

**URI EQUITY COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES
JANUARY 27, 2009**

Attendance: Grace Frenzel, Frank Forleo, Pamela Rohland, Carolyn Sovet, Trish Morokoff, Ann Morrissey, Jerry Schaffron, Lynne Derbyshire, Roxanne M. Gomes, Dania Brandford-Calvo, Gerald Williams, Gail Faris

Minutes for the October 22, 2008 and November 6, 2009 accepted with the following change to November 6, 2009: Andrew Winters has agreed to inform the Council or a subcommittee regarding the process used by Student Affairs in the development of a Diversity Committee. He is willing to be a member of a committee, but is not able to serve the committee as chair.

Announcements:

- Diversity Week events were promoted with reference given to the Website for complete listings
- On Thursday, January 30, 2009, the Afro-Semitic Music Experience Program will be held at the Fine Arts Center; \$10 non-student admission.
- Presidential Search Committee had no new information at the time of the meeting
- International Summer Program gives three credits to URI students interested in a 3 to 4 week international experience. Some scholarship dollars are available. It is faculty led and includes places in Africa, Asia, and Europe and gives credits in several disciplines.
- Academic Planning Summit, January 30, 2009. Over 150 people have responded to give input on the vision presented to the University community by the Provost. The Provost is interested in receiving recommendations for the formation of an academic plan for the future.
- On Thursday, April 16, 2009, the Honors Program and the Women's Studies program are sponsoring Dr. Jody Heymann from McGill University, Montreal. Dr. Heymann is internationally known for her studies on global working families, the working poor, and work-life issues. Her presentation will be at 7 pm at Swan Auditorium.

4. Brief History of Equity Council – Grace Frenzel

The Equity Council has enabled a process of becoming more inclusive among those people and groups interested in diversity issues. The plan was to foster a group and thereby combine with groups such as the President's Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW), the President's Commission on Faculty, Staff and Students of Color, Affirmative Action, etc. Such an inclusive group would allow us to work together with a broader constituency on diversity issues. On November 30, 2007, a decision was made to continue meeting, to work toward formalization and request authorization as a Presidential Council.

In late December 2008, the group was formally recognized by the President. The group's membership list, which gained the President's approval, includes all diversity

groups across the campus. The Equity Council satisfies, in part, the mandate in the University's Strategic Plan for inclusion efforts on campus. In addition, the Council is, in effect, keeping the future position of a Chief Diversity Officer alive until such time as the financial commitment of that office can be made.

Two subcommittees of the Equity Council have been formed to date, namely, The Access and Public Education Committee, and the College Diversity Committee.

5. Committee Reports

a. Access and Public Education Committee

Frank Forleo reported on the work of the Access and Public Education Committee. Frank credits the work of Lynne Derbyshire, Ann Morrissey, Linda Acciardo, Trish Morokoff, (and the group credits Frank Forleo) with the writing of the op-ed piece which appeared in the Providence Journal on December 25, 2008. The piece explained to the reading public the compelling financial circumstances the University finds itself in and especially the effect of these circumstances on low-income students in the state of Rhode Island. The most significant positive reaction to the piece came from Commissioner of Higher Education Jack Warner, who in a letter to Chairperson Morokoff, called the letter well-written and timely. Dialogue with Commissioner Warner will continue, especially as it relates to discussions about the strength of the language regarding equity and diversity in the Presidential Profile being utilized by the Presidential Search Committee.

The Committee also reports that students, especially low-income students who may have to register late for class, are finding that they cannot register because low enrollment classes have been cut (**Lynne Derbyshire update on Financial Aid Concerns**). Even those low-income students who have been helped financially have not been able to register. The approval by the President and the Provost to raise the limit to \$1,000 from \$400 for the imposition of sanctions has been helpful. It was said that we need such policies to allow in-state students to get what they need for classes. The Equity Council may find itself in a position to leverage such requests.

Frank Forleo reiterated that high need students are receiving at least \$400 less, considering the \$250 additional cut added to the previous \$150. President Carothers wants an analysis of TD students asking the following questions:

- Do they have an unmet need
- Do they have a term bill
- Have they accepted both subsidized and unsubsidized loans

After these questions are answered, Enrollment Services will give an answer.

The loss of international students, who funnel significant money to the University and to the national economy, is being felt. These students are not coming or are leaving, in part, because of the loss of assistantships.

Gerald Williams commented regarding the dwindling money from the state and its effect on financial aid and made the following suggestions: First, the Equity Council should extend an invitation, in light of his imminent retirement as President, to President Robert

Carothers to become a member of the Council. Secondly, based on the op-ed piece in the Journal and the Jack Warner response to it, the Council should go to the Board of Governors and the State Finance Committee with the momentum we are now carrying. We can choose and develop spokespeople and let them know what the University is feeling. We should consider this in light of Rhode Island College's plan to give in-state tuition to those out-of-staters residing within 50 miles of the College.

b. College Diversity Committees

The Equity Council would like to provide Vice Presidents and Deans with an understanding of the role of Diversity Committees and how those Committees can interface with the Equity Council. The University's Diversity Committees should be found in all of the Colleges, Units and Divisions of the University including Affirmative Action, Administration, Development, Student Affairs, the latter of which already exists.

There is a group within the Council searching for funding to support the establishment of Diversity Committees in each of the Colleges. Some of the funding would go to the Colleges to develop and implement a plan. It was suggested that ADVANCE, through such funding, could remain as consultants to colleges and divisions to talk about the development of diversity committees. The question was raised regarding the ability of ADVANCE to do this for constituencies of color. It was thought that if there was additional and diverse staff at ADVANCE that the ability to consult regarding racial issues would be effective. In addition, if there were increases in the number of faculty of color, these faculty could assist Diversity Committees in continuing to promote the hiring of more faculty of color.

The College of Arts and Sciences, which has a Diversity Committee, is promoting access for diverse students by offering a \$250 book award for ten Talent Development students needing such assistance. The role that Student Affairs and the College of Arts and Sciences Diversity Committees are playing should be used as a prototype to the University's Department of Administration and other Colleges and Units. It was mentioned that the College of the Environment and Life Sciences, which does not have a Diversity Committee, responded to the budget cuts by eliminating assistantships and hiring an administrator. It was thought there should be a set of principles that all units of the University use when making financial decisions. If the Council drafts these, it should be presented to the President.

Melvin Wade indicated that the proposal being prepared with the URI Foundation goes beyond the formation of College Diversity Committees and expands to a process to increase faculty of color in each college. The investigators will be collecting data and reviewing college hiring policies. They will be asking the question "why do faculty of color come out of the process unwilling to engage and come to committees like the Equity Council." Some voiced that the lack of engagement is not just with faculty of color but faculty in general.

OLD BUSINESS

Meeting with the President and Provost

The President is able to meet on April 24th from 1 to 2:30 pm. The Council is proposing and earlier, special meeting, possible Friday, February 13, 2009 or March 10, 2009.

Co-chair Remarks

Co-chair Schaffron made the point that the council needs to prepare both a short-term and long-term strategic plan that put forth the issues within our purview. The group voiced agreement without any formal plans for action.

ISSUES ON JANUARY 27, 2009 AGENDA NOT DISCUSSED:

Public Announcement of the formation of the Equity Council
Website Development

Next Meeting:

February 20, 2009 1-2:30 pm Green, President's Conference Room