

*Annual Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity Committee Report to the Faculty Senate*

*March 29, 2007*

*Submitted by Dr. Sylvia Spears, Chair*

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The Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity Committee is pleased to announce that the group is once again active. Dr. Sylvia Spears (Department of Human Development and Family Studies) was appointed as chair of the committee by President Carothers, after Dr. Dania Brandford-Calvo stepped down from the position. The committee continues to serve in an advisory capacity consistent with Section 5.54.10 of the University Manual which reads as follows:

The University Affirmative Action & Equal Opportunity Committee shall report directly to the President and shall advise the Director of Affirmative Action, Equal Opportunity and Diversity in: (1) the development, interpretation, and implementation of affirmative action policy for the University as a whole, (2) the monitoring of complaints of discrimination received under other complaint procedures, and (3) the development and implementation of sexual harassment and racial and ethnic harassment policy and procedures. The committee shall evaluate progress, identify problem areas, and make recommendations for change in the areas of education and employment opportunities. The committee shall make an annual report to the President.

This year, the committee actively engaged in a planning process designed to identify goals, strategies and corresponding actions items. In order to best support committee work in this process, the committee established two informal working groups, one with emphasis on issues of institutional accountability and the other with emphasis on issues of education and outreach regarding affirmative action and equal opportunity. In addition, the committee has worked to specifically identify ways in which the committee's work aligns with and contributes to the university's inclusion initiative as outlined in the 2006-2009 University Strategic Plan. The working groups identified the following goals, strategies and actions:

## ***EDUCATION AND OUTREACH***

### ***Goal 1: Revitalize community awareness of the principles of inclusion and diversity and the purpose and function of the AAEOD Office***

**Strategy:** Develop various methods and activities for education and outreach

**Actions:**

- Develop a Community Conference on Inclusion
- Increase student exposure to the principles of inclusion including equity and access in collaboration with New Student Programs
- Make use of informal networks as a mechanism for constructive communication and to distribute information
- Explore the peer mentor model to educate students, staff and faculty on issues of equity/diversity and the role of AAEOD (e.g. Violence Against Women program and Changing the Culture for Student with Disabilities Program)
- Create a liaison network between AAEOD and campus departments to facilitate communication and education regarding recruitment and retention efforts
- Initiate a poster campaign addressing principles of inclusion, ethics and community standards
- Collaborate with the Division of Student Affairs on the Welcome Sticker program

### ***Goal 2: Strengthen the AAEOD Office***

**Strategy:** Revisit institutional reports and assessments on the functioning of the AAEOD Office and urge implementation of recommendations as appropriate

**Actions:**

- Conduct an internal assessment of AAEOD, Human Resources, and Labor Relations functions
- Examine the recommendations from current and previous reviews and develop recommendations for re-structuring, if applicable

## **ACCOUNTABILITY**

### ***Goal 1: Broaden institution-wide commitment to inclusion and create mechanisms to monitor implementation***

**Strategy:** Identify and implement a process for evaluating the success of appropriate university administrators and offices in meeting URI's goals for diversity and inclusion

Actions:

- Research, identify or develop an instrument for evaluation
- Collect and analyze data gathered
- Draft appropriate document for full review and distribution

***Goal 2: To encourage university offices and departments to engage in on-going self-assessment of inclusion practices, policies and outcomes***

**Strategy:** Develop a training program and self-assessment practices that can be administered as part of regular departmental functions and meetings

Actions:

- Obtain philosophical buy-in from deans, department heads and managers
- Collaborate with appropriate departments to design and implement assessment program

***Goal 3: Clarify issues of scope and authority regarding the AAEOD and the Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action Committee***

**Strategy:** Establish clear lines of authority and scope of work for AAEOD and the Affirmative Action Committee

Actions:

- Identify issues and areas that require clarification
- Make recommendations for improving the role and scope of authority

***Goal 4: Establish an operating budget for the Affirmative Action Committee***

**Strategy:** Collaborate with other equity committees and Advance to better establish resources for the inclusion work campus-wide

Actions:

- Develop a budget proposal with justification
- Submit budget proposal for review and approval by the President

## **Current Committee Projects**

Priority projects at this time include conducting an inventory of all diversity and equity committees campus-wide; developing a review process to examine the functioning of AAEO, Human Resources, and Labor Relations; planning for the Community Conference on Inclusion; and collaborating with other campus equity and diversity committees including the President's Commission on the Status of Women, the President's Commission on the Status of Faculty, Staff, and Students of Color, the Harassment Committee, and the Student Affairs Diversity Committee. The leadership of these groups recently formed an Equity Chairs Coalition designed to facilitate communication between groups. It is hoped that Pamela Rohland, Chair of the Disability Advisory Committee, will join the Equity Chairs Coalition in the near future. The Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity Committee is also collaborating with Andrew Winters, Special Assistant to the Vice President of Student Affairs, as he works to establish GLBTQ advisory group.

The committee has established an ambitious agenda for this term and we welcome your comments, feedback, and support as we continue to do this important work. Our regular monthly meetings are scheduled for the third Wednesday of each month from 10:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m. at the Multicultural Center. Please join us for lively and purposeful discussion. Questions or comments about the committee's work can be directed to Dr. Sylvia Spears at [sylvia.spears@uri.edu](mailto:sylvia.spears@uri.edu).

***SAVE THE DATE!***

***Community Conference on Inclusion***

***Friday, April 27<sup>th</sup> 8:30 – noon***

***Details Coming Soon***