

President's Commission on Diversity
Minutes, May 8, 2008
2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Boardroom

Members Present: Diana Holz, Deb Casey, Sylvester Neal, Loretta Ferguson, Gail Himes, Jean Carmack, Kelly Blackwood, Laura Griep, Krista Fox, Susan Davis, Rich Rutkowski, Josh Gerstman, Marco Becerra Nunez, Vivian Tina Christian, Leslie Lehnhoff, Cyndi Rapier, Livia Muller, Patrick Reeves, Alycia Hendrickson, Louise Hull, Kim Nakano, April Jensen, and Lesley Hogan.

Guests: Dani Chang and Terri Thayer

Welcome New and Returning Members

Deb and Diana welcomed new and returning members. Everyone shared who they are, the role they served at GRCC or within the local community, and the reason they want to become involved with the President's Commission on Diversity.

Vision and Goals from Deb and Diana

Diana shared that she is very happy to be co-chairing the President's Commission on Diversity with Deb Casey and were given the ability to lead the way, great things are about to happen with this new leadership. Diana asked Deb to share the vision and goals with the commission. The Leadership Vision and Goals for 2008-2009 is as follows:

Vision: To develop a team of multicultural leaders committed to enhancing diversity at GRCC.

Goals:

1. To provide quality leadership that is empowering.
2. To build team members multicultural competencies.
3. To recognize the diversity work of faculty, staff, and students who support, engage, and enhance the diversity of GRCC.
4. To be intentional and outcomes focused with our 2008-2009 commission recommendations.
5. To acknowledge accomplishments, challenges, and mistakes both individually and institutionally.
6. To reinforce the importance of the commission's work by expecting all team members to be engaged and committed to our meetings, recommendations, and outcomes.
7. To take risks to learn more about the world views of others.
8. To provide intentional time for the commission action-teams to meet, plan, and develop outcomes.
9. To find resources (financial and human resources focused) to support the commission recommendations and provide credibility to the diversity initiatives.
10. To have fun!

Deb asked if this meets our needs for the commission. Diana commented that we need to help each other to remove some of the barriers, what we do collectively, want student involvement, and the reflection of our college goes out to the community. It is our commission to feel safe and to talk about issues.

Susan believed that it would be a good idea if the campus knows what we're doing, possibly a paragraph in the Communicator or have minutes posted. Diana stated that we will update our web page.

Louise mentioned that nobody goes to the minutes and that we need a more accessible/user friendly method to get the word out.

Josh suggested writing something for the Communicator, possibly a little recap of what we're doing and agreed to do this. He will send his write-up to Deb and Diana for approval prior to sending it off to Lansing to post on Communicator.

Leslie Lehnhoff announced that on May 19th, the Auburn City Council will be presenting a diversity resolution, much generalized, great platform, at 7:30 p.m., City Hall. Everyone is welcome to attend.

Marco mentioned networking and going about connecting to other community colleges, universities, tackle issues as a group/team, help them establish a commission on diversity.

Deb stated that the State Board is consistent with other community colleges, 1st year – gathering information, and how that framework works.

Diana commented that many community colleges have been engaging, reflective of that diversity and to let students know and attend with us.

Rich mentioned that K-12 district is a possible focus of networking and the local community.

Josh said that we are real leaders, forefront, and it's important to take things out there.

Gail commented that it's a great new start/fresh start, clarify goals and move forward, intentional data driven, want to make a difference, plan out before we take action, really intentional about what our intention is.

Deb appreciates what everyone said and that we have a dynamic set of goals and to feel free to add to it.

Information Updates

Dream Project: Rich and Dani gave an overview of this project to the commission. Rich embraces this project and is confident that this group will move forward with it.

This project is a student-initiated high school outreach program that operates as a University of Washington 2 credit course. They help high school students (low-income and 1st generation) achieve the dream of attending college while teaching UW students about social issues through hands-on experience.

Dani added that this project served at least 300-400 low-income, 1st generation high school students and working with their high school counselors, helping them with their essays, really student focused. Over 100 students are part of the dream team. "Alula" a UW student who started this project hopes that this project continues, hears stories that these individuals were touched, not only high school outreach, but it is retention, campus-wide.

Rich commented that this is where the diversity piece comes in, good match, people of color, if GRCC takes this on, there's grant request, if one wishes to take it on.

April would like to see how the program really operates. She has the names of the student leaders, would like to invite them here in a week or two.

Louise said that this is great, sense of entitlement, don't think they belong here, but it's an amazing project.

Rich commented that the university is excited to even partner with us and encouraged everyone to go to the university to visit as well.

Alycia mentioned that they came to her high school to talk about it. She's a running start student, involved in ASGRCC and knows that a lot of students are afraid of trying.

Dani stated that 27 out of 52 are going to a college university now.

Sylvester stated that it raises a level of expectations, people that are a little different, empower them; viewing of your peers, long term effects, potential to make a difference.

