

**University Diversity Council  
Meeting Summary  
June 7, 2005**

**Present:** Dr. Nafees Ahmed, Germaine Bennett, William Blake, Bege Bowers, Robert Faulkner, Suzanne Fleming, Cynthia Hirtzel, Deborah Liptak, Yvonne Mathis, Benjamin McGee, James Mike, Susan Moorer, Jimmy Myers, Carl Nunziato, Joe Rottenborn, Leon Stennis, David Sweet, and guest: Jonathan Bentley.

**Excused:** Qi Jiang, Anne McMahon, Joseph Mosca, Rev. Jim Ray, Mirta Reyes-Chapman, Ronald Shaklee, and Wilma Torres.

**Welcome and Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson, Germaine Bennett, at 4:15 p.m. She welcomed everyone and thanked them for coming.

**Remarks, President Sweet**

YSU has just concluded another record academic year. Minority student enrollment is up nearly 1800 to 13.7% of the student body, and there have been 13 straight semesters of enrollment growth. Work is continuing with the local school districts and on retention of current students. Dr. Robert Herbert will assume the position of Provost on July 25, and diversity will be among one of his focal points. The first year of Early College for high school students resulted in 43 of 68 students taking college level courses. They achieved a 2.9 grade point average. In partnership with the Warren schools, the Academic Achievers program now has four graduates who are all enrolled at YSU. YSU is working with area school districts to see what can be done to improve the core curriculum at the high schools and better prepare students for college, and a pilot program has been started to feed back data to the high schools on how students are doing at YSU.

President Sweet noted that Jaymin Patel was missed at the Council meeting; he did a great job with the diversity banners and the diversity circle. YSU had a good year, and President Sweet is looking forward to another great year.

**Introduction of New Diversity Council Member**

Germaine Bennett introduced and welcomed Debbie Liptak to the Diversity Council. She is the Development Director at the Public Library of Youngstown and Mahoning County.

**Remarks, Interim Provost, Dr. Bege Bowers**

Dr. Bowers reiterated that through YSU's partnership with the Youngstown City Schools, the ninth graders enrolled in Youngstown Early College just completed their first year. There was a lot of diversity in that group, and they did very well for ninth graders.

Dr. Bowers elaborated on the background of Dr. Robert Herbert who will assume the position of Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs on July 25. Dr. Herbert, dean of liberal arts at Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, Texas, is also a professor of sociology and anthropology at SFA. A linguist and anthropologist, his background is in international travel and studies. He will be a very good addition to the academic division and should be in attendance at the August 17 Diversity Council meeting.

### **Remarks, Director of Equal Opportunity & Diversity, Jimmy Myers**

Leon Stennis, Coordinator of Diversity Initiatives, will retire on August 31 from the Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity. His job description is currently under review, and it is planned that the job announcement will be posted in the next few weeks.

The Presidential Mentors Program, a group of upper division students that advise the President and members of his cabinet, began as a pilot program last fall. The group met during the academic year, and after an assessment of the program, it will be continued and expanded from 7 to 21 students. The format will be somewhat the same, but it will be an entirely new group.

The hiring process for faculty and staff is being internally reviewed, and an improvement is being implemented to provide diversity directives on how to increase the diversity of the applicant pool to the search committee chair and/or department chair as soon as the position is posted. This new process began June 1. The Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity will monitor this process on an ongoing basis and make adjustments as necessary.

Mr. Myers proposed that the Diversity Council increase meetings from four to six times per year, to not just inform and update, but make them working meetings. This would be "a pilot" plan to see if the Council can achieve committee work during the regular meeting and focus on the first five priority areas to advise the President. There will be no need for committee meetings, as Council would work as a committee and as a whole. The chairs of the standing committees will still maintain their positions and direct committee discussion. Mrs. Bennett expressed concern that attendance may drop with additional meetings.

Mr. Nunziato felt that increased efforts need to be made to communicate to the community the value of the work the university does regarding diversity. Mr. Myers reported that he is working with University Development to submit a proposal to upgrade the Diversity Newsletter. Plans are in place to include a glossy cover, expand the newsletter, and increase publication.

Discussion followed regarding how to communicate diversity education to the community. Along with increased circulation of the Diversity News, suggestions included putting together a presentation and contacting charitable and non-profit organizations, Rotary and Kiwanis clubs, and speakers' bureaus to inform them that this is available.

### **Remarks by the Director of Student Diversity, William Blake**

Over the past several months, many programs have been very successful on campus: Black History Month (February), the first Disability Awareness Month (April), a Diversity Forum on Asian Americans (October), Women's History Month (March), and a gospel concert was held in May via a teleconference. Mr. Blake noted that he was looking forward to the fall, as an increased departmental budget will enable his department to implement additional programs. The Office of Student Diversity is working on a heritage tour of the Underground Railroad for students and has just completed a proposal to the Ford Foundation to promote the coming together of Christian and non-Christian communities. Other activities include participation on the planning committee for the Hispanic Heritage Conference that will be held on October 7. During Hispanic Heritage Month (September 15-October 15) the committee is also planning

related community events such as a book discussion, art displays, dance lessons, and cooking classes.

