Commission on Equal Opportunity and Diversity  
Monday, September 11, 2006

Minutes

Present: Ross Edmonds, Zenobia Hikes, Rick Shingles, Pat Hyer, Ray Plaza, Deborah Morgan, Ann Kilkelly, Carlos Evia, Ben Dixon, Kris Tilley-Lubbs, Valerie Harcastle, Kim Beisecker, Mike Taczak, Brad Klein, Aaren Salido, Elisa Sotelino, Jack Davis, Patricia Smith, Sue Ellen Crocker, Maxine Lyons

Absent: Ruth Grene, Sam Camden, Antionette Stroter, Alexis Bozzo, Craig Brians, Tina Harvey, Saurabh Attarde, Linda Woodard, Kevin McDonald

Guests: Sanda Chelliah, Maggie Sloane, Sarah Wang, Jane Ann Williams

I. Call to Order
The agenda was adopted.

II. Chair Report
There was an observation of a moment of silence for 9/11 followed by welcome and introductions. Carlos reviewed the roles of the chair, vice chair, and commission members. Ray and Pat shared a brief historical overview of the commission. The schedule of fall meetings were reviewed along with some of the agenda items for this year. The commission will provide support for the evaluation of the diversity strategic plan, diversity as part of the FAR report, the Taskforce on Race and the Institution, planning for the 10th annual diversity summit, and activities related to the campus climate. Policy development is another area where the commission may be involved. The existing task forces were discussed. Ross shared ongoing efforts of the campus climate task force including an interest in diversity education and training of faculty, staff, and students. The Safewatch website has been updated to match the new university web design. A new task force on the diversity strategic plan will work with the Office of Multicultural Affairs in developing updates to the plan. Ruth, as vice-chair, will coordinate the diversity summit.

III. CEOD Initiatives
   a. Lee Hall – Following the Lee Hall protest, the commission created a list of recommendations and sent them to the president. Ray provided an update on some of the recommendations. The historical display is currently being constructed. A proposal for MOSAIC, a multicultural theme housing program, was presented this fall. The proposal is under consideration by student affairs. The Office of Multicultural Affairs is responsible for the implementation of these recommendations.

   b. VT Principles of Community – Ray provided a summary of activities that have occurred since the signing of the VT Principles of Community. There is an on-line video of the principles and work is underway to place the principles in all academic classrooms. The Division of Student Affairs has provided framed copies for all departments and also for student organizations that are part of the Commission on Student Affairs. The College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences had an event this fall for all new freshmen focusing on the principles. Future items include getting the principles on some of the Coke machines on campus and finding ways to display them in the Burruss Hall lobby. Zenobia asked that we work with university relations to increase the awareness and visibility of the principles to the outside community. It was also raised that there is also the need to work on the public relations internally. There is a special story in the next issue of the VT Magazine on the principles.
c. MLK Celebration/Diversity Summit – This past spring was the first year VT commemorated the MLK holiday with no classes. The commission took the lead in developing the weeklong series of events. A tentative calendar has been developed for 2007. The two options currently being investigated as keynotes are Senator Obama and a satellite conversation with Nelson Mandela. There is a need to develop more stable funding for this effort. Rick asked if alumni have been approached regarding support for these events. Ben shared that this will be part of the capital campaign. A goal for the Diversity Summit this year is to do something different. Since the event is in the Commonwealth Ballroom with more space, it needs to get it planned sooner so that the publicity can get out earlier.

IV. Announcements

On Friday, there is a Multicultural Faculty/Staff luncheon at 11:30 a.m. in the Multipurpose Room at the Graduate Life Center. The luncheon keynote is Patricia Russell-McCloud, a professional orator and motivational speaker. The luncheon will be followed by diversity discussions from 1:30-4:00 p.m. The lunch and discussions are open to the entire university community. It was asked to resend this information to commission members so that they can forward it accordingly.

Ray shared a plan for a university-wide mechanism for diversity awards. A toolkit has been developed for all colleges to use to develop diversity awards. There will also be university-wide, presidential level awards. The goal is that the first university diversity awards will be presented in the spring 2007. The commission will serve as the review committee for these diversity awards.

Ben welcomed and encouraged members to share ideas regarding updates to the diversity strategic plan. The hope is that the goals of the plan will be assessed on an annual basis through the diversity monitoring and assessment system.

Carlos shared that there was an article in Diverse Online about Virginia Tech adding diversity to the Faculty Activity Report. The commission was instrumental in moving this forward. The article is accessible at http://www.diverseeducation.com/artman/publish/printer_6309.shtml.

Kris encouraged members to sign up for Outreach Now Conference on September 25. Valerie will send more information on the conference this week. Next Monday, September 18 at 7:00 p.m. Nel Noddings will be a guest lecturer on the ethics of caring in the Latham Ballroom. There will be a session with graduate students on Tuesday. There is a state board of education hearing at BMS at 7:00 p.m. tonight looking at the state standards of quality. One topic is the state of ESL, as this population has grown exponentially. Friday starts the Hispanic Latino Heritage Month and the calendar is available from the Multicultural Programs and Services website.

Carlos requested that members email him with ideas for task forces. There will be times set aside at regular meetings for the task forces to meet. At the next meeting on September 25, there will be a discussion of the priorities for the commission.

Meeting adjourned at 12:35 p.m.

Meeting adjourned at

Respectfully submitted,

Alicia P. Cohen, Secretary to the Commission