

CLAHS Diversity Committee Meeting  
Wallace Hall - Room 406  
Monday, February 27, 2006 - 2:30-4:10 p.m.

Present: Jane Abraham, Richard Burian, Megan Carney, Amelia Castaneda, Fred D'Aguiar, Jean Elliott, Sue Farquhar, Valerie Hardcastle, Bob Leonard (chair), Jeff Mann, Marjorie Norton, Rick Shingles

2:30 Bob Leonard conducted the meeting.  
Call to order and acceptance of minutes of previous meeting.

Follow up on Faculty Association Meeting Feb. 16, reported by Dick Burian.

The Faculty Council requests a memo with follow-up recommendations stating projects to be pursued and longer term goals. A good apparatus for dealing with confidentiality is needed, such as a group or committee, appointed by the Dean, with formal training to deal with problems and provide support. The Diversity Committee will have a report ready after break.

The status and function of the Diversity Committee was brought up by Bob Leonard. Should this be a standing committee or remain ad hoc? Discussion focused on the question of how the committee can become more proactive to help bring about a culture change. Ideas expressed: the committee should be able to follow-up with action; we need a 'care of action' not just a care of rhetoric; the Principles of Community, a first step in responding to the problem of neglect, need the possibility of enforcement; a mechanism for sharing information should also be a priority. Suggestions included:

- a disciplinary court or a council be set up to allow enforcement of the Principles of Community.
- a voluntary program be developed to train faculty in competency skills and self-awareness for dealing with diversity issues.
- a student orientation focus group be allowed to present the Principles of Community to target entering freshman.
- as a College we become our own 'safe zone'.

Bob Leonard called for a review of President Steger's letter and a recommendation from the committee to the President regarding the broad issue of diversity with a focus on homophobia. Jane Abrahams, Jean Elliott, and Fred d'Aguiar will draft a letter or memo .

Intervention training for RAs, reported by Megan Carney. She is developing several 'story circles' as a performance-based intervention strategy to engage students faculty and staff in a dialogue forum on diversity issues. It will serve as a tool for training RAs while preparing students to accept the Principles of Community.

Principles of Community.

Suggestions for spreading the Principles of Community included:

- 'rap' as a medium to promote Principles of Community.

- a contest-sponsored event that integrates the Principles of Community, opening it to a variety of musical and performative mediums.

Summer Graduate Diversity Fellowship. Update by Marjorie Norton and Rick Shingles. The official call for this fellowship is out now.

Small Grants for Diversity Research Projects. Update communicated through Peggy Meszaros (not present). These grants are moving forward. The grant period, as reported in the Feb. 6 meeting, will be a year starting in January.

Diversity Award. Update. The subcommittee (not present) composed of Tony Calasanti, Marian Mollin and Ann Potts has met and made decisions. Announcements will be sent next month.

Departmental Search Procedures. Status quo report.

ABD program. Valerie Hardcastle is gathering information for re-implementing the ABD program at Virginia Tech.

Stimulate Diversity Research Projects Bob Leonard drafted a request for a proposal to give Dean Niles a sense of what sponsorship of research might look like. Three junior faculty (Marian Mullin, April Few, Kwame Harrison) were recruited to move the idea forward. The proposal calls on scholarly expertise to conduct a qualitative research project using VT as a case study to investigate the question of whether institutional racism exists on this campus. The act of reflecting upon institutional change combined with research, it is thought, will be an agent of change.

Addressing the needs of “neglected groups” on campus: how Principles of Community can be used.

Are more groups and issues to be considered? It was suggested that two areas need more attention:

- international students with poor English skills
- mobility handicapped students.

Diversity Contact page A diversity contact page on the WEB for faculty was suggested for the College and departments.

Proposals for a common book for freshmen, it was suggested, be heard by this committee.

German Club Incident. Midwinter dance for cadets featuring an ‘oriental’ theme that offended the Asian community. Valerie Hardcastle noted that concern was expressed before the dance and German club members were receptive and turned the dance into an educational event.

Following Tthe statement against single sex clubs made last year by the Diversity Committee, the Provost has not made contracts with the German Club. However, alumni continue to contest efforts to include women.

Multi-cultural center (MCC). Amelia Castaneda reported that due to the space reduction in the MCC, a larger, more usable space is needed to accommodate large student organizations. In spite of diverse efforts on the part of students to enlist the help of the administration, nothing has been done. It was suggested by Bob Leonard that students draft a statement of the problem, allow the Diversity Committee to sign on and help walk it forward to the administration.

4:05 pm: Meeting adjourned.

Minutes were taken by Sue Farquhar