

COMMISSION ON EQUAL OPPORTUNITY AND DIVERSITY
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 12TH, 2012
10:00 am – 12:00 pm
GRADUATE LIFE CENTER ROOM B

Meeting Minutes

PRESENT: Rick Barrow, Dannette Beane, Aaron Bond, Sam Cook, Catherine Cotrupi, Ross Edmonds, Amer Fayad, Jermaine Holmes, Hal Irvin, William Lewis, Mark Managuio, Lesley Moyo, Bill Ortega, Susan Rosebrough, Sue Ott Rowlands, Laura Rugless, Guy Sims, Yannis Stivachtis, Jody Thompson, Mary Ellen Verdu, Leighton Vila, Alasia Washington

ABSENT: Chris Atkins, Kim Beisecker, Tom Brown (with notice), Nicole DaDamio (with notice), Amy Hogan (with notice), Marwa Abdel Latif, Corinne Noirot (with notice), Jacqueline Nottingham, Wornie Reed (with notice), Emily Satterwhite (with notice), Sherri Simmons, Cris Thompson

GUESTS: Marcie Bishop, Mike Kutnak, Perry Martin, Karisa Moore, Pam Vickers

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by Chair Yannis Stivachtis. Motion to adopt the agenda was approved. Suggested changes to the previous meeting minutes were noted.

II. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chair Stivachtis asked if the Registrar's Office had responded to a request for a staff member to visit CEOD and discuss the listing of religious holidays on their website. Perry Martin reported that there had been no response from the University Registrar on the request.

Laura Rugless, recently hired Director of Equity and Access, was introduced to CEOD members by Hal Irvin.

III. UPDATES FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Dr. William Lewis provided an update on the subgroup meetings on strategies for aligning the Diversity and Strategic plan with the Plan for a New Horizon. Focus groups have been meeting throughout the fall of 2012 to discuss the goals, objectives, strategies and indicators that are intended to guide the actions of appropriate university units, including senior management areas, colleges, departments, and programs, in the delivery of initiatives, policies, and practices that advance diversity and inclusion.

Recommendations from these subgroups will then be vetted among various stakeholder groups in the spring of 2013. From this feedback a draft of a realigned Diversity Strategic Plan is slated to be presented to the president and provost around March 2013 for their approval. Dr. Lewis will continue to provide updates as the process moves forward.

Dr. Lewis announced that *The Path Forward*, a campus-wide diversity publication will be published in mid-November.

Discussion was also held on the need for a letter from the Commission on Equal Opportunity and Diversity addressing aspects of the 2012 Homecoming Campaign that perpetuated negative stereotypes of American Indians and were counter to the values of the Virginia Tech Principles of Community. At the previous meeting it was discussed that CEOD would have a role in drafting a letter to the university community addressing the incident. Dr. Lewis reported that in a subsequent meeting of key individuals concerned with the Homecoming incidents that it was determined that a letter be drafted from the Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs to be sent to various listservs related to the American Indian Studies Program.

As a result, discussion was held on the need for protocols as to how the commission will respond publically to issues around diversity when needed. Discussion was held on the ability of the commission to respond independently and that messages did not necessarily have to be of one voice or from one source. The need for CEOD members to be informed of the status of communiques was also discussed.

Leighton Vila made a motion that a letter from CEOD responding to the Homecoming incidents be drafted. Motion was approved. Sam Cook and Ross Edmonds agreed to assist with the composition of the letter.

IV. FOLLOW UP DISCUSSION ON AMERICAN INDIAN FORUM/COMMUNICATION

Guy Sims, Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs and Sam Cook, Director of the American Indian Studies Program provided information regarding the American Indian Heritage Month – Strong Together Forum that was held on November 1st, 2012 in Squires Student Center. The goal of the forum was to highlight the role that American Indian and other indigenous cultures play at Virginia Tech and in society as a whole. The forum featured reflections from representatives from American Indian cultures and from university leaders. The event included facilitated round-table discussions from various student, staff, faculty, and community perspectives in the spirit of the Virginia Tech Principles of Community.

Sam reported that it was good dialogue though it did not address the central concerns of the Homecoming campaign as he had hoped. Sam reported that students from his courses did benefit from this program.

V. SGA PRESENTATION AND Q&A

Alasia Washington, Director of Equity and Inclusion for the Student Government Association presented to CEOD members the work of SGA. Alasia commented that SGA was working on becoming move of a governing board instead of a programming board and that SGA continues to review its structure.

Among the projects she is focusing on is a partnership with Students for Non-Violence (SNV) on a Peace Garden project. The Peace Garden outside the Cranwell International Center stands in memorial to all countries having seen conflict. Plans are to recreate this Garden to symbolize unity and strength through peace. Future goals are to make it a community effort, have it student renovated, with student and community upkeep throughout the years including a playground for local children and stepping stones for each organization that wants to be a part of the garden.

Alasia also seeks to continue to work with the Strong Together campaign to promote the Virginia Tech Principles of Community in the coming year.

VI. ADJOURNED

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 11:30 a.m., with subgroups convening. The next meeting will be on November 26th at 10:00 a.m., GLC Room B.

Respectfully Submitted,

Marcie Bishop
Recording Secretary, Commission on Equal Opportunity and Diversity