

**University Diversity Council
Meeting Summary
March 21, 2005**

Present: Bege Bowers, Germaine Bennett, William Countryman, Robert Faulkner, Suzanne Fleming, Cynthia Hirtzel, Yvonne Mathis, Anne McMahon, James Mike, Susan Moorer, Joseph Mosca, Jimmy Myers, Rev. Jim Ray, Mirta Reyes-Chapman, Joe Rottenborn, Ronald Shaklee, Leon Stennis, Wilma Torres, and guests: Brigid Edwards and Maria Salcedo, students in the Presidential Mentors Program.

Excused: Qi Jiang, Rev. Willie Peterson, and David Sweet.

Welcome and Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson, Germaine Bennett, at 4:15 p.m. She thanked everyone for coming and introduced Interim Provost, Dr. Bege Bowers, who will be with the Diversity Council until a new provost is appointed.

Remarks, Interim Provost

Dr. Bowers thanked the Council for inviting her and indicated that today was the deadline for candidates to apply for the position of Provost. She hopes that a candidate will be selected soon.

Dr. Bowers noted that in developing the core values of an institution, she hopes to see progress in the area of diversity and the appreciation of diversity. She has observed a real “banner” year (no pun intended) with the display of banners on campus and the planting of the diversity tree. She thanked the Council members and the student diversity council for all of their hard work that achieved the accomplishments gained this year.

The fall student minority enrollment figure of 13.7% has increased to 14.2% for spring and is a high figure for the university. Many individuals are to be congratulated for this. There are many different kinds of diversity here; 29% of the student body is over the age of 24, a very large percentage. This factor enriches the campus experience for both the students and the faculty. A student employment survey revealed that a large percentage of students work 16 hours a week or more, another factor that adds to the diversity of the student body.

Dr. Bowers closed her remarks by indicating that she was looking forward to working with the Diversity Council during her term as Interim Provost.

Remarks, Director of Equal Opportunity & Diversity

Introduction of Presidential Mentors and Program Update

Jimmy Myers described the Presidential Mentors Program as a diverse group of upper division students who are positioned to give advice and suggestions to President Sweet and the members of his Cabinet on important social, cultural, educational and political matters.

The students have made some very substantive comments and recommendations to President Sweet. This first-hand input from students is designed to enhance the student's

college experience, improve the campus climate and to stimulate the learning environment for all University students.

The inaugural group started in September, and the program will end in April. Mr. Myers introduced two students from the program, Brigid Edwards, a junior in special education, and Maria Salcedo, a senior in mathematics and Spanish. The group is still advising the president, and a number of constructive and helpful ideas have come from them. Ms. Edwards indicated that it has been a very worthwhile experience to meet the president and the members of cabinet and appreciated the opportunity to bring concerns to them, knowing that they really do care. Ms. Salcedo stated that they have such an important role and represent a portion of the student body. In the future, she hopes that more students share their concerns with the Presidential Mentors.

Ms. Bennett asked about the differences between the Presidential Mentors and student government. She suggested that this be clarified at the next Council meeting and include the role of student representatives on the Board of Trustees. Mr. Myers noted that a final report on the Presidential Mentors Program will include its purpose, recommendations and outcomes.

Diversity Web Page

Mr. Myers announced that a web page for the University Diversity Council is in the process of being developed. Material for the web page is being reviewed with Robert Tupaj, university web site manager. The home page may include a logo, a welcome statement from President Sweet, a mission statement, breaking news, diversity data, and contact information. Other items may also be included: news and events, member profiles, organizational structure, history, diversity charter, minutes from meetings, resources, job postings, diversity education, and constituency information.

The Council members were asked to submit their ideas for the website, and a concept for the home page was passed around for review. The by-line to the photographs on the home page is "Wherever your career takes you, this is the place to start." Mr. Faulkner pointed out that it is important to continually change information on the website to maintain visitor interest.

University Diversity Council's Advisory Role to the President

In the Council's advisory role to the President, 14 areas to advise the President were listed on a handout and included 5 priority areas. Those priority areas are: 1) how best to protect the enrollment growth and how best to retain and graduate the minority students currently enrolled at YSU; 2) awards, recognitions, or celebrations we need to provide or involve ourselves in; 3) how YSU can expand purchasing opportunities for women owned and minority owned business enterprises; 4) how YSU can improve vendor relations; and 5) how we can best communicate our diversity success. These are the President's priorities and any ideas along these lines are welcome.

Priority area 1, student recruitment and retention, is being addressed by the Recruitment and Retention Committee of the Diversity Council, chaired by Dr. James Mike. Following discussion, it was agreed that Council members will be given time to review these priority areas and make recommendations. Mr. Faulkner suggested that the Council members'

attention should be focused on these five priority areas for now and address the remaining items at a later time, as some seem to overlap.

