

Ferris State University
Academic Senate Diversity Committee
Minutes
September 23, 2003

Members present: Sandra Alspach, Kevin Miller, Tony Baker, Carolyn Cook, Carole Jones, Clayton Rye, Joseph Wist

Clayton Rye called the meeting to order at 11:05. As this was the first meeting of the new academic year, the committee members introduced themselves for the benefit of newly elected members.

Following general statements and introductions the committee entertained nominations for committee chairperson. Sandra Alspach was nominated and accepted the role of chairperson. Kevin Miller agreed to serve as committee secretary.

An accounting was made of members who were not able to attend this first meeting. As well, Dr. Alspach and others described the work Raymond Gant (an ex officio member of the committee) and John Thorp have done to advance diversity issues at the university. Although not an official or ex officio member of the committee, John Thorp will continue to be invited to all future meetings. At the time of the meeting, the committee was still awaiting student government elections to receive its student nominees to the committee. These should be forthcoming by the next meeting in October.

Continuing members presented a general overview of the last year's accomplishments and deliberations. Professor Wist asked whether action had been taken on one of the committee's previous action issues, the on-campus housing of international students during holiday breaks. Some committee members had heard that the university has taken some exploratory steps in developing housing alternatives for these students but that, as yet, no firm commitment has been made to secure permanent continuous housing for these students throughout the school year. Joseph Wist strongly urged the committee to follow up on this issue, and it was agreed that the committee would discover the current status of this situation and continue to advocate for this student population. It was agreed that Jana Hurley be invited to update the committee on this issue at a future meeting, possibly October or November.

The next topic of discussion was the status of the racial climate survey that Raymond Gant was sponsoring last year. It was agreed that the committee would continue support efforts with this instrument. The possibility of involving senior sociology students to assist with this project was discussed as well as how these students might receive course credit while fulfilling work toward their senior projects and helping with this important study. It was agreed that Raymond Gant be invited to speak on these issues at a future meeting, possibly October or November.

Other potential activities the committee might take on for the coming school year were discussed. It was mentioned that Clayton Rye and David Pilgrim will soon be showing their

documentary film on the Jim Crow Museum. Professor Rye described that film and possible upcoming opportunities to view it.

Professor Wist talked about the many diversity-related events the committee might take advantage of in Grand Rapids such as the many events sponsored by Grand Rapids Community College. It was suggested that the committee might sponsor an event locally, and the issue of the committee's funding was raised. Dr. Alspach agreed to check on the committee's budget for the year. The possibility of securing funding for projects through grants was discussed. Dr. Baker and Dr. Alspach spoke about funding that might be available through the Communicating Common Ground project and how grants are given to universities through this project to train K-12 teachers in building communication on diversity issues. Carole Jones discussed the possibilities for Kiwanis sponsored events involving the organization's Circle K initiatives. Members were reminded of the upcoming student play, *The Wyoming Project*, and were encouraged to support works like this.

The committee discussed recent events surrounding the General Education Task Force report that is under consideration by the Academic Senate. Committee members discussed the need to reach out and educate the total university population on the importance of diversity issues and how these issues make Ferris a more hospitable place to live, work, and study, as well as the importance that student exposure to diversity related issues holds for their future success in the workplace.

Dr. Alspach reported on the growing interest in an intercultural communications course. Joseph Wist reported on his and the College of Technology's participation in a King/Park/Chavez summer program for middle grades students.

Following a review of the tentative possibilities for future meetings, the committee adjourned at 11:55.

These minutes prepared by Kevin Miller, millerke@ferris.edu.