

Minutes of the Senate Anti-Discriminatory Policies Committee for 7 November 2008
5047 Forbes Towers

In Attendance: Mark Lynn Anderson, Patricia Beeson, Deborah Brake, Jane Feuer, Lynn Fitzgerald (Chair), Dorothy Hawthorne-Burdine, Rodney Jackson, Emilia Lombardi, Carol Mohamed, Paolo Palmieri, Cindy Popovich, Katherine Seelman, Vijai Singh, and Melissa Soto.

Absent Elected Members: Anthony Bauer, Randi Koeske.

Lynn Fitzgerald called the meeting to order at 9:32 AM.

Student attendee Melissa Soto introduced herself to the committee. Soto represents the multicultural sorority Zeta Sigma Chi.

Emilia Lombardi moved to approve the minutes of the 3 October ADPC meeting. Patricia Beeson seconded the motion, and the minutes were so approved.

Jane Feuer reported that she received no response from Linda Williams-Moore after inquiring via e-mail about the status of faculty enrollments in Allies training. Pro-tem member Feuer also announced that she would likely be absent from future meetings this academic year, since she will be on sabbatical during the spring term.

Dorothy Hawthorne-Burdine inquired about the planned discussion of the committee's mission statement; Mark Lynn Anderson, who is a member of the mission statement subcommittee, suggested that the mission statement discussion be placed on the agenda for the December meeting.

Lynn Fitzgerald then introduced the morning's presenters, ADPC liaisons Patricia Beeson (Vice Provost) and Carol Mohamed (Director the Office of Affirmative Action, Diversity, and Inclusion). Chair Fitzgerald reminded the committee of Vijai Singh's caution to pursue issues with clear relevance to practices of discrimination, bias, and prejudice upon which the committee might deliberate, advise, and/or recommend. While anecdotal testimony has a place in our inquires, it is important that the committee does not become distracted by narrated situations or details that are neither ameliorable through policy changes or other institutional action, nor add to our understanding of actual or potential discriminatory practices.

Beeson began by pointing out that Mohamed had only recently become the head of Office of Affirmative Action, Diversity, and Inclusion (OAADI) after an interim stint, and she remarked the increasing cooperation between their two offices on issues of diversity in relation to student and faculty recruitment.

Mohamed mentioned that she had taken over the Office of Affirmative Action as interim director after William Savage retired in December of 2006. When asked by the Provost and Chancellor in September of 2007 to officially head the office, Mohamed requested that both the name and charge of the office be changed to the Office of Affirmative Action, Diversity, and Inclusion. The Provost and Chancellor have enthusiastically agreed and supported these changes, according to Mohamed. Part of the morning's presentation was then devoted to updating the committee on the changes that are taking place in that office, changes that Mohamed characterized as the pursuit to diversity enhancement "beyond the numbers."

The office is no longer located in Pitt Union, but is now housed at 412 Bellefield Hall (315 S. Bellefield Street) across from Heinz Chapel. Mohamed first summarized the responsibilities of her office that have carried over from the Office of Affirmative Action, including maintaining the university's compliance with government agencies by issuing federal reports. OAADI is the office that tracks compliance with the American with Disabilities Act and is the official Title IX contact. The office collects, maintains, and prepares affirmative-action data on the status of women, ethnic and racial minorities, persons with disabilities, and veterans. EEO/DOE demographical data is also collected and maintained by the office, which is charged with responding to complains of possible violation through processes of consultation, complain management, and, if necessary, investigation.

New enhancements to OAADI, according to Mohamed, include increasing collaboration between her office and Lynnett Van Slyke at Disability Resources and Services (DRS), as well as increased communication with the Office of General Council (OGC). The OAADI has also purchased new software with more options for generating alternative customized reports for internal use. There is a new in-house system for maintaining faculty applicant demographics for specific positions that can be made available directly to department chairs and hiring committees.

Mohamed also outlined other continuing and enhanced diversity projects and services at OAADI. The office still does Pre-Audit Form reviews for faculty and research associate positions, and OAADI performs job advertisement reviews, making sure that each includes proper notice of AA/EOE. Mohamed mentioned that "diversity" is a concept that includes everyone (and is not just a "minority" designation). The OAADI offers consultation on ad construction, and it maintains an on-line posting of faculty positions. These faculty positions are also archived on-line. The OAADI seeks to broaden awareness of diversity across the campus, according to Mohamed. The office maintains descriptions of open staff positions at the university at www.diversity.pitt.edu. All positions are open if they are viewable at this site; the list of available positions is searchable on-line. The site is seen as a particularly useful resource for partners and spouses of new hires. The OAADI is also available to schools and departments for diversity inclusion consultations, and the office has developed two diversity-training modules for enrollments of fifteen or more; OAADI currently is researching new training options. The office has published a new brochure that Mohamed distributed to the committee members who were present.

Hawthorne-Burdine asked if diversity training couldn't be made mandatory. Mohamed pointed out the difficulty and complexity of implementing mandatory training, but she claimed that some administrators can and have mandated training for their specific units. Emilia Lombardi pointed to the on-line sexual harassment training that was mandated a few years ago for all faculty staff, graduate students, and residents. Mohamed mention her office's development of an on-line module on employment law, an initiative that had the chancellor's encouragement, though no discussions of this module being mandatory have been considered. Hawthorne-Burdine asked if diversity training couldn't be included as part of the currently mandated harassment training. In response to a question about the diversity workshop, Vice Provost Beeson mentioned that the university had provided funding to faculty in the past as an incentive to participate in the workshop that works with faculty to redesign courses to consider issues of diversity and to be more inclusive. She also emphasized the need to track the effectiveness of the workshop.

