SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATIONAL EQUITY AND CAMPUS ENVIRONMENT
April 29, 2014 Meeting Minutes


Members Absent: Kyle Peasley, Angela Pettitt, Kathleen Tully, Sing H. Wong, Susan M. Fredricks.

The meeting started at 8:30 AM, 315 Grange Building, University Park.

1. Minutes of the March 18 Meeting were approved.

2. Laura reported that she was in the officers and chairs meeting the night before. One of the discussion items was the report on the Procedures Used to Hire Diverse Faculty. She indicated that we may have to be prepared to answer questions. In talking to Susan Basso, Terrell found out that Human Resource Directors at different locations have been very flexible in interpreting the Affirmative Action guidelines. There is not clarity in reporting lines. Hence, there is a need to standardize the process at the Deans and Human Resource Directors levels. Dwight asked if others were concerned with this report. Laura said no, that the chairs meeting went well. Laura also informed that the CORED report will be presented in the Senate meeting by Kevin Dressler and Ronald Redwing. The Senate allocated five minutes presentation followed by 10 minutes Q and A. Dwight: Do we anticipate any questions? Laura replied no. Laura also raised questions about student debt.

3. Comments from Dr. Terrell Jones, Vice Provost for Educational Equity
Terrell informed that there is tentative agreement for a talk by Derald Wing Sue, Professor of Columbia University, on micro-aggressions and marginality. He will tentatively speak at the September 16 Forum on Black Affairs, most likely late in the afternoon. Global programs recommended him. Terrell suggested that EECE could be a co-sponsor for the talk. Dwight: do we need to make any preparation to sponsor his talk? The committee voted unanimously to sponsor his talk. We will assume that all preparation will be finalized by mid-August.

4. Commission Reports

A. Commission on LGBT Equity
No report.

B. Commission on Racial/Ethnic Diversity (Ingram)
Patreese reported that there was the annual meeting between CORED and President Erickson. Terrell mentioned that President Erickson tried to maintain good contact with the committee. Dr. Erickson also discussed Dr. Dovidio’s talk, CORED report, and student debt. He made several recommendations to the CORED report.
Terrell reiterated some points that he made in prior meetings. That higher percentage of aid goes to students attending University Park; most of the aid is for merit and not need. This may be a disservice for first generation students who may need to borrow or work. Aldo mentioned that for those students who are working, not having full financial aid put them in a downward spiral for merit-based aid. Terrell presented the following example: A New York family, making $80,000 can’t pay a $35,000 in tuition, residence hall and other fees to attend PSU.

C. Commission for Women (Fredricks, report received electronically)
Meetings
  • March 19th – Book Reading and Discussion of My Beloved World
  • April 23rd – Meeting at Hazleton
  • May 2nd – Meeting with President Erickson

Awards
  • Rosemary Schraer Mentoring Award - The Rosemary Schraer Mentoring Award was created in memory of Rosemary Schraer, former associate provost for Penn State. It honors a current University employee who exemplifies Schraer’s giving of herself as a mentor. This year’s recipient was Mary Beth Pinto, Professor, Sam and Irene Black School of Business, Penn State Erie, The Behrend College.

  • Achieving Women Awards - The Achieving Women Award recognizes Penn State women who have shown notable leadership and accomplishment in their fields, and have gone beyond the requirements of their employment duties and responsibilities in support of the University’s diversity efforts, promotion of equal opportunity or contribution to human causes and public service activities. The following people were honored:
    • Erin Miller, Undergraduate Student -Architectural Engineering, College of Engineering
    • Kathryne Sparks Woodle, Graduate Student -Ph.D. candidate in Physics, Eberly College of Science
    • Harriett L. Gaston, Staff Exempt Coordinator of Minority Programs, Freshman Testing, Counseling, and Advising Program, Penn State Altoona
    • Shufang (Gail) Lee Chang, Technical Service Food Production Worker B, Campus Retail Dining
    • Patricia Silveyra, Faculty, Assistant Professor of Pediatrics, Research Associate, College of Medicine, Penn State Hershey
    • Felicia Brown-Haywood, Administrator, Director of Student Affairs, Penn State Harrisburg

Penn State Women with Influence Campaign
  • Deborah M. Meder - Assistant Controller, Office of the Corporate Controller, http://equity.psu.edu/cfw/wwi/deborah-m-meder
• Gail Hurley - Associate Vice President for Auxiliary and Business Services, http://equity.psu.edu/cfw/wwi/gail-hurley

5. Comments from General Education Task Force Representative, Janet Schulenberg

Janet provided an overview of General Education reform and what is the new paradigm. She talked about guiding principles and possible outcomes of the reform; how to achieve those outcomes; bringing all PSU stakeholders together; and implementing, assessing and meeting those goals. She also talked about themes and how these themes will interconnect different disciplines. That students should start building themes at the lower level and add depth with higher-level courses. The current Gen. Ed. courses offer too much flexibility without much coherence. The aim of the reform is to retain some flexibility while providing continuity of courses (such as a theme.) The new system would have the social sciences, humanities, and general arts but add numeracy. Laura mentioned that some of the courses may contain engaged scholarship. Dwight asked as PSU moves to the reforms with Gen. Ed., and aside from the themes, what is the main difference between the proposed and new system? Janet believes that the new system will foster collaboration among faculty. Dwight: Will different departments have responsibilities to foster collaboration? Janet: programs and curriculum will have a more integrative approach. She even mentioned a Learning Institute of some kind. Laura thinks that students will be encouraged to be more self-reflective, forcing them to think more about their own curriculum, starting with self-narrative English courses to construct a theme. Aldo mentioned that the reform will include a big assessment component. Jane: when the new PSU president toured PSU York, he stated that he will enhance intercultural awareness. Hence, intercultural awareness will be integrated in the reform. At this point Laura asked if we can discuss the questions posed by the General Education Task Force

How should intercultural awareness be included in the proposed general education curriculum?
How can general education contribute to student understanding of a diverse and accepting society?

