

Equity Council Meeting
Wednesday, September 10, 2014
3:00 – 4:30 p.m.
Student Senate Chambers, Memorial Union
Kingston Campus

Human progress is neither automatic nor inevitable... Every step toward the goal of justice requires sacrifice, suffering, and struggle; the tireless exertions and passionate concern of dedicated individuals. ~Martin Luther King, Jr.

Attendance: Diane Kern (co-chair), Robert Samuels (co-chair), Alicia Mosley Austin, Lynne Derbyshire, Michelle Fontes-Barros, Nancy H. Kelley, Melvin Wade, Stephen Baker, John Sears, Annemarie Vaccaro, Marnie Dacko, Adam Schemm, Sarah Couch, Garry Bozylinsky, Eileen Orabone, Roxanne Gomes, David Hayes, Jackie Sparks, Naomi Thompson, Melissa McCarthy, Amy Olson, Dana Neugent, Carol Pegg, Robert Vincent, Robert M. Koots, Annie Russell, Mary Jo Gonzales, Maggie Charpentier, Susan Golet, Ted Shear, Shana Greene, Debbie Suggs, Earl N. Smith, and Gerard Holder.

1. Welcome and Introductions

2. Confidentiality policy was read to the council members and affirmed.

3. The minutes of May 15, 2014 meeting were approved.

4. Announcements

- Naomi Thompson: Fall reception will be held to welcome diverse faculty, staff, students, and alumni, on Thursday, September 25th from 4:00-6:00 p.m., at the Harge Forum, MCC.
- Amy Olson reminded that Jewish holiday dates change each year and event dates can be found online.
- Melvin Wade: 18th Annual URI Diversity Week will take place between Monday September and Friday, October 4, 2014. The theme of this year is Freedom Summer Project. URI's Multicultural Center will record interviews with 18 activists to honor the 50th anniversary of the Freedom Summer Project.
- Annie Russell: LGBTQ center will publish its events dates soon. Among the events there will be a drag ball and trans-awareness week. There is progress on the construction of the new center. Feb 13, 2015 is the tentative opening day. People can donate paver stones (instead of brick) to the center to honor themselves or someone else.
- Michelle Fontes-Barros: CELS event to welcome freshmen science students.
- Naomi Thompson thanked Annie Russell and her colleagues for helping URI become a more friendly LGBTQ community.

5. Old Business

- Membership and representation on Equity Council: Membership letters are being sent. We also need to know if people want 2 or 3 year terms. The council meetings are open to everyone, but it is important to have members to stay a strong council.
- ACTION ITEM: Once membership list is updated, co-chairs will strive to recruit new members from groups not represented. For immediate action: invite student representatives from MUSIC, Student Senate President, Student Senate Finance Committee Chair.
- Equity Council website updates: Sarah Couch helped with the website update. There is still a Word Press website waiting to go out live.
- Multicultural Unity and Student Involvement Council (M.U.S.I.C.): There was a discussion about how to assist and advocate the student organization MUSIC. Following points were raised during the discussion by several council members:
 - MUSIC is a leadership group intended to be an umbrella organization for student organization. It's created to improve the performance of Multicultural Center students' performance. This organization received less than 4 % from student funding although student of color representation on campus is 21 %. The imbalance between the students' population and funding received should be balanced.
 - Last term the conversation was started on May 15 meeting and a group got together for this purpose twice during the summer and wrote a proposal. One of the issues is that there is a history of students stepping front and speaking out and stepping down. They get frustrated and step away. We will help them with the process because students on their own cannot make the actual change.
 - The reason of the issue is the lack of more diverse representation in student senate. Students of color are elected for the senate but usually they do not stay for long because of hostile treatment.
 - We should have students before we talk about them. They should come and present in the council. They don't appreciate adults telling them what to do. It is critical not to assume anything at this point.
 - We need students to speak but it is clear that there was a tyranny of majority.
 - We should educate advisors to help them function better, with specific tips and strategies.
 - Student senate came again 3 years ago before the council. It is clear that the problem predates this specific issue. Our job is to help them get that voice in the conversation. We need to make a goal how to create positive change.
 - Students' activities are entirely controlled by them. We should also educate students in the senate.
 - We opened the council with the notion that our role is to advocate. We cannot speak for student senate and advocate and help them learn. We don't have to do it here in the council. We go out and have responsibilities. Let us know what we are doing.
 - Having student voice of all involved is crucial. Reeducation of people coming to campus with different ideas and expectations. We have to support the whole student body. We should be mindful of inviting both the senate and MUSIC representatives.
 - We are not fully informed about student funding and student recognition.
 - Our best work is to help students learn that this is an educational aspect that they don't get grade for, but something they should learn.

- Before we invite anyone we should know exactly the purpose of the presentation.
- Knowing what models other universities have may help.
- ACTION ITEM: Bruce Hamilton will be invited to the next meeting to talk about the Student Senate and how the organization functions.

6. New Business

- Notable Accomplishments and Events: We want to get our word out effectively and efficiently, please make sure of your listserv membership. We would like to know the equity issues members of our community are facing. Please send us your feedback about the meeting and our efficiency.
- Diane Kern passed out a handout summarizing closing reflection for 2013-2014.
- Nominations for Equity Council Co-Chair: Bob Samuels has been nominated.