Present: Barry Chung, Charles Gallagher, Christine Gallant, Tazar Gissentanner, Charles Marvin, Lois Mohr, Cora Presley, Steve Rapp, Tim Renick, Hazel Scott, Debra Snell, Susan Talburt, Maria Valeri-Gold, Tracy Van Voris, Sally Wallace, Leslie Williams

Absent: Doris Derby, Barbara Etzel, Paula Eubanks, Valerie Fennell, Steve Harmon, Kathryn Kozaitis, Gayle Nelson, Linda Nelson, John Peterson, Joe Rau, Fernando Reati, Mary Ann Romski, Carol Winkler, Julia Marks Young

The April minutes were approved as read.

Christine Gallant opened the meeting by reviewing the history of the Cultural Diversity Committee. It was formed in 1993 in response to demands of African American students demonstrating to protest the campus racial climate in 1992. Gallant and Doris Derby were among the charter members; and Maria Valeri-Gold also has served since 1995 as a member, as well as Chair for several years. The Bylaws’ present description of the committee’s membership and duties reflected its genesis. (This description had been circulated earlier by email.) Gallant stated that there were serious problems with the present seven duties: #1 and #7 were too vague; #2 is already performed by the Affirmative Action Office; #3 has already been implemented with the recent adoption of the Core Curriculum; #4 and #5 are not appropriate duties for a Senate committee but should be handled by an administrative office; and #6 is already a duty of the Faculty Affairs Committee, which reviews University policies.

Gallant distributed a possible “proposal of duties” for the Subcommittee on Committee Restructuring to consider as an initial base for their further discussion. She said that she would like to see the committee’s definition of “diversity” expanded from its de facto one of racial/ethnic diversity to include gender, sexual orientation, and age. She added that she would like to see the committee become a Senate resource for all minority groups that experience discrimination, as the Affirmative Action Office is a legal resource.

Other possible duties proposed were assisting the two Senior Faculty Associates for women and underrepresented faculty, and working with colleges as they develop guidelines for recruiting and retaining minority faculty.

Further discussion followed as members raised questions regarding the subcommittee’s responsibilities. Gallant explained that the subcommittee would prepare a preliminary description of the committee duties and membership for the rest of the committee to consider further and eventually vote to approve. She said that she wished to let members volunteer for the subcommittee, and then the subcommittee would elect its own chair. She distributed preliminary sign-up forms for volunteers.

Next, Ellen Podgor, a senator from the College of Law, was introduced as a guest speaker who had asked to address the committee. Stating that she spoke as an individual senator and not as a representative for the College of Law, she asked that our committee consider sponsoring a University study to assess GSU’s campus environment for gay, lesbian, and bi-sexual staff, students and faculty. Podgor distributed handouts which provided a report on the campus climate at the University of Georgia and a bibliography of Campus Climate reports from various universities across the country. Gallant asked her who she thought should conduct this study—the Office of Institutional Research or some other group?—and what the study’s purpose
would be. Podgor replied that she thought that our committee should decide who should conduct the study, and we also should decide what action should be taken as a result of the study.

The next item on the agenda was the discussion of next year’s continued implementation of the University Policy on Recruiting and Retaining Underrepresented Faculty. John Peterson was to address the committee on this subject, but was absent because of jury duty. Gallant said that by now all of the colleges either had approved their recruiting guidelines or were close to doing so; and that the next step was to expand those guidelines to include retention. She wanted to leave any discussion of this until Peterson was present. But she said that she saw the two main goals for our committee this year to be the creation of a new committee description for the Senate Bylaws, and the development of retention guidelines by the colleges.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:56 pm.