

Meeting Minutes – Diversity Committee

Location: University Senate Conference Room
Date: 12/12/19
Time: 12:30pm-2:00pm

From Senate website: This committee shall review University policies, practices, and conditions relevant to supporting and promoting diversity among students, faculty, and staff. This committee may recommend any desirable expressions of Senate opinion on these matters.

Attendance

Present

Stephany Santos	Diane Lillo-Martin	Alice Fairfield
Aida Silva	Susana Ulloa	Amy Howell
Margaret Rubega	Edith Barrett	Micki McElya
Anastasios Tzingounis	Casey Cobb	Clarissa Ceglio
Maya Murarka	Willena Price	

Support Staff

Emily Pulzello

Agenda Items

1. Introductions
2. Discussion with Nathan Fuerst, Vice President for Enrollment Planning & Management
3. Approval of November 14th Minutes
4. Updates
 - a. Events of November 19
 - b. Chief Diversity Officer search
5. Discussion of USG Statement of Position Concerning Issues of Awareness of UConn Faculty and Staff
6. Other business

Notes

1. Introductions
2. Discussion with Nathan Fuerst regarding admissions data and how it is reported, specifically focusing on terminology of underrepresented minority students and students of color.
 - a. It is the job of the admissions office to be accurate in describing the community that students are joining, including appropriate references to students and student groups. The admissions office is trying to do an effective job of describing the diversity on this campus, which goes well beyond race and ethnicity, including gender, sexual orientation, country of origin, first generation students, and many other groups. However, there is room for improvement. How can this committee help to make sure that the University is correctly defining and addressing the diversity of our community?

- b. “Minority students” has been used interchangeably with “students of color”. This encompasses a wide variety of students that are uniquely different. The current definition of minority is purely ethnic and racial. What is the appropriate reference and context that should be used to define students?
- c. Underrepresented students are defined as the student groups that are underrepresented in higher education. The distinction between this and “students of color” is not always clear in things that are communicated in various contexts within and outside the University. The admissions office can do a better job of defining global diversity as well. Including international students in some statistics but not in all, could change how things are perceived in terms of the achievement gap.
- d. What are other institutions doing for capturing gender and sexual orientation? Gender and sexual orientation is not currently captured from admissions. The orientation registration form does collect this data.
- e. What proportion of the students that apply actually check off a race? This is shown by the percentage of students that are choosing not to report and is shown in the slides presented.
- f. Race and ethnicity in admissions decisions can be a factor but not a determining factor in an admissions decision. There are groups of students whom do not want it to even be a factor whatsoever.
- g. SAT and ACT have been proven to be biased. An SAT score is just one factor that is reviewed; the holistic review looks at many more factors. Almost every university highlights what their SAT and ACT scores are, particularly if they are improving. Why is it highlighted everywhere if it is a small requirement? Test alternative or test optional encourages students to send in their scores. It is likely that students with high scores send in theirs, which changes the meaning of the school reported mean scores. The message out there is that scores are incredibly important, even though that may not be the case.
- h. Hesitant to report on currently gender, because it is must be asked in a binary form and reported the same way.
- i. The discussion of freshman vs. first year student terminology. The problem with first year naming could become very complicated when there is a transfer student from another college or university. However, this is an ongoing discussion.
- j. Most of the information provided in the presentation is for internal use or for helping to create materials for prospective students.
- k. What is it that prospective students believe or understand when they read students of color? Do they come here and see what they believe to be students of color or underrepresented students? The brochure is meant to keep it fairly simple for the students and they do value the universities growth. There does not seem to be an issue of understanding of students of color and underrepresented minority students for families and guidance counselors. It is evident that students do come in looking for students that look like them, especially since they come from diverse schools.
- l. Every university is required by the department of education to ask certain questions the same way as every other college or university. Are you Hispanic or LantinX? Select one or more races for which you identify? If this is selected, then the student must then be reported by the department of education as Hispanic or latinX? This doesn’t consider the fact that students can be much more than their selection of a singular box. Students are much more diverse than this statistic would show.

- m. Of the students who choose to stay at a regional campus, what percentage of the students who are underrepresented choose to stay? A disproportionate number of underrepresented students apply to regional campuses as their first choice. Through outreach, admissions tries to inform students that Storrs is an option. Additionally, the Connecticut Commitment is expected to increase the number of underrepresented minority students.
 - n. What percent of students of color who are accepted to the university turn down the university? This data is collected, and the university can see where they enrolled, if they received a scholarship. The admissions office can look to see if in state students of color are turning this university down.
 - o. Are their departments of this university that are using this data to hire faculty and staff? There needs to be greater diversity in the student and faculty populations. The president has acknowledged that there needs to be a better job of hiring diverse faculty and staff, but the admissions office does not handle this.
 - p. What drove the 10 percent increase over four years in diversity? Demographic shift as well as an increase in applications. Word of mouth is overwhelmingly important because students will take their experiences back to their families and friends. More financial aid, outreach, and more aggressive recruitment is another factor. The university is not very diverse, but the admissions office is very diverse.
 - q. For students that choose two or more ethnicities, they are grouped separately as having chosen two or more categories.
 - r. Also there are ongoing conversations about possibly including students with disabilities as minority students. However, it is not legal to ask students a question regarding disability. Thus it cannot currently be a component of the application process. Are prospective students aware of the resources offered to students with disabilities? This is not something that is currently advertised to prospective students but data from CSD can be gathered and used to help with this situation.
3. Approval minutes from November 14th meeting
4. Recent Events
- a. Events of November 19th – March on Solidarity
 - i. USG has also put forth a Statement of Position Concerning Issues of Awareness of UConn Faculty and Staff. The march went very well; there was a terrific turnout. However, there less press than was hoped for.
 - b. November 19th Panel
 - i. There are plans to have more discussions like this and also opening the discussion to regional campuses. This will be an ongoing conversation that the President is hoping to keep going. Unfortunately, the conversation was nothing new. It has been the same message for the past few decades, and action and change have not been made. It was the goal of some groups to create a message for the President, which was to help retain diverse staff and for this university to see more action and change finally.
 - c. The company COACH from Harvard has been hired to look into issues of recruitment and retention of diverse faculty at UConn. Human Resources has not uniformly been doing exit interviews, but this new company should provide a better and more productive space for exit interviews and for leaving faculty and staff to fully express their opinions.
 - d. What do you see as the top priorities for the CDO? Action is a major priority for this position. What action does this committee want to see? This committee wants to see

action with faculty, staff and students. Whoever takes on this role needs to understand that this position in Connecticut is different than other locations. This person should show the pride of UConn wanting to celebrate making this community more diverse. The CDO needs to be someone who wants to make this university more of a community.

Nevertheless, racism and racist acts must be called out. This position needs someone who will foster an environment where open discussions of racism and bias can take place.

- e. It was noted that Vanderbilt University has completely reimagined their Office of Inclusion. Vanderbilt provides an outstanding example that is broadly inclusive of the entire campus community.
- f. Most of the international students are mostly seen together, even though this is supposed to be a global community. We should be celebrating this diversity and creating a space for students to learn about each other's cultures.
- g. In January the CDO position should be posted, and by March there should be visits to the campus. The job description will shortly go into the public domain. Additionally, if anyone is aware of someone that would be a great fit for this role, they are encouraged to offer this person's name.