

Diversity Council
May 4, 2009
Minutes

Present: E. Abercrombie, D. Acosta, L. Billionis, J. Bryan, C. Collins, S. Downing, K. Faaborg, V. Hardcastle, H. Kegler, A. Leonard, M. Livingston, B. Marshall, M. McCrate, D. Meem, D. Merchant, E. Owens, D. Padur, N. Pinto, K. Ramos (for M. Leventhal), B. Rinto, K. Robbins, W. White

L. Billionis opened up the meeting and asked DC Padur to introduce GSGA president-elect, Peggy Shannon Baker. L. Billionis thanked DC for his work on the Council and welcomed P. Shannon Baker.

Diversity Conference

L. recognized S. Downing and B. Marshall for their leadership in organizing the Diversity Conference and asked them to comment. S. Downing reported 358 people registered and they have received good reviews overall. It is estimated attendance was comprised of 60% students, 30% staff and 10% faculty. Feedback on the presenters of the concurrent sessions was very positive as they covered a wide array of topics. The opening session featured a welcome by N. Zimpher, keynote address by M. Livingston and a video. The town hall meeting was good and the closing session featured keynoter, Mayor Mallory, and the diversity ambassador awards were presented. She noted the help of 60 volunteers, the planning committee and staff from MainStreet and TUC. B. Marshall was able to secure \$5,000 in co-sponsorships to help offset costs. B. Marshall reported on areas for improvement. There were noticeable absences from administration, Diversity Council members and faculty. Bringing in a recognizable speaker and more entertainment would make it more attractive. Better PR on campus and in the community was suggested also. The lunch portion could be a time for attendees to share ideas rather than featuring a speaker. Have on-site registration and offer the option of half-day participation. Make available a site during the conference where participants can drop off questions throughout the day for the town hall meeting. Have faculty co-chair next year's conference might be helpful in terms of getting faculty participation. Next year's conference date is set for April 14, 2010.

E. Owens reported P&G sponsored a diversity seminar for CEO's and chief diversity officers in the community. He noted the UC conference has spurred activity across the city.

E. Abercrombie acknowledged the work of the co-chairs and the planning committee for the excellent job.

L. Billionis thanked them and all involved in the planning of the conference. Any additional comments should be given to directly to S. Downing and B. Marshall.

Diversity Plan

L. Billionis opened up the conversation about the recent work of the consultant which resulted in a draft document of the Diversity Plan. Council members were invited to provide written feedback and one responded.

D. Merchant stated the chart in the plan document does not reflect the subcommittees that came out of the task force. Her recommendation is to revise these to show what has evolved from the report. M. Livingston indicated that the chart was a draft for discussion including old functions and some new as proposed by the consultant.

K. Faaborg commented the job of recruiting and retaining faculty, staff and students seems to be at the heart of all the work and probably necessitates a standing committee.

D. Merchant suggested having a focused diversity initiative with a subcommittee to stay current on whatever initiative is identified at that time. It needs to have the right structure and be broad and flexible enough to stay current. She asked what is the 2009-10 initiative.

M. Livingston noted the recent HLC site visit identified three items that need attention, one of which being the recruitment of diverse faculty. He agreed with K. Faaborg the need for a critical mass of faculty, staff and students. Absent this dimension, it's hard to imagine how to do the work.

L. Billionis said one of the deficiencies is a conversation about priorities of the subcommittees. M. Gravely's plan allows for this, but it is not included. Do they all demand continuous work because they have constant initiatives?

B. Rinto stated her subcommittee was never clear about what they were supposed to do after they submitted their plan last fall and they need more direction.

L. Billionis asked if there is a desire to maintain the existing subcommittees.

B. Rinto stated there is a desire to know priorities. How form follows function is a question. They need clarity around priorities.

E. Abercrombie raised a concern about the council membership that needs to be reviewed by either the leadership team or the Interim President. A new infusion is needed. Members are not attending and the Council needs committed people to move the work of the Council.

M. Livingston acknowledged the leadership team is looking at membership with a set rotation cycle.

A. Leonard shared concerns about an exit strategy and felt like the work she did on a subcommittee was good but is unclear about the need to look at the structure.

V. Hardcastle noted a presence on the Council does not represent one's commitment to diversity. She doesn't feel like her work at the table has been productive. She feels like more work gets done elsewhere. M. Livingston suggested that most of the diversity work, by definition, is done throughout the university.

D. Acosta shared the activities of his college's diversity committee. They develop recommendations and policies and present them to him in his role as dean. However, they know there are no funds or staff to implement. The CDO only has Student Affairs staff to support this effort. This is a major problem.

