

University Council Committee on Pluralism

2006-2007 Final Report

General Committee Charge

The Committee on Pluralism shall advise the offices of the president, provost, the executive vice president, and the vice provost for university life on ways to develop and maintain a supportive atmosphere on campus for the inclusion and appreciation of pluralism among all members of the University community. The Committee will also address specific diversity issues that may arise on campus.

2006-07 Specific Charges

1. Meet with Vice President Joann Mitchell to explore overlap with the Affirmative Action Council and make recommendations, including possible means of cooperation.
2. Continue to monitor the implementation of recommendations of the Minority Equity Report.
3. Review the results of the USCAR survey and discuss next steps with the Office of the Provost.
4. Review and discuss the committee's general charge and identify two or three issues that should be given highest priority for the committee's work in AY 2007-08.

Actions in 2006-2007

The Committee met six times this year. A brief review of their deliberations and recommendations follows.

- The Committee recommended to University Council's Steering Committee the merger of the President's Affirmative Action Council (AAC) and the University Council Committee on Pluralism (Pluralism) into a single advisory body whose work would be reflective of the charges of both Committees. University Council Steering Committee approved the recommendation and a proposed change to the Council's bylaws creating a new Committee was approved at its February 28th meeting. The new advisory body, the Committee on Diversity & Equity, was established effective immediately with Dr. Bennett Johnson as its Chair and Dr. Judy Shea as its Interim Chair.
- Members agreed that diversity in the curriculum would continue to be a priority. Associate Provost Andy Binns and Associate Director of the Provost's Office for Education Rob Nelson joined the January 24th Committee meeting to lead a discussion of efforts related to undergraduate and graduate education related to pluralism and solicit input. The topics discussed included: "segregated diversity" in and out of the classroom and the importance of increasing interactions across groups and encouraging students to "mix it up more"; pipeline

issues for underrepresented minorities; a “Diversity Initiatives” tab which will become part of the Provost’s Office website to highlight our efforts including course offerings, extracurricular (including residential) programs, special events, and lectures that are related to diversity and inclusion.

- Members agreed that, as was the case last year, a survey of campus climate continues to be a high priority. A Subcommittee on Campus Climate was established to consider methods of assessing campus climate, such as conducting focus groups, reviewing the results of recently administered surveys, analyzing the results of exit interviews conducted by cultural resource centers, and reviewing the results of a climate survey conducted by Dr. Camille Charles. The Subcommittee agreed to focus its efforts on students (undergraduate, graduate and professional) for the near term.
- A Subcommittee on Affirmative Action issues was also formed to follow-up on items that were outstanding from the 2004-05 report of the AAC.
 - *Websites*: The Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity Programs will develop a mechanism for monitoring departmental websites and other publications to ensure that they include the appropriate equal opportunity or nondiscrimination language.
 - *Revision of the EEO Policy*: The AAC had recommended revising the Equal Opportunity Policy to make it more aspirational and to indicate that Penn is not able to fully realize its commitment to nondiscrimination based on sexual orientation because of the Solomon Amendment.
 - *Gender Identity*: The AAC’s work in developing recommendations for further evidencing Penn’s commitment to nondiscrimination based on gender identity will serve as a starting point for future deliberations.
- A review of the issues that were outstanding from the Committee’s work over the last several years was undertaken by Bob Schoenberg. He identified three items that were outstanding and recommended next steps.
 - *Annual Reports on Pluralism Trends (2003-04 and 2004-05)*. It had been recommended that the Director of Institutional Research publish reports periodically on indices of progress in making the campus more diverse and inclusive. Once a new leader of that Office has been appointed, this matter should be raised with him or her.
 - *Campus Climate Survey (2003-04)*. A campus climate subcommittee was formed to develop recommendations whose work was described in the first full bullet on this page.
 - *Social Interaction (2000-01, 2003-2005)*. The Committee recommends that additional follow-up be undertaken with Offices such as Athletics, Religious Life, and VPUL to explore ways of increasing interaction across and among groups.
- The Committee was charged with monitoring the implementation of recommendations contained in the Minority Equity Report. Deputy Provost Janice Bellace and Assistant Provost for Gender and Minority Equity Issues Loretta Sweet Jemmott made a presentation on minority faculty recruitment and retention initiatives at the Committee’s March 13th meeting. They summarized the University’s goal as being one to take a thoughtful and innovative approach to finding ways to strengthen Penn by enhancing our diversity in all

areas. They highlighted some of the initiatives that are underway to aid us in realizing those aims, including:

- During the Dean's annual performance evaluations they are asked to report on efforts to support and enhance diversity which each School has identified as a high priority.
- Information regarding successful strategies as well as challenges to be addressed in recruiting and retaining underrepresented faculty and students has been distributed to deans and department chairs. At the Committee's request, Dr. Bellace has agreed to follow-up on the question of the manner in which pre-freshman and student initiatives are evaluated. Further, Dr. Bellace agreed to follow-up on the suggestion of orienting new faculty members, especially minority faculty members, to Penn and providing information about mentoring and other resources available.
- A new faculty information system is being installed to allow for more effective and efficient monitoring of faculty recruitment, retention, promotion, and departures across the University and to evaluate our progress. In addition, planning is underway to install an automated system for faculty recruitment and applicant tracking.

The final meeting of the year, facilitated by Michele Goldfarb, was devoted to discussing possible agenda items for the next academic year. The Committee reached consensus that the following topics might be on the agenda, though exact methods of carrying out the ideas and the priorities were not established. Those suggestions include:

- Developing a proposal for an appropriate mechanism(s) to increase the effectiveness of the University's diversity efforts. This would include considerable data gathering and exploration of models used at other institutions (e.g., bringing in consultants and/or visiting other campuses, etc).
- Bringing closure on the revision of the University's Equal Opportunity Policy
- Assessing/compiling the initiatives, offices, and other mechanisms currently in place to support the University's aims regarding diversity
- Identifying means of strengthening the support and mentoring of graduate students of color
- Surveying the campus to gather information regarding issues to be addressed in the area of campus climate
- Creating a more robust presence on the University homepage on diversity and related issues
- Engaging alumni in supporting efforts to enhance campus climate and to aid in strengthening diversity initiatives.

Thank you to all members of the Committee and invited guests for their constructive participation in this year's discussions. We are grateful for their exceptional contributions and hope we can count on their continued support even after some members leave the Committee.

2006-2007 Members and Guests

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| Bernett Johnson, Chair | Chair |
| Camille Charles | Faculty |
| Judy Shea | Faculty, Interim Chair |
| Howard Stevenson | Faculty |
| Rosalyn Watts | Faculty |
| Irene Wong | Faculty |
| Shakirah Simley | Undergraduate Student |
| Jerome Wright | Undergraduate Student |
| Mahlet Mesfin | Graduate Student |
| Susana Ramirez | Graduate Student |
| Marina DeScenza Walker | PPSA |
| Karen Ringlaben | PPSA |
| Karima Williams | WPSA |
| Mary Jones-Parker | WPSA |
| Leah Popowich | Staff |
| Joann Mitchell | Guest |
| Valerie Allen | Guest |
| Jeanne Arnold | Guest |
| Valerie De Cruz | Guest |
| Gloria Gay | Guest |
| William Gipson | Guest |
| Scott Reikofski | Guest |
| Bob Schoenberg | Guest |
| Gulbun O'Connor | Guest |
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