

Minutes of the Senate Anti-Discriminatory Policies Committee
10 December 2009
826 Cathedral of Learning

In Attendance: Mark Lynn Anderson, Patricia Beeson, Anthony Bauer (Chair), Paula Davis, Sharon Nelson-Le Gall, Carol Mohamed, and Vijai Singh.

Absent Elected Members: Deborah Brake (on leave), Dorothy Hawthorne-Burdine, Rebecca Harmon, Emilia Lombardi (excused), Paolo Palmieri (on leave), and Cindy Popovich.

Anthony Bauer called the meeting to order at 3:12 PM.

Review of the Minutes

Paula Davis moved to approve the ADPC minutes for 12 November 2009. Bauer seconded the motion and the motion was carried. Sharon Nelson-Le Gall moved to approved the previously tabled 8 October 2009 minutes of the ADPC. Bauer seconded the motion and the motion was carried.

Communication with Regional Campuses

Chair Bauer reported on his inquires into whether the regional campuses have committees devoted to anti-discriminatory policy. He found that the Johnstown Campus has a senate group but no committee. He also spoke with Beverley Gaddy, the Greensburg campus representative to the Oakland faculty Senate. At the Greensburg campus, such issues would typically be brought to their faculty senate that communicates through the senate president, Sharon Smith, and/or through an advisory committee to Dean Nelson, Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs. Nelson reports to our Provost. Bauer pointed to the possibility of locating or establishing an ex-officio liaison position that could look into multi-campus issues. Mark Lynn Anderson and Patricia Beeson pointed out that faculty and staff from the regional campuses can and have served on the ADPC.

Surveys of Student and Faculty Satisfaction

As only three voting members were able to attend the December meeting, Chair Bauer opened the floor to a free ranging discussion of the idea to develop a survey mechanism to measure student and faculty contentment with respect to issues of equity and fairness, so as to establish a baseline of information to measure achievement of anti-discriminatory projects and policy in the future. Beeson recommended caution for proceeding autonomously without verification or cooperation with the Senate administrators. Vijai Singh pointed to the extreme difficulty of creating a meaningful survey, particularly in the establishment of reliable samples, the development of questionnaires and schedules for gathering relevant information, and the protocols for drawing conclusions from the data gathered. Bauer admitted that the endeavor is fraught with problems, but proposed that it is worth pursuing and that we are only in the beginning stages of talking about such a project.

Singh suggested that a quick and effective way of getting a sense of student contentment is to contact student leaders and ask their advice. Beeson commented that she was behind open-ended information gathering, but far less interested in any sort of attempt a scientifically measure contentment. Nelson-Le Gall pointed out that previous discussions on this committee have often made use of information gather by social research units, but that the issues pursued by the committee have been typically driven by the individuals sitting on the committee. She emphasized that it is important to get a better idea of the other concerns that are out there, but that this could be effectively accomplished without the development of a survey by the committee. The Chancellor depends, for example, on gathering information about the undergraduate and graduate climates through talking directly with student leadership. Bauer suggested that those students could be occupying certain privileged positions. Beeson mentioned that focus groups can be important for identifying unseen issues and concerns, but that quantification isn't necessary. Nelson-Le Gall agreed that focus-group approaches work for exclusion issues, gathering information from those who might not otherwise be heard. A considered discussion of quantifiable measurement *versus* quality information ensued.

Beeson pointed out that once a survey is circulating, others are going to want to see the data for other purposes. How is it possible to control or predict the uses to which the gathered data might be put? Beeson asked again for us to consider exactly what sort of information we were seeking. Anderson said that his principal interest was in outreach to the various campus communities and to individuals. He isn't so much interested in gather information so much as making the ADPC known and open to the all as a forum for the discussion of discriminatory policy issues. Several members of the committee mentioned that approximately five years ago there was a *Campus Times* survey of "campus climate," and Bauer felt that this data would be available to us and useful.

Singh pointed to the fact that different constituencies have different needs, and that there are long-standing issues with respect to these constituencies, issues upon which this committee and others have worked for quite awhile. Singh maintained that it is important that we follow thorough on with this work. Davis agreed, questioning the value of a "scatter-shot" approach to data collection. She pointed out that it is policy issues that drive the work of our committee. Beeson added that the work accomplished by the committee relevant to policy was the result of committed individuals serving on the committee who had effectively driven the committee's agenda in the past. In other words, the committee's work is reasonably determined by the concerns, knowledge, and commitments of its elected and invited members. Davis concurred that it is policy issues that are traceable and relevant, and that policies can be specifically addressed by recommendations from this committee. Information perceived contentment has an fairly unclear relation to questions of policy. Davis also mentioned that there is already raw data available to us such as the work of the Senate's ad hoc committee of gender and equity. Bauer mentioned that we will likely be finding out more about this from Rebecca Harmon.

Mentoring

Davis brought up problem of recruiting and retention of underrepresented groups as an issue “without a policy.” Beeson agreed that this is an important area of work to which our committee can contribute. Nelson-Le Gall mentioned the continuing needs for effective mentoring programs, citing the awkward newness and unforeseen complications of the mentoring initiative recently established through the Vice Provost’s office. Beeson pointed out how much of the problem with effective mentoring stems from the dispersal of minorities across the disciplines, sometimes isolated and without support. Nelson-Le Gall said that as a community we could lead on this particular issue of cultural diversity, even at the level of policy. She mentioned how both the present ability of women to stop the tenure clock, as well as professional development initiatives for junior women demonstrate the principal the equity does not always mean equal. Singh mentioned that schools are different on such matters, pointing to the Medical School as more “elastic” with transfers in and out of the tenure stream. Nelson-Le Gall pointed out that women have that option *qua* women, but underrepresented minorities do not. She also mentioned that stopping the tenure clock is still often seen as a stigma, and asked why this was the case? Davis added that, as a committee, we do not stand a chance of effectively challenging deeply ingrained perceptions and habits, but that we can have an on effect the policies that determine professional life.

Nelson-Le Gall asked that any data collected by us (or any existing data made use of by the committee) should be “tied to a vision.” She then recounted the past success of the University in recruiting and retaining the most prominent and promising African American researchers in the psychological and behavioral science, a success and a commitment comparable only to that of the University of Michigan with whom we often competed for such faculty. According to Nelson-Le Gall, we allowed our success to slip away through a lack of policy, leadership, and a sustained vision for educational diversity. Bauer asked what we might ask for in terms of a policy for tenure committees? That a tenure committee meet twice yearly with the faculty member? Beeson said that these matters differ from school to school. Nelson-Le Gall pointed out that mentoring can, and sometimes is, little more than perfunctory. Beeson contended that part of the problem is with changing the climate and the behaviors of faculty and administrators, but that there is also the problem that standards are not equal. She said that she would contact all the deans to ascertain what are the present standards for mentoring, and to discover what resources are available for faculty mentoring. Davis added that effective mentor training is a crucial consideration in changing the current conditions of professionalization for underrepresented junior faculty.

The meeting was adjured at 4:57 PM

Submitted by Mark Lynn Anderson, 12 January 2010