Cultural Diversity Committee
Minutes for January 14, 2010
10:10 am – 11:25 am.

Present: Peggy Albers, Julie Ancis, Eric Blacknall, Annette Butler, Douglass Covey, Doris Derby, Susan Easterbrooks, Christine Gallant, Mary Anne Gaunt, Shif Gurmu, Beth Gylys, Heather Housley, Cora Presley, Kenee Stephens.


Guests: Tim Renick, Alison Calhoun-Brown.

Minutes from the November meeting were approved.

Tim Renick, Associate Provost for Academic Programs and Chief Enrollment Officer, updated the committee on undergraduate data for Fall 2009 on ethnicity and the new federal definition of “Hispanic” as a cultural group. A person may now self-identify as Hispanic and also as a member of any of the races. He also informed us that during Fall 2009, there was an increase in the percentage of Hispanic/Latino students as there has been each year since 2005. The “multi-racial” category will no longer exist. He also discussed data for the undergraduate retention rates for our various racial/ethnic groups, noting that white students here have had the lowest retention rates over the last 10 years. Doug Covey added about the retention of white males that the ones we lose now have averages around 3.4 to 3.5.

Tim also summarized our unmet need by discussing figures for the students who lack the financial resources to finish their work at GSU. Cora suggested that perhaps we could initiate “bridge courses” for the Freshman year so that students in academic trouble would not lose their HOPE scholarships.

Alison Calhoun-Brown, Director of the Office of Academic Retention, also spoke and informed us of several initiatives begun to encourage Freshman retention. Also, she said that the Latino student contingent is growing on campus. She spoke of the Latino Outreach Program and the new position for an Academic Professional who would serve as a resource for Latino students on campus. Mary Anne Gaunt asked if there was anything on the academic side to encourage their retention, and Alison replied that there were workshops to help them.

Doug Covey suggested that the University can thank Doris Derby, Director of the Office of African American Student Services and Programs, in large part for the substantial presence of African American students on campus.

The committee discussed the general problem of undergraduate retention and graduation. Cora Presley noted that it may be helpful to track what kind of classes are being taken and to offer better advising on this. The PATH program is designed to evaluate those not successful in graduating. It was suggested that FLC’s be developed to track those not graduating in four years.
Susan Easterbrooks, chair of the Disability Initiatives Committee, reported on a study made by DIC member Sandra Owens on the ADA-compliance of our Panther buses for students. Sandra is wheelchair-bound and took a test-ride on these buses and discovered that many lacked tie-downs for wheelchairs, operable lifts on the bus, and siderails. On one bus, the driver let her off in the rain. Susan has made a formal complaint to Auxiliary Services, which has been quite responsive in addressing these concerns. Buses will receive random spot checks, along with written reports that bring immediate attention to these issues.

In other business, Christine Gallant told the committee that she would like the committee to consider whether or not to update the 2001 University Report on Recruiting and Retaining Tenure Track Minority Faculty. She said that many of the recommendations have been implemented. There was some uncertainty about whether this should be done. Annette Butler expressed support for such an updating. Doug Covey said that he thought it would be best to ask the Provost first how such an updating would fit into her program for the 2010-2015 Strategic Plan, and the committee agreed. Christine said that she would discuss this with the Provost and report back at the next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:25 AM.

Minutes Submitted by: Eva Hill