SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATIONAL EQUITY AND CAMPUS ENVIRONMENT
October 22, 2013 Meeting Minutes


The meeting started at about 8:30 AM, 315 Grange Building, University Park. Laura presented the minutes of September 10, 2013 meeting for approval. The minutes were approved by unanimity.

REPORTS FROM COMMISSIONS

Commission for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Equity. Sing reported the following:

LGBT Conference Proposals: There is a Nov. 11 deadline. LBGT urges that we submit proposals. The Conference will be held at Penn State Erie, April 10 & 11, 2014.

Employee Concerns: The EECE Advisory & Consultative Report on “LGBT Resources for Students at Penn State” recommended that commonwealth campuses to have one designated person who can be the point-person with regards to any LGBT issues at their campus. This report was approved by the Faculty Senate on August 28, 2012. The taskforce is now in the process of researching and drafting a letter to send to Dr. Madlyn Hanes that would require 1/4 of such position at each Commonwealth campus.

Transgender Taskforce: Bathroom issues, the taskforce is looking at policies regarding gender neutral bathrooms; PSU does not have such a policy. The taskforce is also looking into benchmarking across other universities to see what policies are in place (Arizona State University has a very pro-gender neutral bathroom policy in place).

Presentation from Jill Musser, OHR Benefits Representative to CLGBTE. A presentation about what Penn State’s current healthcare policy provides for employees who are going through the transitioning process. Based on the fact that Penn State's insurance is self-funded, could it be possible for the medical costs of transitioning be included? Continued work with OHR to look into this area.

Commission on Racial and Ethnic Diversity. Patreese reported the following:

Discussions are being held regarding plans for a combined Open House and spring symposium focused on the book Whistling Vivaldi and featuring Jack Davidio as a speaker. The date is March 4, 2014 and the venue is the Pasquerilla Spiritual Center. CORED is looking for funding partners to support this effort.

The Staff Team is considering a group format as opposed to a one to one format for their staff mentoring program.

The annual P&T Symposium is scheduled for October 25, 2013. It is a joint effort of all three
Presidential Commissions.

A panel discussion is being planned to feature speakers on the Pine Ridge Reservation.

The Student Team has two focuses this year: 1) a conversation with students regarding retention and graduation factors, and 2) a follow up on the Student Debt Taskforce.

An open letter to all students will be published regarding Halloween and a reminder to respect the value of individuals and avoid reinforcing stereotypes during the holiday activities. The letter would be a proactive step to try to get students to think about the possible consequences of their actions.

Dwight asked about the top issues to be discussed this year. Patreese stated a.) Student debt b.) Students leaving the University without a degree. Terrell expressed that there is real concern with students leaving with an average of $20,000 debt. He mentioned that some students could have been advised to attend other campuses. In the past, federal aid accounted for about 88% of the educational cost; today federal aid only accounts for 30% of that cost and students have to finance the rest. Aldo asked if there is any policy accepting transfer students from community colleges to Penn State University Park. Terrell replied that there is not a big push for PSU University Park to do so. Angela asked if there was a comparison of the PSU budget models. Terrell reported that in the past 1/3 of PSU budget came from tuition, 1/3 from research and 1/3 from the state. Now less than 10% of the PSU budget comes from the state, with rest coming from tuition and research funds. David inquired if there is any alternative model such as the Oregon model (free tuition in exchange for a percentage of the student’s future salary) being looked at. Aldo asked whether the two billion dollar Campaign for the Future will help alleviate the students’ debt problem. Terrell replied, it will only help for students in the 3.5 GPA range and above (merit-based scholarships).

**Commission for Women,** Susan reported the following:

Women of Influence poster series is currently being undertaken.

Board of Trustees meeting was held on Sept 20. CFW answered questions of the role of the CFW and its value.

CFW Kick Off was on Sept 25 from 10-1pm in the Hintz Alumni Center. There were over 40 participants.

A joint statement for support of John Amachi for Homecoming Grand Marshal was completed, sent, and published in the Collegian and CDT.

There will be joint P & T symposium, with CORED, on Oct 25.

A diversity meeting is being held on Friday, November 1 from 11-12:30 PM in 404 Old Main regarding the branding of “Penn State Lives Here.”

The Family Leave Committee rolled out a survey last year on maternity and family leave. The report is currently being written.
A number of campus events were approved for funding, including Harrisburg.

