

Senate Diversity Committee Meeting

Minutes of April 7, 2014

Giolas Conference Room

1:00 pm – 2:30 pm

**In attendance:** Kobby Amposah, Sandra Bushmich, Karen Bresciano, Tracy Bordeu, Rosa Chinchilla, Maria Luz Fernandez (Chair), Alice Fairfield, Kent Holsinger (Dean, Graduate School), Min Lin, Maria D Martinez, Gene Salorio, Pamela Schipani, Charmane Thurmand (Graduate School), Bill Stwalley

1. The minutes of the March 6 meeting were approved
2. The purpose of meeting with Dean Holsinger was to discuss existing Graduate School programs for special needs of diverse graduate students including under-represented minorities, international students and students with disabilities.
3. Charmane Thurmand provided a very comprehensive information regarding “The Multicultural Scholars Program”. She indicated that this program has increased over the years in number of applicants and awardees and there are now a number of activities during the Academic year for these students to attend to, which makes these awardees more involved in University events and potentially increase retention. The application process has changed slightly over past years. The committee that awards these Multicultural Fellowships not only evaluates the traditional metrics such as GPA and GRE scores, but pays special attention to the essay written by the faculty member who will be major advisor. The essay needs to describe the different ways in which the applicant will be supported by the department including 1/2 GA or TA for full funding, space and other activities aimed at furthering the education of the awardees. Also the definition of these awards is more comprehensive since a “white male” in the school of Nursing or Asian Americans in the Humanities are considered under-represented groups in these disciplines. It was also mentioned that MBA and MS students are also eligible.
4. Charmane also mentioned other existing fellowship programs such as the OSP (Outstanding Scholar Program), which currently funds about 17 scholars. Some of these scholar programs provide a full GA.
5. Students with disabilities were also discussed and the lack of funding to attend the needs of these students. Rosa Chinchilla indicated that there are graduate students in her department (Literature, Culture and Languages) who could provide services utilizing sign language for deaf students during graduate school events as part of their required training. This way, deaf students could participate more in University experiences. UConn does not currently have the infra-structure to cater to the needs of student with disabilities.
6. It was discussed that the number of housing has decreased for International Graduate students since there has been more utilization by undergraduates. Pamela Schipani from Residential Life explained that for example last year 92 international graduate students

were accepted in the dorms and only 52 moved in, which left 32 vacant spaces. This can represent a problem, especially since graduate and undergraduate students are not housed together. There are a number of graduate students who are currently living in Willimantic; however, transportation has become an issue although it is paid by students' fees. Pamela indicated that there is a web-site for orientation for international students. It is clear that housing and transportation for International students has different aspects that need to be addressed so that both Residential Life and International students can come together to find a solution that is acceptable for both parties.

7. Kent discussed recruitment efforts of under-represented students done by the Graduate School. These efforts include attending National Conferences to recruit African American and Latinos. These recruiting efforts are a joint effort with the Vice Provost for Diversity. There is also the summer research program, which is important to develop pipe lines and relationships with other Universities. Although there are many students from these groups that apply to UConn, only about 10% accept the offer. There are some initiatives that can be done to improve application numbers including reduce fee or waiver of fee by use of coupons.
8. After thanking Kent and Charmane for their thorough presentation, the committee used the last 10 minutes to plan our next meeting on May 8<sup>th</sup>. Since the committee is still concerned on the recruitment and retention of under-represented faculty, this last meeting will be used to plan strategies. Maria Luz will invite one or two individuals to the next meeting that can provide input on these issues.
9. The meeting was adjourned at 2:20 pm

Respectfully submitted

Maria Luz Fernandez, PhD  
Chair, Senate Diversity Committee