Hawthorne-Burdine proposed that it might be helpful in someone from OAADI to meet with incoming faculty at the orientation sessions.

Beeson presented information on the university's efforts at minority student recruitment, admissions, and retention. The university's expanding pool of applicants has allowed for increasing diversity in the admission process. Beeson pointed out that the university has always used a "holistic" model of application review where a committee assesses the entire file of each applicant. Many schools previously using a statistical model for affirmative action have turned to our model after the Supreme Court decision on the University of Michigan's affirmative action program. The University of Pittsburgh provides services for student retention that address the principal reasons many students consider leaving the university, reasons that often have a greater impact on traditional minorities. First, students feel that they "don't fit in" at the university. Beeson mentioned the work of Dean Humphries and her innovation and continuing support of the Office of Cross Cultural Leadership that provides diverse student organizations with a "shared space," as a means providing students with a sense of belonging. Promoting inclusion through student orientations has also been a means of making students aware and welcome to our campuses. Students also leave school because of poor academic performance and "bad grades." The university seeks to ameliorate the rate of academic failures by requiring mid-term assessments for all first-year students, so that new students having difficulties can be identified and provided with assistance options. Help with study habits and tutoring is available at the university, and there are several skill specific centers on campus available for assistance such as the Academic Resource Center, the Math Assistance Center, located in the Department of Math, and The Writing Center, which provides writing instruction and assistance for both students (undergraduate and graduate) and faculty. Finally, financial difficulties are at the root of a many students' decision to leave the university. The university provides significant amounts of financial assistance as part of admission packages, and the Office of Financial Aid helps a variety students decide on ways of financing their educations.

Beeson then presented the committee with statistics on African American first-year admissions that show an increase of over thirty percent in the Admission of African American students during the last twelve years when compared with the previous ten years. There has been an even greater increase in the graduation rates of African American over the same period. Hawthorne-Burdine asked if the university had any plan to address "homesickness," such as weekend buses to major nearby cities. Beeson pointed out that the university coordinates such buses at Thanksgiving, and that the recent academic calendar change to create a fall break sought to provide student a long enough recess to return home for the extended holiday weekend. Hawthorne-Burdine also mentioned the possibility of recruiting graduate students from traditional Black colleges and university as an important diversity initiative, and she also discussed how the University of Florida made use of state records to recruit talented undergraduate minority students.

Beeson went on to discuss the recruitment and promotion of minority faculty in those schools under the Provost's Office (which does not include Heath Sciences). She emphasized that while she was discussing African Americans, the same tendencies held true for other minorities at the university. During the summer months a recruitment plan is developed for every position to be filled: to insure that all positions are in-line with goals and planning; to insure that the advertised salaries are in-line with the budget; and to make sure that advertised positions are broadly defined in terms of expertise. There is

a recruitment form that goes to OAADI for approval before a job search can begin. Once the search is conducted, normally three candidates are brought to campus, but these must be reviewed by the Dean's Office to determine, in part, if the pool is diverse and, if not, why not. Departmental search committees are apprised by the Dean's Office of the gender profile of new PhDs in specific areas in relation to the profiles of applicants and candidates for a particular advertised position at the university. If a committee decides on a particular candidate, before a job offer can be made, approval to negotiate must be sought from the Dean and Provost who make evaluations of the proposed job offer in relation to affirmative action goals.

Beeson reported that there has been significant progress over the last thirty-six years in recruiting and promoting African American faculty at the University of Pittsburgh, and she provided the committee with numbers of hires throughout this period, data showing a steady increase in recruitments of new African American faculty through the mid-to-late 1980s when there was a brief leveling off, in large part due the increasing numbers of African Americans promoted to tenure over the same period. The recruitment numbers for new African American professors have again increased over the last decade as older, tenured African American professor begin reaching retirement. According to data compiled by the Association of American Universities (AAU), the University of Pittsburgh is well above the mean for minority faculty with respect to African Americans, relative to public universities who are our peer institutions.

Staff hires have also seen an increase of African American hires, well over fifteen percent during the last twelve years. Carol Mohamed explained how the Office of Human Resources (OHR) partners with hiring departments to create as diverse a pool as possible of qualified applicants. OHR advertises and promotes positions through a variety of means, including job fairs, employment agencies, state and federal employment offices and programs, and various cultural institutions. Sometimes specific institutions, such as historically Black colleges, are targeted to promote specific vacancies.

Mohamed also described other efforts to encourage staff diversity, such as "behavioral interviewing consultations" designed by OHR to promote fairness and equity in the interview process through making interview questions uniform, and by through establishing relevant lists of questions. Efforts to promote the inclusion and retention of minority staff members include compensation consultations for job descriptions and job evaluations, and the maintenance of salary equity. The latter is insured through standardized job classifications into twenty-two families of positions, each with twelve grades. Salary ranges are annually reviewed, and pre-hire salary assessments are also available. No one is ever hired below the minimum range (lowest grade) for a position.

Chair Fitzgerald proposed that we spend the December meeting sorting through the information we have received today and at our previous meeting in October. She also asked committee members to look to our spring schedules so that we could begin to coordinate, via e-mail, a regular monthly meeting time conducive to everyone's busy spring schedules.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:46 AM.

Submitted by Mark Lynn Anderson, 24 November 2008