C. Collins commented on the work at the College of Medicine. There are many efforts in the colleges and units. The Council needs to have a goal.

M. Livingston referred to the status report on the recommendations that was distributed some time ago that noted all items from the task force as well new ones. They were very substantive; work has been done. To hear council members say that nothing has happened is disheartening. Significant work has been done. The consultant was brought in to address two issues: 1) how this structure functions, and 2) the role of the Council and the role of each member. What are the priorities of the Council? Pick one and let's move forward. There are modest resources allocated to the Council, but there more out there. He, T. Perzigian, and N. Pinto have drafted language to empower the rest of the university in terms of integrating diversity into our respective planning processes. More things have been done than just the Diversity Conference. We do not need to go back to the mechanics at every meeting; fundamentals, yes.

L. Billionis acknowledged that Council members are displeased with the meetings themselves recognizing there needs to be more interaction than just reporting. This past year, the Council has struggled with issues such as: 1) should the Council be a funding board, 2) complaints, grievances. What is the role of the Council? Where do we need to have an impact? What should be done in the meetings?

D. Merchant stated now that most of the 52 recommendations are complete, the Council has the opportunity to identify its own initiatives for action.

V. Hardcastle asked what's missing – the basic structure. There are reps from the President's Office, the Provost Office, deans. These people meet all the time and we know they are committed to diversity. What is needed are people we never hear from – faculty, staff. The wrong people are at the table.

K. Faaborg reported on discussions from the Provost Committee on Faculty Diversity and it is their opinion this will not stick around. The Council will not hold them and others accountable.

B. Rinto reported her subcommittee brought in people from the UC community who spoke candidly, but nothing was done with that input.

M. Livingston said to use the Diversity Conference as a prototype that yielded good results. They made a recommendation for this initiative; it was funded and acted on.

B. Rinto said her subcommittee submitted a report, but there was no follow up.

V. Hardcastle asked how do you work from the bottom up; not the top down. Need to hear other voices. Need to answer to a group from the bottom up.

E. Owens said the subcommittees are made up of people from outside the Council. There is the realization that not much work in his subcommittee was accomplished this year, but people need to stay committed to keep the work going.

J. Bryan reported on the Provost Committee on Faculty Diversity which solicited proposals from the faculty. The initial response was low, but when they went back out with examples, it generated much more creativity.

D. Acosta asked about the status of the budget allocated to the Council. People are doing this work every day. He believes in the principle of the Council, but people have been doing this work for years without it being funneled through the Council. He does not want to see it become a bureaucratic process.

H. Kegler said faculty, staff and students don't know the definition of diversity. A broad based definition is needed that identifies all the Council's work. If faculty make this part of their goals, they will make it happen whether they have the money or not. Continue with what's been started and infuse diversity into the subcommittees and beyond.

M. Livingston noted the survey results from NSSE and SSI address matters of campus climate. The data made a very compelling statement that students of color are more satisfied than compared to their white counterparts. This is evidence of success. This success comes not just as a result of the Council's work, but from all the work on campus.

D. Acosta said the Council's work is great but we need to give credit to other people on campus doing good work.

L. Bilionis said it was his hope the Council would be a body to offer fresh ideas that are not in the administration. Some people have fallen into a notion that if we do not have any money for an idea then it can't be implemented. There will never be enough resources and we all have other jobs. We need to learn how to operate in this environment.

N. Pinto suggested this group be involved with grass roots initiative.

B. Marshall noted there are four different levels of engagement in the room: 1) those that come up with ideas, 2) responders and reactors, 3) implementers, 4) ambassadors. Perhaps the Council should be structured along those lines.

A. Leonard said part of the disconnect is no feedback. To address the subcommittee's concern of no response, they could report at the council meetings.

D. Merchant said we don't have effective meetings. There is a need to change the process of making decisions. We are making this harder than it really is.

J. Bryan asked if we are short-circuiting ourselves. The plan is a draft. The purpose of each subcommittee needs to be charged.

M. McCrate said just to pick something for the goal and get it done.

S. Downing asked if the plans submitted by the subcommittees could be reviewed and initiatives could be selected from them.

L. Bilionis concluded the meeting saying the subcommittee chairs would likely be asked to report at the June meeting as to the status of their work. Additionally, initiatives would be identified to move forward.

NOTE: Given the focus of this meeting, M. Livingston chose not to provide the CDO report. Attached, for your information, is a list of diversity related programs, activities and events.

Minutes approved by L. Bilionis and M. Livingston.

NEXT MEETING

June 4, 2009, 10:00 AM, 310 University Pavilion

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