Partners for Workplace Diversity

Dr. McMahon announced that the planning for the Hispanic Heritage event has begun and will be held this fall. More details will be shared at the next meeting. The Partners for Workplace Diversity have a web page that lists cultural events and opportunities for diversity presentations. She will post all of the information that is sent to her.

On Wednesday, April 27, the 2005 Diversity Initiatives Awards will be presented at the annual Human Resource Conference, which will be held from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. in Kilcawley Center. The conference is being sponsored by the Western Reserve Chapter of the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), YSU's Williamson College of Business Administration, Partners for Workplace Diversity, and the student SHRU Chapter, Sigma Pi Alpha. Dr. McMahon encouraged members to submit nominations and emphasized that the primary purpose of the awards is education. Initiative is also recognized.

In September, the diversity poster contest will be held in the schools. Winning entries will receive a \$100 savings bond.

A monologue about the death of 146 workers in a 1911 fire at a shirt factory in New York was presented on campus and in the schools this month. This event influenced the enactment of business regulations regarding working conditions in factories.

Remarks by the Director of Student Diversity – No Report

New Business

Predictors of Cultural Discrimination in Public Schools

Dr. Kenneth Miller, Chair of the Department of Counseling, presented an overview and slide presentation on the research he conducted regarding cultural discrimination in the public schools. All of the high schools in Columbiana, Trumbull and Mahoning Counties were contacted, and each one was classified as rural, urban or suburban. A research instrument was developed to measure cultural bias. The purpose of the study was to 1) determine culturally discriminatory attitudes, behaviors and school policies related to race, sex, sexual orientation, and social class among 12th grade students and teachers, 2) identify demographic and cognitive predictors of culturally discriminatory behaviors, and 3) develop "cultural profiles" for each participating school to include results and recommendations for improving each school's "cultural climate".

An article about Dr. Miller's study appears on page 4 of the winter 2005 edition of *Frontiers*, published by the School of Graduate Studies and Research, and was disseminated to the Council members.

Frequency of Meetings

The frequency of Diversity Council meetings was briefly discussed. It was agreed that Council should meet often enough to accomplish its goals and fulfill the mission.

Subcommittee Reports

Community Diversity Committee

Susan Moorner, Chair of the Community Diversity Committee, reported on the Community Diversity Series this year, adding that February was so busy, it was difficult to choose which events to attend. On February 3 a discussion of a book of poetry about civil rights heroine Rosa Parks was held at the main branch of the Public Library of Youngstown and Mahoning County. On February 11 the reading of original poetry about Rosa Parks was conducted by the We Be Poetry community poetry group at the SMARTS Center.

A discussion of Sue Monk Kid's book, "The Secret Life of Bees," was held on February 22 at the Public Library of Austintown. It is a story about racial conflict in the South during the 1960s.

A discussion of ideas about economic development espoused by Richard Florida in his book "The Rise of the Creative Class" will be held at the Trumbull Branch of the Butler Institute of American Art in Howland on April 5. Florida's book espouses the author's belief that areas that have allowed the greatest freedom for creativity tend to be the most successful economically.

Student Recruitment and Retention

Dr. James Mike announced that due to scheduling conflicts, the Student Recruitment and Retention Committee will be meeting on March 24. The committee will be working on ideas to improve faculty diversity and a workshop to assist students in the identification of graduate schools earlier. Dr. Mike was thanked for volunteering to chair this committee.

Update on Activities of Coordinator of Diversity Initiatives

Leon Stennis reviewed a listing of recent and upcoming diversity related events and highlighted "A Day of Remembrance" that reflected on the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II, and some of the restrictions that U.S. citizens are facing since 9/11, held on February 19 in Kilcawley Center. It was a very good, lively discussion with a cross section of the community.

YSU Theater will present "Spinning Into Butter," the story of racism on the campus of a college in Vermont on March 31 and several days in April.

Mr. Stennis announced his upcoming retirement in August and added that a lot of work lies ahead in the next five months. He reviewed his major responsibilities which include making the campus community aware of the importance of diversity and diversity events, planning pre-college workshops, and increasing minority student enrollment.

Accolades were shared with Mr. Stennis for the *Diversity News*. It is very encompassing on what's happening.

Round Table Updates

Discussion was held regarding a central clearinghouse for diversity related events, as there were some conflicts with events held during Black History month. Mr. Myers stated that the

Council's webpage could be used to serve that purpose. Germaine Bennett requested that we assess the representation from each of the colleges, to determine if any are missing.

Rev. Ray described the study circles process that was done eight or nine years ago. He noted that it gained the attention of several people in the Youngstown 2010 project and will require training and facilitators. Although it will be a huge undertaking, there is a tremendous need for it to be done.

With no further action to come before Council, Germaine Bennett thanked everyone for coming, asked them to attend as many diversity related events as they could, and asked them to watch for the new web page. The meeting was adjourned at 5:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Bidwell, Recorder