Patresees stated that IL and US courses do not have large IL and US contents, that it may be as low as 25%. The push is to increase the content to about 75%. Dwight asked the committee to elaborate more on the undergraduate curriculum since he deals mostly with graduate students. Janet and Laura explained that Gen. Ed. courses can be spread out over the 4 years of the undergraduate curricula. Laura added that students, transferring in from other locations, take the Gen. Ed. courses mostly in the first 2 years. Out of these transferring students, about 70% do not take Gen. Ed. courses during the senior year. David: Are Gen. Ed. courses mandated by the University? Laura replied yes, and Gen. Ed. courses also include communications, technical writing and physical education. Dwight: How is this going to happen for the reform to work properly? He also wants to make sure that students have real world experiences in real settings rather that engaging in “ivory tower” discussions. He mentioned some of the work done by the
Medical School in that regard, including the efforts of making the PSU Medical School as diverse as possible. Luis stated that many students build curiosity in engineering design courses, where the courses tend to be very diverse. Another example he presented was a general course in sociology where diversity was infused. He said that this course was very successful in creating intercultural awareness.

Patreese: students should have experience learning, service learning, and interaction with real life situations, even "skyping" experts from outside the University. Terrell: students should be exposed to cross-cultural awareness competencies and be able to understand cross-cultural divides. Dwight suggested a project where students should be exposed to a higher level of these competencies by immersing themselves in a complex environment. These are four years to charge 18-year old students, he stated. Jane said that the new PSU President is very aware of these issues. Terrell: faculty members should infuse diversity in courses and have them deal with conflicts and lively discussions in the classroom. He mentioned that 21st century skills include: cross-cultural competencies, digital knowledge and intercultural understanding.

Laura: asked for discussion on the second question. David: our own background is based on past experiences and generally has two levels: 1) awareness and 2) competencies. Aldo: Is it possible to get a minor in intercultural issues? Patreese: How would the classroom look with a diverse student body? Dwight; the University needs to deeply invest in a diverse classroom. Terrell reiterated that cross-cultural competency is a very clear direction to achieve the above goals. He also stated color blind diversity loses the fact that Affirmative Action (AA) made sense to correct social injustices. Luis: some of these issues were talked about in the sociology 119 -200 course. Laura: maybe it is important to have a 300-level sociology Gen. Ed. course. Terrell: All faculty members should make an effort to teach diversity.

Dwight: How does PSU know what the students know? Does PSU have any assessment tools to measure skill sets and competencies? Janet: The Gen. Ed task force plans to use AACU tools. Dwight: this could be used as a good marketing tool: good well-rounded engineers going to a diverse workforce. Terrell noted that PSU is the 2nd largest producer of teachers for the “Teach For America” program. Janet stated that the Gen. Ed. Task Force polled employers and they liked the idea. There was a question about the World Campus, which plans to have 45,000 students. How is this plan going to work for them? Janet: maybe during the summer before completion of their program.

6. Joint Diversity Awareness Task Force Update (Ingram)

Patreese: The Joint Diversity Task Force report has been accepted with “no air time” in the Senate. The interviews with the three co-chairs of this task force will be placed in the Senate blog. Laura: is this task force going to join the Gen. Ed. Task Force? Patreese: Each Gen. Ed. sub-committee discussed the report and each subcommittee should have a member.
Terrell: the Provost indicated his desire to infuse diversity inside and outside the curriculum. Patreese: Students should be given incentives to participate in diversity activities and it should be reflected in their transcripts. Terrell: Students should go beyond awareness and go to a higher level: competencies. Patreese: IL and US should be reviewed every 3 years to check for diversity content. Right now these courses have diversity content anywhere from 25 to 50% , the push is to have them at 75% content level. Jane: We included in the report a 3-year review. Who is going to do it? Patreese: Curricular Affairs and the Joint Diversity Task Force. Jane also stated that it should be a peer review, since some Fixed-term II faculty members teach some of these courses. Aldo: Assessment could be used for these courses.

Laura mentioned that the Applied Research Lab (ARL) members are encouraged to attend diversity activities. She also indicated that there should be some reporting and accountability on these issues. Dwight: Faculty should share these recommendations. Is there any attempt to infuse diversity across all disciplines? Laura: Faculty should be on board.

In another item: Terrell reiterated that Human Resources directors are comfortable with broad interpretations of the University’s policies in diversity. It should be some standards.

7. Suggest Charge Items for 2014-15 EECE Committee
Laura: What should be the items that the committee tackles for next academic year:

- Luis: Graduate Student diversity issues
- Dwight: Admission issues
- Aldo: Lack of Diversity in Administrative posts at the University.

Meeting was adjourned at 10:45 AM.
Meeting minutes prepared by Aldo Morales.