The University of Michigan
Committee for a Multicultural University
Minutes of December 12, 1996

Present: D. Deskins (SACUA Liaison), Y. Kuniyuki, R. Megginson, C. Smith (Chair), J. Su, P. Wilhelm (Secretary), W. Yang

Guest: Lester Monts, Vice Provost for Academic and Multicultural Affairs

Absent: A. Nadasen, S. Pandit, J. Salazar, Y. Wulff

Items Distributed:

1. Agenda
2. Minutes of November 21, 1996
3. Article, "Responding to Attacks on Affirmative Action"
4. Article, "A Powerful Guiding Vision at Michigan"
5. "The University of Michigan Statement on Social and Educational Diversity" by John Su

C. Smith called the meeting to order at 5:07 pm.

Approval of Agenda. There were no changes or additions to the agenda.

Announcements. There were no announcements.

Approval of the Minutes of November 21, 1996. Four changes were proposed to the minutes, and the revision was approved.

Meeting with DPSS Task Force. C. Smith announced that he had received a response from P. Boylan regarding a meeting between Task Force to Review the DPSS and members of the CMU. Smith explained that Boylan had proposed a meeting with Smith and one other member of CMU. Smith suggested that the CMU send one student, two other members, and himself to the meeting.

Smith stressed that student perspective would be important in such a meeting. He proposed that at CMU's next meeting the committee discuss those issues they want to emphasize in the meeting with the Task Force to Review the DPSS.
Continued discussion on definition of diversity. J. Su distributed to the committee a draft of a definition of diversity. He had several comments about the statement. Su explained that his statement was in part a response to various diversity definitions that the committee has looked at so far. Su expressed dissatisfaction with these earlier statements on several levels:

1. Some definitions contain the notion that there is a "one" and "another", that diversity is "otherness." In this case diversity is made a combative term. Su stressed that his statement did not include such a notion.

2. Most diversity statements do not actually offer a clear definition of diversity. Furthermore, Su explained, the Oxford English Dictionary does not even contain a definition of the term as we use it. Therefore, a definition is necessary.

Su then described various possible paths the committee could take toward a definition. On one hand, the committee could look at diversity as a notion that each individual must be diverse; or, on the other hand, it could look at diversity as relating to community.

D. Deskins suggested that one should not deal with these issues in an abstract academic way. He stressed the need for a statement that was not so removed from reality. Deskins stressed the fact that the population is changing and that the University, as a public institution, needs to respond to that reality in some way. C. Smith affirmed the value of Su's statement, saying that it would be a philosophical justification for diversity. Kuniyuki stressed that a very important portion of Su's statement was the following: "If universities remain closed to the complexities and diversities of the world, they will fail their primary responsibility of education." Kuniyuki maintained that this portion of the statement was an especially good place to start.

Megginson asked who the final audience of this statement would be. Smith answered that he would like to see the CMU come up with a statement on diversity that will move the committee off "square one" and will be acceptable to Senate Assembly. Once the Assembly has accepted it, the CMU can proceed. The statement could be distributed widely, including the world wide web. In reference to the last statement put before the Assembly, Smith said that the CMU would not give the statement to Senate Assembly with the intention of engaging in a prolonged debate.

Deskins stressed the need to go into situations like this without an attitude of compromise. He stated that one reason for this is that a compromising position will not gain attention. A second reason Deskins cited was that past failures in the area of multiculturalism and diversity have resulted from a desire not to be confrontational.

Smith asserted that Su's statement goes further than last year's statement because it explains why diversity is valuable. Smith asked the committee to continue to give comments and suggestions on the diversity definition to J. Su.
L. Monts suggested that the definition put out by the CMU include the faculty perspective with regard to issues that faculty deal with on an individual basis; namely, in the realms of classroom, research, and teaching. Monts noted that the University has yet to hear from the faculty on these things. In elaborating on some of the issues faculty need to address, Monts suggested issues of campus climate and curriculum reform. Monts gave examples of areas for faculty to consider, including promotion and tenure of faculty, and different learning styles. Smith responded to Monts, saying that the CMU was not charged to deal with those issues but that the committee is open to a charge if Monts wished to give one to the committee. Su asked Monts how the CMU might implement Monts' thoughts. Monts suggested focus groups, studies to look at progress of minority faculty, and studies of how students are progressing through certain departments. Monts said that these are only a few of the things a committee could do. Smith noted that the CMU had been charged by SACUA to prepare part of a series of position papers to give to the new president of the University.

The discussion turned to what is included in multiculturalism and diversity. D. Deskins stressed that multiculturalism includes not only minorities but also women. Smith commented that it also includes people who have diverse views and people who do not accept the University as it is. Deskins suggested that it also includes people that are ignored when they speak out.

Monts posed the question of whether the resources at the University and those channeled into diversity programs match up with the problem. With regard to the role of the CMU Monts suggested that the committee be a resource to other groups or committees in order to deal with the real problems at the University.

Old Business. C. Smith brought up the summaries of student data that Wilhelm had acquired. Smith noted that the University has not published consistent data with regard to minority enrollment. Thus, he noted, it is difficult or impossible to make comparisons over the years with the available data.

New Business. The committee took up the issue of meeting times for next year. The members agreed to stay with the same biweekly schedule, including the same time and location. The first meeting of 1997 was set for January 9.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:20 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul A. Wilhelm
Secretary to the committee