

Senate Diversity Committee Meeting

Minutes of February 4, 2015

Senate Office

3:30-5:00 pm

In attendance: Michael Bradford, Elizabeth Conklin (ODE) Casey Cobb, Manisha Desai, Maria Luz Fernandez (Chair), Diane Lillo-Martin, Shayla Nunnally, Willena Price, Bill Stawley, Bob Stephens, Susana Ulloa, Dan Weiner (Vice-Provost for Global Affairs)

1. For this meeting, we invited Dan Weiner, one of the two appointed individuals by the Provost, to chair the newly created Task Force whose main function is to address major diversity issues at UConn. The purpose of this meeting was that the Task Force informed the Senate Diversity Committee on their progress. Dana Wilder the co-Chair of this committee was not able to attend the meeting. The Vice-Provost for Global Affairs and Shayla, who is also part of the Task Force, provided an update on the initiatives that are being addressed since they were appointed to this important diversity effort last October. Elizabeth Conklin who is also part of this committee provided additional information.
2. The Senate Diversity Committee was informed that the Task Force is focused on defining a Vision, and there was also discussion on initiatives and expectations of this Task Force. During the discussion, it was mentioned that diversity initiatives need to have a strong foundation from the grassroots, a point of view that was debated because there is a strong belief that support of the upper Administration is essential to succeed; it should really be a combined effort. The existence of isolated diversity efforts in some departments all over the University was also discussed. The Task Force discussed about prioritizing an inclusive environment based on justice at UConn, two main issues that have been discussed extensively by the Senate Diversity Committee in the last year. Overall, there was a general feeling of frustration associated with a “déjà vu” sentiment that the issues continue being the same and that the initiatives continue to be recycled without fruition.
3. The Committee provided several ideas to the Task Force that we all believe are essential to demonstrate that UConn is committed to Diversity. Among these ideas, the creation of a centralized Diversity Office was considered to be a key initiative to ensure a Diversity Presence. The composition of the Office whether there should be a Diversity Officer or be formed by Faculty who devote part of their time to this effort is something that probably needs to be further discussed. However, this Diversity Office is essential to have a central place to reposition diversity initiatives and move them forward. Another important point was to have the word **Diversity** in a more central place at UConn web site to ensure that any faculty who is interested in coming to UConn can easily find that UConn supports diversity and UConn is committed to recruitment and retention of diverse faculty and staff. Several examples were given on how our aspirant universities do have diversity in a central place in their web site where they highlight the initiatives and the efforts of the

administration in promoting diversity and specific examples for recruitment and retention of diverse faculty.

4. Dan Weiner also discussed that the Provost is now requiring that faculty who are applying to UConn should provide a statement of diversity in their application packets. The Senate Diversity Committee believes that this speaks highly of institutional commitment to diversity and it is this kind of efforts that should be publicized in the Diversity web page. Other initiatives discussed by other members of the Committee to promote recruitment and retention of diverse faculty were spousal hires and that diversity efforts are taken into consideration in PTR. It was also mentioned that other Universities give Diversity awards to faculty and students who have shown outstanding efforts to promote diversity at the Institution.
5. It was decided that the Task Force should meet with the Senate Diversity Committee in March to continue these discussions.
6. A meeting in late February among Committee members was proposed to discuss the retention strategies that will be presented to the University Senate on March 2nd
7. The meeting was adjourned at 4:45 pm am

Respectfully submitted

Maria Luz Fernandez, PhD
Chair, Senate Diversity Committee