The Office of Student Diversity recently received a commendation from the 126<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the Ohio House of Representatives in recognition of its efforts on campus for exceptional diversity initiatives.

## **Subcommittee Reports**

### **Community Diversity Committee**

Leon Stennis reported on the activities of the Community Diversity Committee, noting that five events were scheduled during the academic year. All were successful in their impact on the community and attendance. The committee is meeting next week to plan the community diversity series for next year. Among the plans is a centennial observance to honor Paul Laurence Dunbar, the first African-American poet to gain national eminence as a poet. The event will coincide with the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death and is a real opportunity for community awareness. The Community Diversity Committee plans events dealing with age, race, religion, and sexuality.

### **Student Recruitment and Retention**

Dr. James Mike reported that the Student Recruitment and Retention Committee has been meeting and developed a vision statement to outline the committee's purpose. The committee's role is to study issues related to recruitment and retention, make recommendations to the University Diversity Council, act as a catalyst to adopt practices to enhance recruitment and retention, and integrate those practices on the YSU campus. A charge to all units on campus is to integrate diversity into what they do; it should be something we all do everyday. The goal of the committee is to recommend policy changes to President Sweet. The committee will focus on two critical issues: (1) faculty and staff recruitment and retention, and (2) student recruitment and retention on campus. The committee will meet with various groups on campus to assess what is being done to integrate diversity and see where improvements can be made. It was stressed that the increased diversity of faculty affects the recruitment and retention of students.

Discussion followed regarding how to market diversity training. It was suggested that this training could be one of the Community Diversity Committee's annual events or perhaps a diversity module could be marketed through the Metro College.

### **Update on Activities of Coordinator of Diversity Initiatives**

Leon Stennis disseminated and reviewed a listing of recent diversity related events that were held in April and May, along with a summary of events that are scheduled in the coming months. Along the lines of communicating diversity to the community, Mr. Stennis and Chuck Daubner, manager of training and development, conducted a diversity training workshop titled "Fostering Diversity at Columbiana High School" for 300 students at the school on May 10 and 17. The workshop focused on the "what" and "why" of diversity.

A publication titled "The Road Ahead: Improving Diversity in Graduate Education" was disseminated to Council members which covers the importance of diversity in graduate education. Mr. Stennis noted that his personal goal is to increase the diversity of faculty on

the YSU campus. As a result of a completed survey of minority graduate students, Mr. Stennis is planning a pre-doctoral workshop for minority students. Arrangements will be made to have representatives from area colleges do presentations on what doctoral degrees are available. This information will encourage more minority graduate students to complete their doctoral degrees and perhaps be selected as YSU faculty members. Mr. Stennis indicated that the Youngstown area is a growing minority community, and YSU needs to reflect on the diversity of the community.

Mr. Stennis introduced Jonathan Bentley, graduate- student intern in the Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity. Jonathan, who will be working in the office until the end of fall semester, received his undergraduate degree in psychology in 2002 from the Ohio State University. He will receive his master degree in counseling this December.

### **Round Table Updates**

Dr. Bowers shared that she has enjoyed working with the Council and hopes to see continued progress after Dr. Herbert arrives.

Benjamin McGee thanked Dr. Sweet for his words of encouragement and thanked Mr. Stennis for his interest and contributions. Suzanne Fleming expressed best wishes to Leon, and said "keep that passion!"

Debbie Liptak noted that she was glad to be a part of the Diversity Council and sees a lot of possibilities for the public library to partner with YSU and further promote diversity programming.

Jonathan Bentley indicated that his internship in the Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity has been an interesting and positive experience, and he hopes to be a part of more of the Council's activities in the future.

Mr. Blake shared that he hoped the Student Diversity Council could gain another student as enthusiastic as Jaymin Patel. The banner campaign is still underway with a continued goal to raise the level of awareness.

Dr. Mike expressed his hope that the Recruitment and Retention Committee will be effective to help to get the diversity module out in the community.

Dr. Rottenborn noted that as the cost of education continues to rise, it gets more difficult almost by the day to integrate the principles of diversity on campus. The Diversity Council is involved in this struggle but has to keep working at it; models are needed to show students it can be done, but it's a worthy struggle.

Yvonne Mathis indicated there were a large number of minority students in her sociology class. She thanked the Council for the opportunity to be a member, is learning a lot, and felt the Council's efforts were paying off.

William Blake thanked Mr. Myers for the nomination of the Office of Student Diversity to receive the "Diversity Best Practices Award" from Western Reserve Chapter of the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM).

Robert Faulkner pointed out that Council is like a pipeline and a funnel; Council needs to refine the key issues identified at this meeting so they are manageable and progress can be made.

Jimmy Myers thanked Leon Stennis for the contributions he has made in the Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity, welcomed Debbie Liptak to the Diversity Council, and extended congratulations to Germaine Bennett for her Athena Award nomination.

Suzanne Fleming added that the leadership of the Diversity Council needs to be reflected back to the community. Robert Faulkner thanked Germaine for her leadership, adding that she was “the glue that holds the Council together.”

With no further action to come before Council, Germaine Bennett thanked everyone for coming and generating an honest dialogue about the key issues that the Council is facing today. The meeting adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Bidwell, Recorder