Jane asked if faculty and/or students will be considered in the “PSU Women of Influence.” It was suggested that we focus on women in history of PSU including first female student admitted and first female employee. Susan does not know. Terrell mentioned that there is History of Women at Penn State book, where answers can be found.

Laura thanked the committees for their hard work.

**SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS**

Laura asked for a report from the Climate for LGBT Faculty and Students Committee. Angela reported that she is reviewing the survey developed last year by Karyn McKinney and her group. Angela wants no more than 25 questions in the survey, separate categories for students, staff and faculty, and limit the options in the answers. Angela stated that potentially all faculty, staff and students will be surveyed with a target of more than 115,000 people, Patreese mentioned that is not viable. Dwight wondered if there is any other mechanism at PSU to sense the LGBT climate. Angela also mentioned that the survey will be delivered by email. Sing recalled that CLGBTE had agreed to contribute money for incentives, such as gift cards, for people filling out the survey. Dwight asked if anybody at Penn State has the expertise to carry out this qualitative research. Laura asked if the LGBT Commission can help in this endeavor. Sing replied that the Commission is interested in helping with the survey. It was mentioned that a Pulse Survey several years ago addressed the LGBT climate. Angela will try to find the results from this survey. Angela mentioned that she will have a final draft of the survey questions for the next committee meeting.

Laura asked if Dwight has any reports in the Campus Climate for Differently Abled Individuals. Dwight mentioned that he sent a couple of emails to Maria Tuglio, who suggested the topic. She has not sent any replies yet. Terrell suggested contacting the PSU Office for Disabilities, specifically Keith Jarvis. Dwight will make some groundwork and look into previous University reports on this issue. Laura mentioned that the National Federation for the Blind has filed a lawsuit against Penn State for lack of classroom accommodations and accessibility of the Penn State website. Dwight asked if any other university has been cited by the National Federation for the Blind. Terrell stated that he is not aware of any but stated that PSU has provided accommodations for students with learning disabilities. Terrell also mentioned that more support will be needed as more war veterans come to Penn State. Dwight described a wonderful experience at the College of Medicine, where a wheelchair-bound student was admitted. Faculty and students accommodated the student, in the classroom and in clinical work. The student made a lasting contribution to the college and now everybody in the College of Medicine is aware of how important it is to provide these accommodations for Differently Abled individuals.

Laura asked Aldo to report on the “Procedures Used to Hire Faculty.” Aldo replied that he sought guidance from Terrell. He will talk to Aldo after the meeting. Aldo also mentioned that he contacted Ken Lehrman. Ken will be attending the December 10 meeting to provide advice.

Laura asked for comments on the EECE draft input for the Gen. Ed Review. Jane mentioned her experiences at Penn State York with “Teaching International.” Students there are looking at the Indian sub-continent. She has lectures by guest speakers from that region of the world. She mentioned that even a former student, who now works in India, skyped to her class. Dwight urged
the committee to think more broadly, for instance he thinks medical students could provide support agencies that care for the elderly and poor. This will help students broaden their experiences not only in a hospital setting but in the community. David praised Jane for “Teaching International” but encouraged the University to help students to get immersed in another culture. David wondered if a Trustee Scholarship can be designated to help students travel. Dwight asked if there is any point person at University Park who can provide “good experiences” in traveling abroad. Terrell mentioned that Office of Student Engagement is a good starting point. Terrell also commented that travel abroad ranges from one to two weeks, and it generally led by a faculty member. Patreese mentioned that they are working on a “diversity passport” with the Joint Awareness Taskforce to create a “Diversity Focused” certificate for students who complete the passport. Laura proposed that students could create an on-line diversity portfolio that companies can look at.

**Comments from the Vice Provost for Educational Equity:** Terrell mentioned that there are about 1500 students across the system that are in scheduled status but not registered. Of these 1500, many are underrepresented students (22% African-American, 12% Hispanics and 6% Asian). He mentioned that the last day of classes is the cut-off point to pay the tuition. Terrell also indicated that many students have different strategies for paying the tuition but he thinks that some students of color will have problems paying the tuition by that date. Aldo inquired whether these students have filled the FAFSA. Terrell mentioned that there are not requirements that students fill the FAFSA in order to be admitted to PSU and that, in general, campuses are more proactive, than PSU U. Park, in not letting students stay in scheduled status. Dwight also mentioned that students will not be able to register next semester if their tuition is not paid and that is a problem as well.

Meeting was adjourned at 10:20 AM.

Submitted by *Aldo Morales*