COMMITTEE FOR A MULTICULTURAL UNIVERSITY

Minutes of 23 September 1997
Circulated 09 October 1997
Approved 14 October 1997

PRESENT: J Cameron, T Dabney, L Kleinsmith (SACUA Liaison), J McGowan, R Megginson, C Ransom, CB Smith (Chair), S Stone, W Yang
ABSENT: A Nadasen, S Sutaria

MATERIALS DISTRIBUTED
1. CMU Agenda
2. Draft Minutes of the CMU meeting of 10 April 1997
3. List of Committee Members and Appropriate Information
4. Memorandum from AAAC regarding Proposals for Eliminating Barriers to Pluralism
5. Article Published in the University Record 17 April 1995, UThe Michigan Mandate: Promise and ProgressL by Professors Ronald J. Lomax, Thomas E. Moore and Charles B. Smith

C. Smith called the meeting to order at 5:25 PM.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA
The agenda was accepted without modification.

CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES
Approval of minutes of June 15th postponed was until the next meeting.

INTRODUCTIONS AND BACKGROUND OF CMU
C. Smith asked the committee members to introduce themselves and then gave a brief review of how the Committee for a Multicultural University was established. He also spoke briefly about Lester Monts' new appointment, the change from Vice Provost for Academic and Multicultural Affairs to Associate Provost for Academic and Multicultural Affairs, and the expansion of L. Monts' responsibilities entailed in that appointment (including financial aid and undergraduate admissions). Smith expressed the hope that Monts would attend the next meeting and would address his associations and commitments with the committee. C. Smith presented three key issues that might be addressed by the Committee: recruitment and retention of faculty of color, retention of students of color, and the overall "climate" of the university.

CONSIDERATION OF A FACULTY OPINION: PENDING AFFIRMATIVE ACTION LAWSUIT
C. Smith noted that four members of the Michigan House of Representatives were
attempting to initiate a class-action lawsuit against the University of Michigan similar to the Hopwood case in Texas. He suggested that the Committee might wish to formulate a "faculty opinion" should the case actually be filed. L. Kleinsmith noted that within the university faculty there is a diversity in opinion and that, therefore, there could not be a single "official" faculty opinion. R. Megginson responded by stating that silence will be seen by faculty and especially by students of color as a strong stance. C. Smith suggested that if a lawsuit does take place, a response from SACUA and/or the Senate Assembly should be immediate, hence, the draft of a response was requested. R. Megginson agreed to create a draft statement for the CMU to be reviewed at the next meeting. L. Kleinsmith suggested that a Senate Assembly resolution might support an objective rather than the means and that the committee could create a resolution that supports the recruitment goals of the University. He said that Carl Cohen, in his objections to affirmative action, objects not to the goals, but to the means by which such goals are approached, which be views as racial preference.

COMMITTEE GOALS FOR THE 1997-1998 ACADEMIC YEAR
C. Smith asked that the committee members each express their opinions with respect to the issues that should be addressed by the Committee during the coming academic year.

R. Megginson spoke about the "climate" of the university for students and faculty of color as a major issue and expressed the opinion that the maintenance of a tolerant and diverse climate should be a top priority in terms of the retention of students of color.

C. Ransom agreed that climate issues should be a top priority of the Committee as well as seeking ways to maintain a diverse faculty and student body should an unfavorable ruling result from a suit against the affirmative action practices of the University. He observed that even if there is no lawsuit, problems with affirmative action will remain. He also stated that procedures should be examined, and that alternatives should be suggested and implemented in many programs in order to create a supportive climate at the University. He gave the example of the problems encountered by low-income students and students of color in attending Freshman Orientation. Those students, who unable to attend (due to work and other commitments), were adversely affected in many ways, but specifically in class scheduling. C. Ransom, R. Megginson and S. Stone all reported that, because of these scheduling and registration difficulties, (administration closed many classes ahead of schedule) many students of color not only were dropped from or blocked from registering for many classes (Math and English specifically).

L. Kleinsmith said that, though it is too early for a "global" opinion about affirmative action, life after these lawsuits is something to think about. He said that the writing was on the wall and what the future will look like is something to consider, life without affirmative action as we know it today. He said an examination of what needs to change is in order and that the problem begins long before student reach the university level. This sparked a discussion about the fundamental role of education and what contributions the university should or could be making to the larger community. He said that the university does not support input into the K-12 curriculum/criteria. He shared the example of his involvement with setting up programs with Detroit Middle Schools and how he was
"slapped on the hand" for taking time away from his university responsibilities. The statement was made that the various units of the University, with the exception of the School of Education, did not encourage faculty to participate in outreach. C. Smith suggested that CMU find out what the University is doing to address activities of this nature.

J. Cameron spoke of preparing for life in the University should a lawsuit against affirmative action be successful. She mentioned that in the School of Nursing the separation of students is prominent. She stated that the students of color are under scrutiny and that there is very little cultural sensitivity in the classrooms. She expressed the need to keep the lines of communication open between faculty and students of color. She gave an example of the type of statements made in nursing classes that reinforce separation between cultural groups and stated that the climate is much more heated currently. She talked about a call to professors to get an historical background on the issues they present in order to have them become more sensitive in the classroom. She expressed the idea that each Nursing professor make at least one culturally sensitive comment per class meeting as a starting point for creating a more tolerant supportive climate for students of all ethnic backgrounds. She stated that issues concerning survival during the process is key.

W. Yang expressed his opinion that education is the key, that people of all races must work together, there is no other choice. He stated that being raised in another country has made him sensitive to people of all backgrounds and that it is natural to work together. He claimed that the problem may take centuries to overcome but the solution begins with the educating of students in these classrooms at this institution.

S. Stone also stated that the problems of morale and climate are key issues. She expressed concern about the retention of faculty of color. She stated that African-American women with strong credentials have been denied tenure in the English department and during the past two years professors of color have been forced to leave that department. She spoke of the distress felt by students of color with regard to the University's lack of commitment to upholding diversity. She stated that the retention of faculty of color is imperative to students.

J. McGowan agreed that education is important and that professors should make an effort to be sensitive and knowledgeable. She said that at the School of Dentistry efforts were being made to include diversity in some courses. She inquired about training/classes in how to include diversity/multicultural issues into curriculum and where a professor would go to get such materials. Two names were mentioned in this regard, Mark Chessler and Sherrie Saunders (staff position in Multicultural Programs at CRLT). In closing, it was stated that focus should be on improving the climate here at the University and on living in the time during the lawsuits and possibly after affirmative action.

C. Smith said that many faculty members are not involved in these issues and that for some there may be a commitment to diversity but ignorance of how to mentor pervades. He said the medical school was the largest unit but had a low percentage of faculty of
color. He suggested that the administration should provide an initiative. He handed out both and article and a memo and asked for committee members to read both for discussion at the next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:36 p.m. The next meeting of the Committee is scheduled for Tuesday, October 14, 1997, at 5:15 p.m. in the Conference Room of the Student Activities Building.

Respectfully submitted:

Tawna M. Dabney
Secretary, Pro Tempore