

Minutes for Meeting on December 9, 2011

Present: Kathryn Artuso, Chris Call, Toya Cooper, Jane Higa, Omedi Ochieng, Rick Pointer.

Kathryn opened in prayer.

Chris called for a review of minutes. Toya asked for an amendment to the minutes over remarks she made on clarity of language.

Chris asked the diversity committee to offer input to the strategic planning committee on the ways in which each of the strategic tracks can help to advance diversity.

- Jane suggested emphasizing that the proposed institute for global education ought to reinforce the college's priority on both domestic as well as international diversity. She said that she is concerned that there are times when diversity is interpreted as only pertaining to international encounters and experiences.
- Rick pointed out that we should emphasize diversity in all the institutes. There's a danger in having only one institute emphasize diversity. Conversely, the danger is that when everyone is responsible, then no one feels responsible.
- Chris suggested changing the wording of the program leadership tasks to the following: "*Operate* institutes that complement the college's priority on diversity."
- Rick suggested changing the wording of educational effectiveness tasks from "assess" to "evaluate." Thus it will read: "*Evaluate* whether diversity learning outcomes are being achieved."
- Kathryn wondered about the possibility of encouraging faculty to use seed money for innovative ideas on diversity initiatives.
- Toya suggested creating corporate experiences for students on matters of diversity. An example would be programming diversity events during student orientation.
- Toya suggested that one way of increasing diversity and global awareness would be the placement of artwork around campus that drew from diverse traditions.

Chris reported that he had received responses from members of the faculty regarding the previous meeting. He thought it may be helpful going forward for members of the committee to offer follow up reflections after every committee meeting over email. He reported the following recommendations from members of the committee:

- Worksheet for dept. chairs whenever they hire a faculty of color
- Reviewing best practices from other institutions
- Reviewing data from students of color and women on their experience at Westmont
 - Chris said that Bill Wright reported that the next survey of students would take place in 2012
- Collect stories from students of color on their experience.
- Chris said that those who have been in the campus longer tend to look at improvements that have been made over the years to make the campus more diverse whereas those who are relatively new tend to look at the improvements that the college needs to make to make it more diverse. He thought that the committee's strength lay in having diverse perspectives.

- Chris said that the college thought it is important for the college to be sensitive about the stories it is telling incoming faculty and staff of color.

Chris opened up the meeting for further suggestions on recommendations that the committee may consider pursuing:

- Toya was concerned that the committee not forget to survey staff of color on their experience.
- Jane suggested that the college seek to define what it means by “global”
- Jane reported that she is working with a trained analyst on sifting through a HERI survey on diverse learning environments. Among other things, the survey will offer information on the climate for women on campuses.
- Chris suggested that the committee consider taking a tack from the strategic planning committee. This involves having the committee decide on a few topics to address. The committee then designates a few of its members to intensively work on the topic and then to report back to the committee.
- Rick thought that assigning sub-groups to work on various topics was necessary for the effectiveness of the committee. Members would then work between committee meetings and report back to the committee.
- Rick said that it was unclear what authority the diversity committee has. One of the challenges of the diversity committee is that it has never had a binding authority. He said it would be helpful for members of the committee to know what authority it had: whether its authority consisted in making recommendations; or if the executive team has to sign off on the recommendations made by the committee.
- Chris replied that the committee’s recommendations were aimed at the president. He said that previous committees had felt unable to make recommendations because the provost was not a member of the committee and that was why the provost had been asked to be part of the committee.
- Jane added that the provost had been asked to be part of the committee so that the committee could benefit from his knowledge of academic and faculty governance and processes.
- Chris thought that it may be helpful to seek clarification from the president on the authority that the diversity committee has.
- Rick said that the matter of authority was tricky in committees that span administrative-faculty sectors of the college.
- Chris asked if the committee could act on recommendations such as having the faculty adopt the best practices handbook.
- Rick thought that there may be different ways in which the faculty handbook could be recommended to the faculty. The committee could send its recommendations to the faculty council, for instance.
- Omedi suggested that the committee’s authority ought to be that the president and the faculty council offer a public or formal response to its recommendations.
- Rick said that the handbook for department chairs is likely to be welcome. He thought that the committee ought to have a small subcommittee (consisting of Mary, Kathryn, and Omedi) to work on a best practices handbook for department chairs. Such a handbook would then be put to the faculty council.

Chris asked for suggestions on potential tracks for the committee to work on in the coming year:

- Best practices handbook

- Common student experiences around diversity initiatives. Toya gave as an example the time when students watched the “The Help” and then gathered for a conversation over the movie. Another suggestion would be for students to read a book during orientation and then talk about it.
- Kathryn suggested that the committee give out a survey to discern the attitudes of students. She said that one revealing survey administered by Caryn Reeder (Religious Studies) found that there was a significant group of students who didn’t think that women should teach.
- Toya said that she would be interested in hearing from staff on their experiences on matters of diversity. She wondered if there are needs among staff that are not being addressed.
- Rick said that there be as many as 1 in 4 students who believed that a woman should not be a teacher, in particular, a biblical studies teacher.
- Kathryn agreed to get in touch with Caryn Reeder on the survey she had administered in her classes.
- Chris will talk with Toya on experiences of staff.
- Jane will investigate putting together a group that will explore suggestions for corporate or common experiences among student on matters of diversity.
- Omedi will speak with Mary on ideas for a “best practices” handbook.
- Rick said that he envisions the handbook as a 2-3 document. He said he would not want it to be an onerous task.
- Chris urged the rest of the committee to identify potential “next steps” for the committee.
- Chris suggested the possibility of collecting stories around diversity.

Rick then reported back to the committee on the workshop on how to manage difficult conversations. The workshop lasted about 5 hours. It consisted of faculty and staff sharing “war stories” on difficult conversations. The external consultant identified principles that the group could draw from the war stories. She also helped the participants identify the presuppositions that they bring to conversations and interactions. According to Rick, the evaluation forms overwhelmingly indicated that many of the participants thought that the workshop was worthwhile. Participants wished they could have heard more from the consultant on her own ideas.

The meeting was adjourned.