assessments are used for different programs.

VI. Announcements

Daphne reported on her ongoing work with the National Science Foundation and that opportunities for funding and recognition of diversity efforts were available.

Ross reported on the LGBT caucus having a meet and greet with the CEO of Equality Virginia, Jon Blair in Squires in February. He also reported about upcoming movies being promoted by the LGBT including “Milk” and “Doubt”.

Virginia Reilly reported on the upcoming College Bound effort in conjunction with CAEE this summer. This marks the 11th year of College Bound. Also the university recently completed an ADA review and an ADA work group and reading group will be starting soon.

Perry asked about procedure for forwarding Policy 1025 revisions, he will get with Maggie on getting the final version passed along to University Council.

Meeting adjourned at 11:35am.

Respectfully submitted,

Perry D. Martin
Secretary to the Commission on Equal Opportunity and Diversity