Commission on Equal Opportunity and Diversity  
Monday, April 17, 2006

Minutes

Present: Ross Edmonds, Susan Willis-Walton, Ruth Grene, Judy Alford (for Sue Ellen Crocker), Edd Sewell, Kris Tilley-Lubbs, Maxine Lyons, Zenobia Hikes, Rick Shingles (for Susan Anderson), Marilyn Kershaw, Pat Hyer, Michael Goode, Ray Plaza, Linda Woodard, Ann Kilkelly, Maggie Sloane (for Kevin McDonald)

Absent: Sumeet Bagai, Angela Kim, Tina Harvey, Valerie Hardcastle, Ben Dixon, Jean Brickey, Maj Zaheda, Richard Benson, Ann Kilkelley, Kim Beisecker, Carlos Evia, LaChelle Waller, Ellen Plummer, Sam Camden

Guests: Judy Ridinger, Jennie Reilly, Jane Ann Williams

I. Adoption of Agenda
The agenda was adopted.

II. Chair Report
Maggie Sloane will be here later to introduce herself to the commission. She is the new Associate Director of Compliance and Conflict Resolution. There has been a request to cancel the meeting for next week since there are a number of conflicting events on April 24. It was then suggested moving the May 8 meeting to May 1 to avoid meeting during final exam week. Pat recommended polling the commission to see which date works best for most members. At that last meeting the chair and vice chair will be voted on. Ray passed out some materials from the Campus Climate Check-Up for members to review. There was also a National Issues Forum held on April 6 with the focus on America’s Role in the World. At the next meeting results from the roundtable discussions held on March 28 will be shared. The at-large applications were reviewed by a subgroup and they have identified names to be forwarded to the President for his selection. There were no applications for the at-large faculty/staff representative to University Council. Ray passed out a sign-up sheet for the VT Principles of Community t-shirts. Ray is meeting with representatives from the Physical Plant and the University Architect about the principles being placed in academic classes. Coke has agreed to work on a design for the principles to appear on the Coke machines on campus. Michael and LaChelle have been working on the follow-up from the Diversity Summit. Last week was the first planning meeting for the 2006-07 MLK celebration. If members have suggestions for keynote speakers, please send them to Ray.

Maggie Sloane introduced herself and shared some of her responsibilities. There is a design group that has put together a 40-hr training for mediators to occur in May. She is also responsible for increasing the awareness of the harassment and anti-discrimination policy and is working on ways to best educate faculty and staff.

III. Task Force Updates

A. College Diversity Committee
The EO office has some specialized training/meetings next week on Monday afternoon and Tuesday morning.

B. Diversity in the Faculty Promotion Process
The resolution is to be voted on at University Council today. Rick shared some of the reactions at Faculty Senate which was very mixed. It is doubtful it would have passed if there had been a vote.
C. Data and Research Support & Policy Integration
Nothing new to report.

D. Campus Climate
Nothing new to report.

IV. Presentation by Human Resources – Performance Management Process for Staff
Linda introduced Judy Ridinger, the senior human resources manager. A handout on the performance management program was distributed. The Human Resources Department was given the ability to create their own set of universal dimensions, for which diversity is one. Linda asked that members look at how the Principles of Community tie into the diversity dimension. Since the diversity commitment was created before the Principles, there may be a need to do some revisions to the description of the diversity dimension. Ross suggested the problem isn’t with the statements but with the supervisor’s interpretation. Staff must be given opportunity to do a self assessment that can be considered by the supervisor as part of the evaluation. It is not clear how many employees take advantage of that opportunity. The self assessment is a place where employees could make clear the work that they do in the area of diversity. Roughly 500 staff members serve as supervisors of other staff and 1,000 faculty members supervise staff. There was a question about adding engagement as an indicator. Concern was whether staff would be penalized if they were not given the opportunity to be engaged in diversity activities. Some classified staff have more opportunities than others. It was recommended that someone in addition to the supervisor review the self assessment. Three ratings are associated with each dimension: below contributor, contributor, and extraordinary contributor. Another suggestion was to include more language and examples of how staff might meet the different ratings. There are training sessions offered, but not all supervisors take advantage of the opportunities. Department Heads and Directors are also critical in this process. Jane Ann shared that the office is working on developing a multifaceted and multidimensional training that can be accessed in multiple ways by those who need the training. A number of members stressed the need for training to be mandatory for supervisors. Pat suggested adding civility as part of one of the performance indicators. There is an opportunity for Human Resources to create some written materials to address some of these issues. It was recommended to update the narrative for the diversity commitment which is another place to tie in the Principles of Community. Jennie reminded members that many employees do not have access to computers and stressed the need to bring training to some. Pat asked that Jane Ann be given some time at the last meeting to share what some of her ideas are for education and training since that has been the focus of so many commission meetings. Linda shared that any changes made need to be done by July 1.

Announcements
Jennie shared copies of the invitation to the Disabilities Awareness Reception and speaker on April 19. The Collegiate Times added a photo to the advertisement that was not approved by Jennie or Susan Angle. They are working with CT staff to do a disclaimer on the ad. It was also suggested that Ray issue a statement as chair and others write letters to the editor. Tonight is the SafeZone reception at 6:00 p.m. in the Multipurpose Room at the Graduate Life Center.

Meeting adjourned at 11:50 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Alicia P. Cohen, Secretary to the Commission