

Senate Diversity Committee Meeting

Minutes of November 14, 2013

Dodd Center Room 162

10:00 AM- 11:30 A.M.

**In attendance:** Kobby Amponsah (graduate student representative), Sandy Bushmich, Karen Bresciano, Rosa Elena Chinchilla, Mun Choi (Provost), Maureen Croteau, Alice Fairfield, Maria Luz Fernandez (Chair), Domenica Gnanem, Katrina Higgins, Katherine Johansen (ODE), Min Lin, Margo Machida, Jeff Ogbar (Vice-Provost for Diversity), Morty Ortega, Willena Price, Eugene Salorio, Pamela Schipani, Bill Stwalley

1. The Senate Diversity committee met with Provost Mun Choi on November 14. Before this date, a list of questions based on our previous discussions and concerns was drafted and sent by e-mail to the Provost in anticipation to the upcoming meeting.
2. The Provost provided a good definition of diversity as viewed by his office in answer to our first question. In regards to diversity, an important point that was brought up was the composition of key University-wide committees. It was discussed that although the Senate Diversity Committee is diverse in terms of membership, we must do more to increase diversity in all committees. The Provost was very responsive to this observation and made a note of this situation.
3. The issue of policies for retention was discussed at length. Specific cases of faculty leaving for lack of departmental support were presented to the Provost. Different strategies related to increased retention were discussed including a well defined mentorship program and spousal hires. In terms of mentoring, the Provost proposed that the search committees that bring new faculty to the University should serve as an “ad hoc” mentoring committee until the new hire is awarded tenure. The mentoring is a key strategy for retention and should be both systematic and thoughtful. Jeff Ogbar, Vice Provost for diversity discussed some of the initiatives conducted by his office to increase retention including the Ambassadors Program, aimed at facilitating the hire and retention of all new faculty with emphasis on under-represented hires.
4. Mandatory exit interviews were also discussed as a means of understanding why faculty leave the University. Katherine Johansen (ODE) discussed that, in the absence of mandatory exit interviews, only disgruntled employees are interested. Thus the concern has always been that you are faced with heavily biased impressions that do not take into account the more normal aspects of employee turnover that exist at any workplace. She also mentioned that although in favor of exit interviews, some logistical work would have to be done to figure out how best to implement and utilize them.
5. The Provost shared with the committee his concern about the need for increases in faculty diversity hiring. This concern will continue to be addressed for the next hires in collaboration with the office of the Vice Provost for diversity and ODE. He also mentioned that all faculty and

staff who work at UConn need to be more pro-active in demonstrating a personal ownership and responsibility to increase diversity. The Provost was informed by some of the members of the Senate Diversity Committee that some faculty and staff at UConn do not understand or embrace diversity.

6. Overall, the meeting with the Provost was productive and informative. The Provost announced fundamental changes on faculty recruitment procedures and policies for search committees that will become institutionalized for the next hires.
7. After the Provost left, the Committee approved the minutes for October 17 and planned the agenda for the next meeting. The consensus was to ask Vice-Provost for Diversity Jeff Ogbar to share with the committee his recruitment and retention efforts of under-represented faculty.
8. Our next meeting will be on December 12
9. The meeting was adjourned at 11:35 am

Respectfully submitted

Maria Luz Fernandez, PhD  
Chair, Senate Diversity Committee