Diversity Task Force Meeting

February 2, 2010 @3pm

University Club

Discussion Prior to entry of Provost:

Dept of Justice meetings (recent) regarding the hate incident on campus:

- Mediator Amy Albert
- We are making inroads to getting better equity on campus
- Most recent meeting (Mon?) w/ Amy
  - Large staff and faculty presence
  - Strong show of concern/support
  - Handout from Melvin
    - RE – diversity learning, leadership
    - Lack of figure head, no central person/face of diversity effort
    - Need a position/person to lead the effort at a high level

Gerald Williams – Welcome

- Co-chair of the Equity council w/ Trish Morokoff
  - Numerous diversity committees on campus
  - Working on getting others up and running
  - Encourage people to become involved/more involved
  - Need to get academic affairs online w/ diversity
- Gerald addressed forum (discussion ensued):
  - Dept of Justice meetings
    - Provost and President were there at the most recent meeting and stayed for the duration – 2 hours, shows support and commitment to the cause of diversity on campus
    - Next meeting (3rd meeting)
      - Bias response
      - What happens after an incident
      - How to report and incident
      - Need to formulate an action plan for responding to hate crimes
      - Need a centralized area/set of people to respond to/deal with such incidents
- BUA document
  - Created regarding/in response to incident (1991 or 1992?)
    - Agreement between BUA and President regarding equity
- Expectation of incoming students regarding equity
  - Need to make a preemptive strike against hate crimes
At orientation?
- Parents are there w/ student
- Early understanding by incoming student of issue and punishments regarding such behavior

Part of student contract?
- Should be certain expectations as a member of this University
  - Respect for others
  - Acceptance of diversity
  - Understanding of the consequences for violations
- Should be a clear delineation of what incidents are and how to report them
  - New student handbook addresses this issue?

Need a well defined understanding of “what is a hate incident” and how to report/who to report to
- Harassment committee is defunct, need a new system
  - Should change the name anyhow to include/reflect hate or racial bias incidents as well as other infractions
- Need a central figure/governing body to report to
  - Several areas on campus deal with these issues, need ONE, centralized area/person/people

Do any other Universities have a code of conduct that is signed (including a piece on diversity)?
- Can we use their idea
- Feasibility?

Student Equity Council
- Leadership Conference this weekend @Alton Jones
  - Mostly students, some faculty (Diversity Task Force)
    - How to begin developing diversity for all students
      - In curriculum
    - Faculty workshops
      - Provide support for learning/teaching diversity
      - Understanding differences in classroom
    - Res hall piece
      - Respect and equity in Res halls/student life on campus
  - 2 other agenda items (no one remember the specifics)

Provost Takes lead on discussion after arrival:

Curriculum
• Learning objectives
  o Multi cultural competence
  o Core set of learning goals regardless of learning discipline

• Issues w/ Gen Eds (as diversity tool)
  o Need better definition
  o Not best choice
  o Need agreement

• Forum for Teaching
  o Last Friday
  o 120 faculty signed up
  o Data discussed regarding URI’s effectiveness in dealing w/ racism
    ▪ Very low rating on campus regarding discussions of racism
    ▪ Talk given on facilitating discussions on racism and their importance

• Self-assessment Rubric
  o Faculty Support for and Involvement in Diversity Learning (pg. 2)
    ▪ Use this to build improvement
    ▪ Will be the focus of the next meeting

• Diversity Day
  o Define a day (end of Spring Semester) to celebrate diversity
    ▪ Create a forum for race and racism
      ▪ Need to open a dialog on campus
        o All opinions and ideas need a forum for open airing without fear or recrimination – open, thoughtful and honest
      ▪ Students feel the University has failed to capture incidents and issues to use as a catalyst for change at the University

Break up into groups

Developing Learning Outcomes group meeting:

This was an animated discussion and it jumped from topic to topic frequently, please excuse any duplications as I wanted to outline the discussion as it happened in real time as well as follow the threads of the discussion that ensued.

• Looking at the idea of how to developing these outcomes into a curriculum
  o A group of courses taken over time
  o Incorporated into Gen Eds
  o A single course
  o Mixed into current courses
  o ?

• Fears/concerns
  o Losing diversity learning if vague/non-specific
- Diversity cannot be “woven” into every course at the University
- Cannot be adequately accomplished through Gen Eds
- Some students will look at any course requirement on diversity as “something they have to do to graduate”

- Different types of students (regarding diversity)
  - Those who are natural born activists
  - Resistant but willing to learn
  - Resistant and unwilling to learn
  - Those who want to learn but have no direction
- We need something for everyone
  - Possibly introduce general concepts Freshman year
    - Tailor learning in later years to their pursuit or major field of study
  - With a 4 credit system
    - 2 in early years, more general learning
    - 2 Jr/Sr that are major specific
      - I.e. – if student is going into nursing they take a specific set of courses tailored to dealing with the public in a caring environment, making certain to understand the needs of different populations, ethnicities, religions, etc.
      - If the student is a structural engineer, they should take a set of courses that would pertain to understanding of others cultural view, standards, cultural decorum, etc.
      - Use the major field of study to determine the needed courses in diversity, make it applicable to the job they will be doing and it’s requirements

- Multicultural understanding
  - Multiple different sources of knowledge
    - Different viewpoints and understandings based on different backgrounds/culture
  - “Multicultural”
    - Contentious term, difficult to agree on a definition
    - Definitions are based on source and experiences of source
    - Term can be misused in teaching
      - Unless a course is specifically comparing our culture with another (a side-by-side type of comparison) then the course is teaching history not multiculturalism
      - Many professors will balk at changing their courses and teach history instead of culture
  - Need a learning outcome woven into each course, somehow
    - Have to teach students how to be global citizens
• Most in the group agree that an intro course would be a good plan
  o May have to petition Gen Eds committee
    ▪ Majors have different standards, diff Gen Eds?
      • Have to agree on a standard before moving forward
  o Review Gen Eds and diversity flags
    ▪ What is required to graduate
      • Is it the same for everyone
    ▪ URI 101 a requirement for all?
• Many classes are simply a tutorial, not really an immersion to or provide a deep understanding of culture
• Define specific goals/outcomes for learning and create a plan to get them included into the curriculum
  o Need a set standard for outcomes
    ▪ Want to look at goal setting as a best case scenario
      • Consider it may not be possible for all students to be able to complete every one and “check it off on his/her cosmic checklist”
      • Remain hopeful that all students will be able to complete them by the end of Sr year
  o Outcomes
    ▪ Application of concepts
    ▪ Use of theoretical framework
    ▪ Skill/analysis centered within students unique cultural and historical experience
    ▪ Action/critical analysis
    ▪ Multiple knowledge bases
      • Different sources and contexts of knowledge
    ▪ Freedom/justice (moral and otherwise)
    ▪ Knowledge
    ▪ Skills
    ▪ Competencies
    ▪ Exposure
    ▪ Understanding of techniques
    ▪ General understanding/empathy
    ▪ Conflict resolution
    ▪ Power/privilege equity
    ▪ Social good
    ▪ Cultural skills building
      • Story of law firm and internet – issues of sexism and racism on blog
        o Need to teach an understanding of and respect for the consequences of culturally insensitive actions and real world applications for why we have a need for this line of teaching

Call for action:
• Find a way to lump the items in the list above (outcomes) into groups for the next meeting
• Go to the forum on Sakai and discuss these ideas