

Commission on Equal Opportunity and Diversity
Monday, December 8, 2008 – Cascades Room – The Inn
Meeting Minutes

Present: Craig Brians, Jean Brickey, Carson Byrd, Virgilio Centeno, Ross Edmonds, Pat Hyer, Hal Irvin, Aditya Johri, Brad Klein, Kathy Lloyd (for Sheila Carter Todd), Anna LoMascolo, Maxine Lyons, Kevin McDonald, Deborah Morgan, Kelly Oaks, Fred Piercy (for Sue Ott Rowlands), Ray Plaza, Daphne Rainey-Wittich, Jenny Quijano Sax (for Kim Beisecker), Richard Shingles, Guy Sims, Patricia Smith, Mikhelle Taylor, Dennis Welch

Absent: Sheila Carter-Tod, Virgilio Centeno, Stevan Jackson, Aditya Johri, Deborah Mullins, Ingrid Ngai, Ashley Smith, Patricia Smith, Elisa Sotelino

Guests: John Browder, Elizabeth Gilboy, Karisa Moore, Sylvia Ramos-Cotton, Virginia Reilly, Inesse Semeah, Maggie Sloane

I. Call to Order

Guy called the meeting to order with Daphne participating by phone. Minutes from the last meeting were approved. Guests to the meeting were welcomed.

II. Taskforce Reports/Graduate Student Diversity Initiative

1. **Taskforce on CEOD Public Relations:** Dennis Welch representing the Task Force on CEOD Public Relations presented on three goals beginning in spring of 2009. First, a focus on long-term continuity of public relations. Secondly, to provide information to Virginia Tech and individuals external to the campus about CEOD's mission and how interested individuals and groups can raise issues connected to diversity. Finally, to inform the university community and others beyond it on the commission's meetings, actions, and achievements.
2. **Guest speaker, Manuel Perez-Quinones – Associate Dean and Director of the Office of Graduate Student Diversity for the Graduate School.** Manuel spoke on the Graduate Student Diversity Initiative. The office has become a formal initiative with a long term focus to become an enabler, assisting departments to recruit, retain, and graduate a diverse student body.

Manuel reported on the Office's focus on Inclusive Excellence. Areas of emphasis in this respect include Education and Scholarship, Access and Success, building a Graduate School Community, and providing an infrastructure to support these activities.

Discussion on several aspects of the initiative followed. A question was raised by Brad on diversity and research. Manuel responded that the focus is on students conducting research on diversity issues. Further discussion centered around the connection to this program and other efforts such as the Race and Social Policy Certificate Program and outreach efforts to the medical fields.

A question was posed by Daphne on the attention given to recruitment verses retention. Manuel responded that department evaluation will be based on a wider criteria – persistence. Secondly, there will be work with Kevin on a diversity strategic plan related to improving campus climate.

Rick followed up with a further comment on the need to have strong mentoring and other retention activities in place. Manuel indicated that some strong recruitment efforts are already in place and a focus on retention will be emphasized.

Virginia Reilly asked about strategies for including students with disabilities and Manuel indicated that they would look at co-sponsorship of activities.

Guy posed a question as to how difficult financial times would influence activities. Manuel indicated that money from the Task Force on Implementation will support some of the activities right away. Manuel sees that activities will be less impacted than fellowships. Overall VT's programming will not be affected more or less than other institutions dealing with financial challenges.

3. **Diversity Summit:** Guy reported on the upcoming Diversity Summit on Friday, January 30th, 2009, 2:00pm-4:00pm in Commonwealth Ballroom in Squires. This year's summit will focus on the LGBTQ Community.
4. **Campus Diversity Integration Taskforce:** Daphne reported that this task force has worked to gain insight into campus diversity activities and conceptualize a resource that serves as an archival and contact hub for diversity activities. The taskforce feels that this focal point should be embodied within the Commission on Equal Opportunity and Diversity.