Rich would like to do it as a commission. Dani said that it's a pivotal possibility, contact with students, and leadership from students, contact our colleagues, recruiting, students figured it out, did the guidebook, bring the idea here, take it and run with it. Laura said that she is interested. Louise mentioned that TRIO is an important alliance to make and asked if anyone from TRIO is a member of the commission. Gail stated that she (DSS) works closely with TRIO.

Forming a committee was suggested, student representatives present in the room should connect with faculty, find project, passion with it, take the lead.

Rich says that time is of the essence; bring them here, next week or two. April will facilitate a meeting time, get it going, and set up the discussion.

Dream Project Mission:

The mission of the University of Washington Dream Project is to assist low-income and 1st generation high school students in attaining higher education and to raise awareness among university students about the issues of educational opportunity and social mobility.

Passport to College Foster Youth Program: Deb and Terri reported that GRCC has signed onto the Passport to College Foster Youth Program, providing support to students, 16-24, who were part of the foster care system. It includes financial support and access to resources to assist students in their college experience. This program will be served through the Commencement Achievement Program (CAP).

Jean asked how students find out - level out of high school. Terri said that you can ask them if they're foster youth, and refer them to the CAP program, refer them now and will find out where to get the paperwork.

Kelly asked if CAP is monitoring these students. Terri said that College Success Foundation is tied in to this. Deb added that CAP has peer navigators and have at least 10 students.

Alycia asked if there's a campus-wide email sent out to faculty. Terri stated not yet.

Deb mentioned that she has processed two requests to hire for the Diversity Services Director and the CAP positions, hopefully interviews will take place in July. Even though Terri is leaving GRCC, she has agreed to work with the CAP person, definitely have someone hired for fall and possibly do a presentation during in-service day.

Rich congratulated Terri for her great work on the Pow-Wow event in April. Terri also added that she has 4 videos regarding the Pow-Wow in the Library for review.

BREAK**Information Updates (continued)**

Courageous Conversations: Deb Casey and Kim Nakano reported on their meeting with the leadership group of BCC regarding courageous conversations and how they implemented this program. Meeting notes of March 14, 2008 were passed out.

Per Kim, it was a free flowing conversation rather than a question and answer session. A trainer from California was brought in and had a conversation about race, risk taking reflective conversation on campus.

Bring trainers on campus, talk to people on list, and reflect back, people giving of themselves, heart and soul. Notes based on themes that came up. If this was implemented on campus, who should be involved, people at college at the highest level must push this forward.

Deb & Kim's recommendations:

- Until all of President's Staff, or at least a strong core contingent of President's Staff is willing to engage in Courageous Conversations and be able to sponsor it, our recommendation is that we scale way back from training on "addressing racism and white privilege" to training on "conflict management" and "having respectful conversation."
- Focus institutional energy on recommendations from President's Commission on Diversity initiatives. Rally team members around these initiatives which can lead to the leadership supporting the diversity conversations. Show institutional diversity outcomes to all members of the community.

The intention is to work at the highest level with the President's Staff. Once we have our safety net in place, we can then determine what to do in our next year's 2008-2009 goals. How do we prepare ourselves?

April commented that maybe ½ of the President's Staff is willing to commit and ½ maybe not. Do a little convincing. Don't do unless you're fully supported.

Susan stated that the President is very engaged, need to present just like the "Dream Project." Susan would like to hear from Loretta, Tina, and Louise.

Loretta said that she is very upset. Something happened at BCC. Courageous Conversations fixed things, awareness, talk about honesty/truth. GRCC is not ready for it. When is it going to happen?

Tina said she's disappointed, frustrated, felt led on, discussion with Deb and Kim, not ready, and to launch this in 2009-2010 until the President's Staff is ready?

April said the key is the President. Dream Project targets disadvantaged students of color.

Deb commented that this is global institutional issue, incidents team ready to go, it's just getting these things going.

Louise said that it's a great idea, reactive, recruitment - different populations; faculty consciousness around race, not bring it out but dropped out. Idea of networking is great. Love new leadership, doesn't seem like it's going to be addressed.

Deb recommended looking at the qualifications for inclusion. Hiring committee – don't want a diverse group.

Kelly is torn about this. Work the process down; make up of the pool, lot more investigation, lot of barriers, more people at table than before (President's Commission).

Diana mentioned that Rich embraced the Dream Project, and we can be strategic with this. Rich's commitment makes a difference. Look at barriers, financial aid, ESL, institutional barriers (referral notebook).

Marco is excited with courageous conversations. The President's Staff is not ready. On a student level, they're ready. It is sad that he came into the commission and the topic is on table and he is getting ready to leave GRCC and it's still on the table.

Livia supports Marco. She is an international student and this is an urgent issue to be tackled. It makes college experience harder than it should be. It discourages you to be actively involved.

Susan recommended the commission or Rich to bring back for discussion and asked if this issue went to Rich. April thought that it did, but Deb & Kim said they only met with April and not Rich.

