Senate Cultural Diversity Committee Minutes

November 10, 2003
12:00- 1:15

Present: Hazel Scott, Christine Gallant, Doris Derby, Cora Presley, Fernando Reati, Susan Talburt, Leslie Williams, Chip Gallagher, Lois Mohr, Valerie Fennell, Laloria Konata, Sally Wallace

Absent: Barry Chung, John Peterson, Charles Marvin, Linda Nelson, Geoff Haydon, Joe Rau, Jeffrey Benson, Kyle Bruner, Marissa Johnson

The meeting was called to order at 12:12 pm. The October minutes were read and approved with one correction. Caroline Gergely is from the Disabilities Services office instead of Susan Gergely as it is written.

Cora Presley announced that Susan Talburt has been appointed as the next Senior Faculty Associate for the Advancement of Women. Congratulations to Susan were extended from all.

Cora informed the Committee that occasionally, our Committee receives requests for reports that have to be submitted before our next scheduled meetings. This was the case when the Senate Budget Committee asked for a list of our Committee’s budget priorities. She consulted with Christine Gallant and John Peterson and sent the attached budget priorities statement to the Senate Budget Committee. Gallant suggested strengthening the funding request by noting that the Board of Regents has mandated a climate study of campus racial climate. She also commented that the table should reflect that the data is from AY 02 and the source of the data is the University website.

Caroline Gergely, Director of Disabilities Services discussed general issues regarding staff, student and faculty disabilities access on campus. She pointed out the physical access challenges in bathrooms for wheel chairs. One of the main challenges was the use of technology in classroom instruction. She expressed that technology for disabled can be an open or closed door. Students with visual impairments have difficulty accessing web-based course materials, including WEBCT courses. Gergely explained how, technology such as screen readers can aid the blind with websites. However, this works only if courses and websites are designed for the blind. Other universities also see a need to develop a policy on disabilities and web-based instruction. Gergely requested that the Committee assist the Office of Disabilities in proposing a policy. After extensive discussion on the problems of distance education, over reliance on technology in teaching and the cost of purchasing software to enable visually challenged students access to web-based instruction, the Committee decided to approach the IS & T Committee to begin conversations about increasing disabled students’ access to web-based instruction. Committee members suggest that UETS schedule workshops on WEBCT and visual disabilities and that the ADA Compliance Committee be involved in any discussion. Presley stated that she would meet with the Chair of IS&T to begin the discussion.

Subcommittee Reports

- African-American Male Initiative
  - Hazel Scott reported that the African American Male Initiatives Subcommittee has met and begun gathering comparative data on recruitment and retention of African-American male students as compared with other students by race and gender. The next meeting will be on November 21, 2003.

- Recruitment Guidelines
  - Cora Presley announced that John Peterson requested that the Chair table the discussion of the topic until he can attend the December meeting. He also informed the Chair that most committee
members had completed the task of discussing recruitment guidelines with their Deans. However, some reports are still missing.

- LGBT Climate Survey
  - Susan Talburt reported that the subcommittee has completed its work. She shared the final draft of the survey with the committee. The survey will cost approximately $16,000. The survey will be produce statistical data and subjective responses. Christine Gallant suggested that the title of the survey (“Climate Survey”) be changed to indicate the subject of the survey. The Committee voted to endorse the report of the Subcommittee. The Committee decided that the Subcommittee’s report would be forwarded to the Provost with a cover letter from the Chair. Also, Talburt and Presley will meet with the Provost to present the Subcommittee’s report and request funding for the survey. Presley thanked Susan Talburt and Chip Gallagher for their work on the Subcommittee.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:07 pm.