The Task Force has determined the need for such a hub due to a high number of student, departmental, and administrative units that focus on Diversity. As well, there are a wide variety of definitions of diversity among organizations and the need for effective communication between groups in different areas remains a priority.

The Campus Diversity Task Force further recommends that a description of Diversity be adopted using criteria from the Office for Equity and Inclusion. Additionally, Kelly Oaks and Raymond Plaza from OEI would be consulted to identify major diversity initiatives and active diversity groups on campus. Further work would be done with OEI to determine the level of resources needed to achieve the implementation of this central resource point. The National Science Foundation is recommended as a potential source of funds to support this type of effort.

5. **LGBT Taskforce Update:** Ross presented on behalf of the taskforce. Among the key issues discussed was the need for those who are lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, or transgender to know how to locate resources, including identifying individuals and literature that can be of assistance. Discussion also held on the need for a LGBT Resource Center similar to the VT Women's Center. Also continued work toward building a supportive climate is needed.
6. **Implementation Team Update:** Ray provided an update of the work of the Implementation Team. Since the release of the Implementation Team Report on August 25th, 2008, budgetary commitments have been made, however with challenging fiscal times, some aspects of the plan may need to be funded over 7 year period rather than a 5 year period. Commitments made towards these efforts will be strategic and formal budget plans are being submitted by each area and assessment will later be conducted to examine outcomes.

Ray provided an overview of each component area of the plan. In the focus area on academics, a faculty workgroup has been formed to develop an undergraduate diversity requirement. With the faculty area, the visiting scholars program is already underway and the Diversity Cluster Hire strategy is being used to recruit the Directors of Africana Studies and Center for Race and Social Policy. In the area of staff diversity, new recruitment and outreach strategies are being developed to reach under-represented communities. Undergraduate student efforts include a focus on "yield" events utilizing Alumni and Admissions representatives to attract under-represented students. Efforts dealing with student mentorship, activities that improve campus climate, and student

pipeline efforts are continuing to be supported. Progress is being made to formally support the Office for Graduate Student Diversity Initiatives.

In the area of Alumni and Community Engagement, Multicultural Alumni Programs are being enhanced with the leadership of Laurie Brogdon, who is actively coordinating a number of efforts that engage various cultural groups. Additionally meetings with leaders of local multicultural communities have been held by the President's Office.

Administrative structures will benefit from the development of Diversity Development Institute which will be lead by a Director for Education and Inclusion with in OEI.

Next steps include gaining a greater grasp of budgetary needs and the need for assessment of these initiatives. CEOD can expect to be kept updated on proposals and initiatives being developed.

III. Update on University Strategic Plan – Diversity Scorecard – Perry Martin

Perry presented a slide show on institutional progress towards diversity as it related to the Six-Year Plan. The presentation presented was from the November BOV meeting. Some discussion centered around whether the criteria used for determining institutional success related to diversity was an adequate measure. Pat indicated that these standards are set criteria and will be used to determine progress as the plan progresses. Perry also stated that any opportunities to share data in addition to the criteria set forth in the scorecard be taken advantage of and that it is important that the BOV remains aware of our progress towards equity and inclusion through a variety of means.

IV. Update on Compliance and Conflict Resolution Efforts - Maggie Sloane

Maggie led discussion on recent letter to the editor on celebration of holidays. A number of members shared perspectives from employees and students on the impact of decoration and seasonal events on the overall campus climate. Maggie invited suggestions for improving future memos. Daphne suggested promoting a focus on the commonalities among religions including celebrations that occur at common times of the year. Virginia talked about some of the historical discussions on holiday recognitions and suggested that perhaps a website would be helpful in providing tips on being inclusive of various religions.

V. Announcements

Ray highlighted the upcoming MLK Jr. activities.

Tricia spoke about a student effort called Actively Caring for People.

Next CEOD meeting was announced for February 2nd.

Meeting adjourned at 11:52am

Respectfully submitted,

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