April would like to see at least 30 people trained. Weekly discussion with who comes and engages in this discussion must be trained first. Two full days to get training, heavy long term issue.

Leslie Lehnhoff mentioned from past inclusive committees she's been involved with, they present things relevant to this conversation community wide, take that and present to President's Staff, give some substance, timing is an issue, highly charged.

Tina & Loretta both agreed that there are racial conflicts; civil rights did not end racism.

Deb said she is pro with courageous conversations; reinforce the recommendations that we needed to do it. For a year she needed to have this on campus, move forward to prepare ourselves this year for next year. The history generated at MEC from day one, came with dialogues at BCC.

Susan said this should not be an issue of sponsorship by the President's Staff since April is here, but we probably need top leadership.

Louise understands coming forward with this. Glad that April is here, it's unfortunate that Rich is not here. Agree with the recommendations; don't know that it can be simultaneously, issues of diversity stuck in wasteland.

Josh stated that this should be a weekly meeting agenda, what is there can be shared with this group here. Deb said that the issue of diversity never comes up.

April mentioned that Deb is doing it; diversity activity included the Pow-Wow. As a matter of fact there is an engagement coming up tomorrow, May 9th at the Tribal College in Muckleshoot, thus far there are 10 people going.

Diana mentioned having diversity on agenda every week for the President's Staff meeting. She also mentioned that there needs to be a student voice. She encourages the student representatives to go back to student government and talk about diversity. Patrick said that Highline Community College have this courageous conversations, personally student government would appreciate doing it.

Kelly said that barriers would be brought out, identify a barrier, what do we do?

Kim recommended the urgency of our campus to have courageous conversations, the ability to talk about race but we need that support. Louise is frustrated why people in President's Staff aren't ready to talk about this. Strong desire to get this accomplished.

Rich asked that Deb and Kim brief him in the details since he missed most of the conversations earlier. He saw the meeting notes, skimmed through it, has lots of questions, where does it go when we talk about white privilege.

Tina doesn't think you resolve white privilege. The idea is to talk about it. Offended – why? Open honest communication; let people know it's a problem in our society today.

Louise said that this is a powerful question. She is half white, identifies herself as that, depends on the situation. How do we work together such as in the classroom and make it in a fair and equitable situation for everybody.

Diana mentioned setting up an environment to talk about it, acknowledgement of certain things in place, understanding of the term, getting along and how safe does one feel. What does it take for President's Staff to get ready?

Rich asked to have a conversation with Denny Hurtado about the boarding school. Why not formulate a conversation, want to watch, want to learn, if this is a safe place, and let's begin.

Loretta mentioned that the courageous conversation training is a two day workshop; don't know the vocabulary/rules. Louise mentioned the training involves setting up framework, creating a framework, ground rules. Gail commented that we need to be informed, change our behaviors, and need to behave differently.

Leslie Lehnhoff announced that Tuesday, June 3rd at 7pm, the City is coordinating a Multicultural Roundtable at the Auburn Library and that various representatives will be present for a discussion on cultural diversity in the Auburn Community. Everyone is encouraged to attend.

Rich is interested in getting together with Kim and Deb to talk more about courageous conversations.

Gail has done exploration for herself and often reminded to pay attention, be mindful, give people a vehicle, framework to go by, skilled, safety net that we need.

Diana understands people, being respectful, hearing the students are an eye opener.

Marco stated that courageous conversations budge from students to the top, find solutions to problems, and not pushed aside. LSU received cards that were passed out on campus on illegal immigrants. LSU send out surveys on what illegal immigration is, feels he's the future, courageous conversations are more for the other (older) generation, fear of approaching. HCC is so advanced with this issue. Why isn't the President's Staff ready? No outcome until we address this.

Leslie stated that we're taking baby steps towards it, significant one for Rich. Loretta said that it's a long term goal, grass root. Rich is interested in the particulars, how is it implemented, etc.

Leslie would like email addresses of everyone in the commission for information updates on community events.

Loretta gave thanks to Deb and Kim for going to BCC for this courageous conversations discussion.

Rich would like to get beyond the generalities, talk about strategies, how you hold these conversations. Diana suggested that the President's Commission make that commitment.

Deb and Diana would like to propose next meeting since June 12th is Commencement day.

Action Plan:

- Josh will draft an article for the Communicator sharing some highlights and announcements from our 5/8/08 meeting of the President's Commission on Diversity.
- Auburn City Council will be presenting a diversity resolution at their next meeting, Monday, May 19 at 7:30 p.m. at City Hall.
- April will bring student leaders from UW to talk about the Dream Project.
- Sent email addresses to Leslie Lehnhoff for information updates on community events.
- Auburn City Council is coordinating a Multicultural Roundtable at the Auburn Library, Tuesday, June 3 at 7:00 p.m.
- Deb & Kim will meet with Rich regarding Courageous Conversations
- Propose new date for next meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 4:50 p.m.

Recorder: Shirley Quenga