

2008/2009 Annual Report

Faculty Senate Diversity Subcommittee

The Diversity Subcommittee (hereunto referred to as the Subcommittee) met six times during the 2008/2009 academic year based on availability of members and the need for meetings due to topics arising during the year. The first Subcommittee meeting was held in September 3, 2008. Subsequent meetings were held in October 2008, December, 2009, January 2009, March 2009 and the final meeting in May 2009.

During the past year, the Committee discussed several areas of interest. Some of these items remain concerns, while others were addressed with the appropriate university personnel at the time. This document will summarize those issues.

SUMMARY OF ISSUES

TAMU Diversity Plan

During the 2007/2008 academic year, the Subcommittee had sent comments (attached) to Dr. Guerrero on the diversity plan of record; however, the Committee had only received a response from Dr. Guerrero that the comments had been received. The committee felt strongly that the plan be discussed at the faculty senate. The committee suggested TAMU diversity plan should be a point of discussion at Faculty Senate meeting.

The committee felt a need exists to improve retention plans for faculty and students in the departments. It was suggested that both Dean of Faculties and the Vice President for Diversity report to this committee each year with respect to recruitment and retention.

The committee was also concerned with the need to assess the campus climate with respect to religious tolerance, sexual orientation, etc.

Accountability at the system level regarding diversity was discussed as an issue needing to be addressed by the administration. The Vision 2020 document contains statements concerning diversity. At the level of Chancellor or Governor, diversity should be encouraged and incentives put in place to help foster changes.

The overall issue of campus "climate" with respect to diversity was discussed and indications were that while we have made some advances there still is a long way to go to improve the climate at TAMU with respect to diversity.

The committee also wanted to see the faculty perspective maintained and believe Diversity Subcommittee an appropriate avenue to be an advocate for faculty related issues.

Distribution List “A” from Dr. Guerrero- Update on Activities of the Office of the Vice President and Associate Provost for Diversity,” dated 9/17/08.

Committee members did not receive a copy of this email until it was distributed for this committee meeting. Questions raised on this document were: When is revised plan going to be ready? This committee would like to see a draft of the revision. The Fall 2007 graph “Compared to our Peers”—Does “ethnic minority faculty” also include underrepresented groups? Which groups are included? Under the “Climate” subheading there is a statement which reads, “To this end, our office participated in the development of recent climate survey instruments for faculty, staff, and students to ensure that questions asked would yield data...”—the question raised was who was in charge of this survey? How representative was the survey participation? The Committee believes copies of these reports should be provided to this committee.

Dr. Brown’s speech at the Freshman Convocation

The letter from Dr. Murano to a parent regarding Dr. Brown’s speech was a discussion point for this Committee. Members noted that this letter from Dr. Murano showed little support for Dr. Brown. Those who had read the speech (available online) did not think that the speech was inappropriate or inflammatory; however, the tone of response from Dr. Murano does not seem appropriate. The committee obtained copies of the emails from individuals, the drafted response from the Convocation Committee, a copy of Dr. Brown’s speech, directions from the Convocation Committee to the speakers and other letters from the president. The committee raised the following questions: Is there a champion at the level of the President’s office for diversity? What is the President’s public relation’s role regarding these issues of diversity? Should a report be sent to the Faculty Senate via the Faculty Senate executive committee? Should we broaden the scope of the discussion to include other events or instances of intimidation of faculty? How do we define diversity in this committee – does it include diversity of ideas? The general consensus of this committee is that diversity of thought or ideas should be promoted on this campus and it is within the purview of this committee.

Vice President for Diversity (VPD) and the role of the office

The committee viewed this position as a position that has ability to influence administration on campus climate and is accountable for progress or lack of progress. What kind of structure will be set up for the Diversity office? What are the responsibilities of that office? What is their role with respect to the President. The VPD should be proactive in changing image through PR and marketing— an ombudsman for diversity. The committee believed that the search committee should ensure that the position has the appropriate authority to make changes. What role would this position have at the graduate and undergraduate level? The candidate must have a plan – quantitative—what are the interactions with other departments. Accountability on diversity for upper administration should be part of strategic plan – including deans and department heads.

The Committee recommended that there is a need to look at the TAMU demographic data and use the information as a measure by which to measure progress towards the University’s goals. This is not to say that quotas are being advocated, but a means to measure where we have been and where we are now in order to be

able to decide how to get to where we need to be in the future with respect to diversity on this campus. Both hard and soft metrics need reviewed to make these determinations and effectively use climate surveys to see/measure improvement over time.

SUMMARY OF ACTION ITEMS COMPLETED AND PENDING

Completed

- 1) Invited Dr. Stanley, VPD, to the September 2009 Committee meeting.
- 2) Requested for the diversity plan to be placed on the agenda at a faculty senate meeting
- 3) Developed summary of Brown incident as an example- with more global discussion of the campus climate as a whole with President Murano.
- 4) Provided models for the office of Diversity for Committee to submit our vision for the office of the VP for Diversity.
- 5) Provided names to President Murano for the VPD Search Committee membership.
- 6) Provided plan of what this committee would like the office Dr. Murano stated that regarding diversity, the University is not there yet in looking at demographics.
- 7) Assist with the process of identifying a VPD.
- 8) Suggested to the Administration that the VPD would be in an advisory position to go to when incidents occur.
- 9) Suggested to President Murano the establishment of a systematic means of communication regarding information on the University's position on diversity.
- 10) Requested (by Dr. Diana Kaplan) the inauguration of President Obama be televised for the community.
- 11) Raised concern with Dr. Murano and Dr. Vitter that the response from Administration did not support Dr. Brown and that this kind of response gave mixed messages to the faculty.

Pending for Academic Year 2009-2010

- 1) Develop resolution concerning flexibility in the work place for faculty who are taking care of elderly parents
- 2) Arrange a time for the Provost to meet with this committee
- 3) Arrange for the Dean of Faculties to meet with this committee
- 4) Arrange for a representative of the GLBT group to meet with this committee.
- 5) Monitor the state of diversity at TAMU and work through the VPD's office
- 6) Look at sustainability, retention, climate and training with respect to diversity on this campus
- 7) Invite the VPD to serve as an ex-officio member of this Committee.
- 8) Invite the Dean of Faculties to serve as an ex-officio member of this Committee.
- 9) Invite the two finalist candidates not selected for the position of VPD to serve as members of this Committee
- 10) Invite a representative from the Staff council and from the student body to serve as on this Committee
- 11) Ask Dr. Stanley to address how hard and soft metrics will be tracked through the office of the VPD and reports should be produced on a yearly basis to better determination what programs should be adopted to provide a significant, positive impact on diversity at TAMU.