Cultural Diversity Committee
Minutes
February 12, 2002
3:10 pm-4:35 pm

Present: Kyle Bruner, Doris Derby, Justina Emmanuel, Valerie Fennell, Christine Gallant, Tazar Gissentanner, Charles Marvin, Lois Mohr, Cora Presley, Joe Rau, Hazel Scott, Maria Valeri-Gold, Tracy Van Voris, Sally Wallace, Julia Marks Young.

Absent: Mustafa Elsawy, Edi Guyton, Linda Nelson, John Peterson, Ron Squibbs, Molly Weinburgh.

(Note: the meeting place was changed by Dean Abdelal from the Dean’s Conference Room in 718G to 217G, a classroom. This is relevant because the meeting was abruptly concluded at 4:30 pm so that the scheduled class could meet there.)

Christine Gallant welcomed our new member, Tracy Van Voris. The January minutes were approved as read.

The meeting was devoted to discussion relating to the two motions regarding staff membership in the Senate. Christine began by reviewing the history of the first Motion A, that limited staff senators to members of SAC. We passed it in November; and were informed in December that the Senate Executive Committee thought that the election of staff senators should be open to all staff and elected by all staff. Christine had invited Leslie Williams, President of Staff Advisory Council (SAC), to speak about SAC’s recommendations on Motions A and B, that opened nominations and elections of staff senators to all staff. The other members of the SAC Executive Committee also attended our meeting. Leslie said that in their recommendations, SAC had decided that the reason for their recommendations was they had decided that they were closer to faculty than students. SAC wanted to be members of the Senate because they had served on all the Senate committees previously. They favored Motion A.

At this point, Christine asked Leslie to wait to finish what she had to say until the committee voted whether or not to rescind Motion A. This would be preliminary to our consideration of Motion B, which could be amended to include any of the SAC recommendations. There was no discussion. 12 voted in favor of rescinding Motion A, and 2 abstained.

Leslie continued to speak in favor of the four SAC recommendations. (#1: of the proposed 10 staff Senate seats, elect 5 from SAC [one automatically its President] and 5 at-large; #2: staff should be selected in the same manner as faculty, with 1 staff senator for every 10 staff members; #3: 38 staff senators should be selected by the Exempt [salaried] staff and the Non-exempt [wage-earning] staff in the 19 staff voting districts; or #4: 19 senators from the 19 staff voting districts would be elected by the staff in each district, in addition to the President of SAC for a total of 20 staff senators.) Tracy also spoke on the organization of SAC and its election process.

Cora Presley was concerned that staff who were elected as SAC members had not been specifically elected as senators. Justina Emmanuel pointed out that staff did not elect their SAC representatives at-large, but only by their district. Joe Rau asked Leslie which recommendation
they preferred, and she replied #1.

There followed a long discussion of how many staff senators should be proposed in our motion. Christine suggested that the committee take votes on each amendment to the motion, but the committee decided that they did not wish to take formal votes for each one but discuss the amendments and then take “straw votes.” Several members said that it would be impractical to propose #2, since with the 1800 campus staff this would mean 180 staff senators, or #3, since the Senate was unlikely to approve 40 staff senators. Sally Wallace expressed concern that with only 10 at-large staff senators, the entire staff might not have voices in the Senate. Tazar Gissentanner said that the number “10” came from the number of Senate committees on which SAC members served, an arbitrary number. Joe, Sally, and Julia Young all turned to discuss recommendation #4, of 19 staff representatives from all the voting districts plus the SAC President.

Cora reminded the committee of her earlier observation from seeing Senates at other universities that when the number of staff and administrative senators equals that of faculty senators, then the faculty is drowned out; and she thought that that is the fear of many faculty senators at GSU. Justina added that the purpose of admission to the Senate was to get staff a voice; and that ten are not many but that this is true for students too, who only have ten student senators.

At this point, Maria Valeri-Gold suggested since most of our discussion was about recommendation #4, we should take a vote on whether the discussion should focus on this recommendation. A vote was taken, and 12 approved, none opposed, and 2 abstained. More discussion of this recommendation followed. It was generally agreed that we would amend the motion to specify that 20 staff senators be elected, with one staff member from each of the 19 voting districts elected by the staff within the districts, plus the President of SAC.

Christine expressed her strong concerns that this number would not be approved by the Senate. She said that at Committee of Chairs meetings, there had been some who wanted to limit the number of staff senators to 5 and others who wanted to raise the number of faculty senators to dilute the staff vote. She said that she was afraid that this amended motion would get a “No Pass” vote from the Executive Committee, which would mean that possibly the whole motion to get staff representation in the Senate would fail. She also pointed out that nearly half of the members of SAC and of the staff in the voting districts were Non-exempt status, or paid by the hour; and she expressed concern that this too might be a barrier to admission for many of the faculty senators. All SAC members present, and also the committee, felt that it should make no difference whether staff are Exempt or Non-exempt in status—all had a right to admission in the Senate. Christine said that as Chair she would follow the consensus of the committee in advocating our motion.

More discussion followed as the committee recommended specific changes in the sentences of paragraphs two, three, and four of the part of the motion relating to the University Statutes, to reflect their proposed amendment. At this point, the class that was to begin at 4:30 began clamoring at the door. Cora said that she wanted to see the entire amended motion before we voted on it. Christine agreed to send the amended motion to all members for an e-mail vote by Friday; and all agreed that they would reply to vote yes or no, or to abstain, by Friday.

The class swept in, and the committee and the SAC Executive Committee swept out, at 4:35.