

**Ferris State University**  
**Academic Senate: Diversity Committee**  
**2003-2004 End of Year Report**

The Diversity Committee considered a variety of issues in the 2003-4 school year and continued its mission to act on behalf of diversity-related matters for the university's Academic Senate. The committee welcomed several new members during the 2003-2004 school year, including faculty members Carole Jones, Carolyn Cook, Kim Daugherty and Karen Nash. New student representatives for the year were Jaclyn Zimmerman and Leslie Harrison. Faculty members with continuing terms were Clayton Rye, Joseph Wist, Sandra Alspach, Griff McTume, and Kevin Miller. Sandra Alspach was reelected as chair for the committee as was the committee's secretary, Kevin Miller.

In its September meeting the committee elected its officers and discussed agenda and action items for the coming year. Clayton Rye chaired the meeting and helped welcome new members to the committee. It was agreed that the committee follow up on one of the issues from the past year, finding permanent housing for international students. Several other past issues were discussed in part to bring the new members up to speed on the committee's recent actions, including the College of Technology's participation in the King/Parks/Chavez summer college orientation program. Several new opportunities for the committee's attention were discussed at the first meeting, and it was agreed that several speakers be invited to attend future meetings.

For the October meeting the committee heard from visiting speakers John Thorp and Jana Hurley. Frequent Diversity Committee attendee John Thorp presented the committee with several diversity-related conference opportunities and briefed the committee members on continuing developments for expansion of the Jim Crow Museum as well as other diversity-oriented issues. The committee then heard from Jana Hurley who briefed the members on developments and issues pertaining to the permanent housing of international students. Committee members voiced their concerns about the way the university turns its international students away during holiday break shut downs. Ms. Hurley reviewed the history of this situation, including many efforts that she and other housing personnel have attempted to implement in order to meet this challenge. Jana Hurley suggested that a residence hall that would remain open through the holidays might eventually be designated for international and nontraditional students.

During the November meeting the committee heard from John Thorp regarding diversity-related events including the National Conference on Race and Ethnicity (NCORE) in American Higher Education to be held in June in Miami. It was agreed that Timme funding would be investigated for sending one or more of the committee members to this conference. Also attending the November meeting was guest speaker Cindy Horn, a coordinator with the office of Student Leadership and Activities. Ms. Horn presented the committee with an overview of her experience at a seminar put on by the Institute for Healing Racism. The two day seminar she described helps business, community, and educational leaders examine the complex ways that race influences our lives and the implicit racist tendencies with which American culture imbues its citizens. Possibilities for one or more of the committee members attending future seminars or related activities were discussed.

The January 2004 meeting was attended by guest speaker Louise Yowitz who is Director of Employee Relations and Affirmative Action for the university. Ms. Yowitz described her role and work with the Diversity Incidents Team, which is a group comprised of a number of personnel from across campus, which monitors and responds to diversity-related problems. Ms. Yowitz reported on the history and structure of the team and the current year's incidents. The committee members asked a variety of questions about the team and its work. Ms. Yowitz also described her role as a mediator with the Dispute Resolution Center in Grand Rapids and the services this organization offers to employees and students at Ferris. She reported on how to schedule a mediation session and what kinds of issues are best suited to this kind of dispute resolution. Following her briefing the committee attended to old business issues. It was resolved to try and secure a team Timme travel award for the NCORE in June. Upcoming activities were highlighted such as the National Teleconference, the forthcoming Vagina Monologues, and the Sojourner Truth presentation.

At the February meeting John Thorp addressed the committee members on a wide variety of issues, including work with the American Democracy Project. Dr. Thorp detailed the scope and mission of this project and President Eisler's involvement with the organization. Dr. Thorp drew the members' attention to a key text Dr. Eisler is encouraging the university community to read, *Educating Citizens: Preparing American's Undergraduates for Lives of Moral and Civic Responsibility*. Developments with the Jim Crow Museum were also presented. Following Dr. Thorp's presentation the members described new course offerings such as a new upper level sociology course in applied community research. Dr. Baker suggested that student projects for this course could be augmented by the Diversity Committee's involvement. Dr. Alspach reported on a new course in communication, Comm 390, which could also offer tie-ins with the committee's work. It was announced that a team Timme award for travel to NCORE was secured. Karen Nash, Clayton Rye, and Tony Baker will attend the conference on behalf of the committee and the university.

The guest speaker for the March meeting was President Eisler. Dr. Eisler updated the committee on his progress in surveying the campus community through his small group meetings and other venues. He suggested that efforts to advance diversity on campus, while strong, are often isolated and do not take advantage of other agents for diversity that might strengthen individual approaches and tie them in with a stronger, more unified vision. President Eisler stressed his commitment to diversity issues and suggested that the committee is well suited to play a key role in helping to unify the university's work on diversity matters. Dr. Eisler informed the committee that he will be working in the next year to help the university develop and put into motion a three year plan for the university's future and that commitment to providing a diverse institution will be key to that plan. He invited the committee to stay involved with its work and to look for future opportunities to strengthen its work with the university. After Dr. Eisler's presentation, the team going to NCORE stayed to plan its itinerary.

The forthcoming meeting in April has been designated to finish up the year's business. As well, guest speakers from D-SAGA will be addressing the committee.

Questions or comments regarding this report may be addressed to Kevin Miller, the committee secretary, at millerke@ferris.edu.