

## Meeting Minutes – Diversity Committee

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**Location:** University Senate Conference Room  
**Date:** 11/14/19  
**Time:** 12:32 pm-2:02 pm

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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 Fairfiled
Aida Silva	Susana Ulloa	Amy Howell
Margaret Rubega	Edith Barrett	Micki McElya
Anastasios Tzingounis	Avolyn Nieves	Casey Cobb
Christina Rivera	Maya Murarka	Willena Price
Alexis Boylan		

#### **Support Staff**

Emily Pulzello

#### **Agenda Items**

1. Introductions
2. Approval of October minutes
3. Updates (including conversations with Nathan Fuerst on shifting terminology and John Volin on faculty retention)
4. Discussion of responses to recent racial incidents (including: 1. what further response should there be from the University Senate? 2. announcement from Avolyn about an upcoming March of Solidarity on Tuesday, November 19)
5. Neurodiversity (Christine Wenzel will be our guest, starting at 1:00; so some of our discussion may need to be shifted)
6. Chief Diversity Officer search
7. Other business

### Notes

1. Introductions
2. Minutes from October 10<sup>th</sup> meeting approved.
3. Updates for the Committee
  - a. Discussion continuation of the correct terminology used by the university and in open senate forums. Nathan Fuerst has agreed to come to a meeting of this committee to discuss the reports that are generated by the university. Often times admissions and the university are asked to define and report based on standards of the federal government or granting units.

- b. A. Howell spoke with John Volin between this meeting and the last regarding faculty retention. There is a push to track and evaluate faculty retention in a meaningful way. It is encouraging that this task will be handled by a third party and will likely include exit interviews. This third party would be longer term and provide information back to the university and potentially the Senate. This issue has been a long-standing issue that has not yet been resolved. There have not yet been results pertaining to this issue. Is it possible that this third-party can implement quick responses and or solutions?
    - i. Although it does not make it any more palatable, this issue has been a nationwide problem that has to be resolved. The commitment to resolve this issue has not been a priority. Part of the problem has been the lack of continuity from president to president.
      - 1. The entire structure as it stands may be the issue in it of itself. Giving money to this issue may help to provide insights but the structure itself may need to be completely different. Talking about diversity is separate from actually acting on this situation. An objective that can be posed is having the head of this initiative come to this meeting and provide clear deliverables.
    - ii. Deans have been charged with diversity but have not been held entirely accountable for the results of this charge.
    - iii. CLAS is currently running a variety of search committees, and this committee can inquire about the guidance that has been given to these committees and how they plan to evaluate diversity.
      - 1. CLAS has approximately 19 searches and potentially another 10 cluster hires. Before the posting of the ads, they have been reviewed to make sure they written to include diverse hire and encourage a large breadth of candidates.
    - iv. What is the plan for the Dean's office for a search committee results that has no diversity? The department search committee doesn't know the diversity of the pool of candidates chosen. This information is not provided, so a committee cannot reasonably determine if the pool is diverse, despite pointers that may be available.
  - c. There is also a challenge of convincing the faculty to choose a diverse candidate.
    - i. Ultimately the list that the faculty lands with is the candidate that has met all the specifications which often include such qualifications as publications and grants. People in more diverse pools tend to be structurally disadvantaged and do not meet the merit requirement. There must be a definition of diversity that is included in the process so that the list given to faculty inherently includes diversity.
4. Two events that occurring on Tuesday
- a. The March on Solidarity will be held on Tuesday November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2019.
    - i. This march combines a variety of prominent issues on campus. The march will help to bring students and faculty together surroundings a variety of issues that are inherently interwoven. The mission statement that the students have generated acknowledges the intersection of environmental justice, social justice and women's rights. There will be talks on the Union terrace and following the talks there is an outlined marching route for students and faculty.

- ii. There are not yet marches on other campuses or regional campuses, however there will be a livestream for other campuses and students to view.
  - b. There will also be a dialogue on this date that can be attended. This is an approach to bring people together to structurally get people into a productive dialogue.
    - i. This will be separate from the Town Hall. The intention of the dialogue will be to have closed door conversations with faculty and staff that can freely and openly discuss issues at UConn. This dialogue is taking place before another incident happens on campus to address a variety of concerns. As a community we need to communicate and work towards getting on the same page, and the dialogue should help in this goal. While this gathering is last minute, it is clear that the community is working with the circumstances given. Students seem to be pleased that something is happening given a full calendar and a stressful time of year.
    - ii. These planned events are not ideal in timing but they are providing a response and a reaction to incidents that have happened on campus. These events are providing support for students in a variety of ways and providing the community with an arena to communicate. It is clear the president is working to try and respond to this incident and to support students.
  - c. There has been a statement released by the University Senate regarding the recent incident on campus. Should this committee provide a statement?
    - i. Instead of a statement condemning the incident, it may be more productive to sponsor and support the March for Solidarity and the students organizing it.
- 5. Neurodiversity Presentation- Christine Wenzel (Center for Students with Disabilities)
  - a. It is not well known, however students with disabilities are one of the fastest growing minority populations. There has been a recent shift and reframing of how disability is perceived, looking at it more as minority group.
  - b. Center for Students with Disabilities has been working to inform students and the general university population. It has also been diligently working to encourage Professors and community groups to understand and acknowledge that not everyone learns the same way. Embracing the social model and accepting a universal design for courses and community events would acknowledge that not everyone learns the same, but that there is a benefit for more than student with disabilities in this design.
  - c. Most of the students that UConn is working with are the students with an “invisible disabilities.” However, our perception of disability as physical is not a true picture and indication of the actual population of students.
  - d. Are there things we are doing wrong as a university that these students see and are bringing forward? Currently, the students do not currently feel that there is a need for a student with disabilities support group. Through the work from this committee and the center, students feel that the campus is accommodating and accepting. However, there are times that professors are not as accommodating and students sometimes see that professors view accommodations as a burden. There are also issues regarding students who take exams in the testing center and whom have questions but cannot ask them until after the testing time when they can see the professor.
    - i. Some students may feel that CSD’s name is a hinderance for them. There has been a request from students to change the name from disabilities to something else. However, CSD does not want to change the name currently and sanitize the

idea of disability. The very laws that help to govern and protect these services is the one that includes the name disability.

- e. Through granular reporting, the center is able to look at whom is answering their surveys. In the past few semesters there has been an effort to attract more students who are Asian. It was indicated that this population may not regard mental health as much as others, so the center has been able to use its social model to address this and increase the number of students that sign up for services.
- f. CSD has been asked to add videos or helpful resources for faculty. Department heads have asked to attend CSD staff meetings and become better educated on the student groups that they are representing. The center is restructuring to try and address liaisons for different departments so that their answers can be addressed more quickly.
- g. If students learn differently, why in many cases do they only receive extra time and not a different exam? Accommodations can-not fundamentally alter the course. Additionally, the nature of the course can-not be changed through accommodations. Extended time can help to give students more time to process, interpret, and answer the questions, which does not fundamentally change the course. Other accommodations are offered and can include exams being read aloud.
- h. Some adjustments in classes that can be made can affect more than just students with disabilities. For example, presenting a video with captions on would be helpful to students beyond those that may be deaf. Potentially gathering a list of adjustments that can be helpful to the overall student body should be created and disseminated.