

Equity Council Meeting Minutes
Friday, March 28, 2014
3:00 – 4:30 p.m.
Student Senate Chambers, Memorial Union
Kingston Campus

Attendance: Michelle Fontes-Barros (co-chair), Diane Kern, Liliana Costa, Alicia Mosley Austin, Betsy Cooper, Sarah Couch, Amy Olson, Gerard Holder, David Hayes, Jackie Sparks, Annemarie Vaccaro, Maggie Charpeutier, Carol Pegg, Adam Schemm, Marnie Dacko, and Shana Greene.

Invited Guest: Wendy Bucci

1. Introductions

2. The minutes of February 27, 2014 were approved.

3. Foundation Update: Wendy Bucci, Chief Operations Officer

- Three areas of diversity initiatives: fundraising, staff, board and trustee relationship
- Fundraising for the endowment of university:
 - There are up to 100 trustees. They have parallel numbers with the university in terms of diversity.
 - 5 more board members and more trustees will join the committee.
 - The make-up of the committee is light in minorities. They are looking for people who are qualified and can add to the diversity of the committee.
 - There are slightly more males than females.
- Staffing:
 - Positions are posted on website. Staff is not very diverse. There are three open positions.
- Fundraising for the university:
 - Three thousand accounts for endowments. There are accounts and endowments for diversity purposes and for diversity students. Many of the funds serve a specific purpose.
- They have an investment committee and funding committee. Member suggestions can be made for those committees. There is a statement available about the member requirements.
- Q: For the spots open currently, what are your requirements? Where can we find that info?
A: Trustees have slightly less commitment. Board members need to be people who demonstrated commitment to the campus such as financial support. They are good candidates for trustees who have some experience and commitment in the university.
- Q: Can you tell by demographics where you have potential increase?
A: Raising info depends on self initiative. There are two lists on the foundation website about endowed funds. You can search for funds on our database.
- Q: Can the money remaining be used for scholarship? If not, what do you do with it?
A: The money rolls back into the fund for future year's distribution. The lists and needs are updated each year accordingly.

- Q: How can we find what kind of scholarships are available for each college?
A: There is a scholarship list that is specific for each department and school. Colleges can look at our webpage and post that information on their websites.
- The distribution of this year is three million dollars for scholarship.

4. NECAP update: Diane Kern, Associate Professor, Education

- Health education wealth fair, South Kingstown
 - NECAP is not ending this year. It will be given to juniors and seniors. The exam is discriminatory to the student vulnerable.
 - Rhode Island Department of Education.
 - People testified, stood out for over 400 children.
 - There are grass-root organizations that lobby, pressure.
- The next high stake assessment: PARQQ
 - PARQQ is being piloted right now. There is no publicity about the cuts of the piloting. If this exam is used as a high stake exam, cut scores and high stakes are not known.
 - It is a major equity issue.
- RI ACLU March 2014 report on over-suspension of African American students:
 - Racial bias in school suspension in the RI schools: Black students are disproportionately suspended.
 - Higher numbers are East Greenwich, North Kingstown, and Portsmouth.
 - 'Dear Colleague Letter on the Nondiscriminatory Administration of School Discipline' is sent to the institutions who over-suspend by the US Department of Justice & Department of Education.
- Q: Will changing to PARQQ make a difference?
A: No. It should be studied for a year, suspended the next year, and then it should be tried and compared. In this particular format, there are students who fail.
- Q: What about alternative schools which are for students who cannot do well in traditional schools?
A: They have to follow the standards.
- Q: Test results can be waived if they are accepted by a selective institute. What are the requirements for that?
A: They are coming up with new policies.
- Q: in other states, universities are more active part of the opposition. What is our position in that regard? How can it work with this institution?
A: Education Honors Colloquium is one of our activities for that purpose.
- Q: Are there people who can tell us how this works in higher education?
A: Yes, there are people. May 5, there is an open public conversation.
- Equity council is happy to help Diane Kern in any way possible; it can be on the agenda in the next meeting.

5. College of the Environment & Life Sciences Diversity committee update: Michelle Fontes-Barros

- It is in operation. Michelle co-chairs it.

- Three sub-committees come up with their goals and achieve it.
- Training and development
- TA positions, faculty and staff positions
- Website accessibility
- There are 17 people in the committee.
- Q: Are there students, faculty, and staff in the committee?
A: Associate dean, assistant dean, 7 full professors, 4 associate professors, a few staff members. Students are invited and they have student voice when we need it.
- We need have clear transparent rules for marketing and finding students of color.
- Colleges and departments can have their own diversity committees and work on their own problem. They should identify it as a problem first.
- Q: How long members serve on the committee?
A: There is not a rule about that yet. We will move to that when we come up with a goal and achieve that. It is good to have some continuity in the committee and flexibility to function efficiently.

6. New Business/Announcements/Q&A

- Amy Olson: Holocaust Remembrance Week, March 30 – April 4, 2014.
- Diane Kern: Honors Colloquium event is canceled. At town hall meeting on April 24 three of the four mayors will be there. They want to meet with diverse students before the meeting. They secured a grant to bring young women of color to URI. The students are coming to campus on April 5 and they will be matched with other young women from diverse backgrounds. There will be a campus tour and a panel.
- EDP 665 Social Justice in Higher Education, Instructor: Annemarie Vaccaro, Summer 2014.
- Membership update
- McNair Proposal update will be discussed in the next meeting.
- Michelle Fontes-Barros: A letter from the Equity Council will be sent to VP Gerry Sonnenfeld and VP Christina Valentino to wish them well.

*Next meeting: Thursday, April 24, 2014, 9-10:30 a.m., Thomson Board Room, Ballentine Hall