Senate Assembly Committee for a Multicultural University

Report for the academic year 2008 - 2009

The Senate Assembly Committee for a Multicultural University met seven times during the 2008 -2009 academic year. It began the year under the inspiring Chairmanship of Dr. B. J. Evans who stimulated the Committee into brisk action to review the effect of and response to the diversity report “Trends in Minority Faculty participation” (http://www.umich.edu/~sacua/cmu/CMUReport2008.pdf) prepared and released during the previous academic year. The data for the 2008 survey of minority faculty was compared with similar data for 1989 and 1994. The report was presented to and approved by Senate Assembly in April 2008. As a brief reminder key conclusions included:

Since the 1994 Report, progress in increasing minority participation in the faculty has been very different for the different minority groups and for minority groups in the different faculty ranks. Since the 1994 Report, the percentage of Black, full-time, tenure-track teaching faculty has decreased in 8 Schools and Colleges; the percentage Hispanic faculty has decreased in 3 Schools and Colleges and the percentage of Asian faculty has decreased in two Schools and Colleges.

In contrast to the positive trends since 1994 in the number of new hires, overall, for males and females, and, overall, for minority males and females, there has been no significant change in the hiring rates for Blacks and Hispanics.

With these disappointing findings the Committee felt it important to disseminate the information, to offer recommendations that might remedy the situation and to seek more information that could reveal the causes of this pattern. To these ends a number of steps were taken.

- To distribute the report at the upcoming Diversity Summit (failed, although Dr. Evans did present an outline of the report orally)
- To distribute the report at the Robert O’Neil lecture ‘Is Diversity Legal?’ (successful) and to meet with Dr. O’Neil to garner his recommendations (successful).
- To prepare an editorial contribution to the The Record summarizing the report’s findings (published April 2009 as ‘Is diversity dead?’).
- Arrange for the Committee to meet with Anthony Walesby (Office for Institutional Equity) to try and answer the following questions:

  Why does minority faculty leave this institution?
  What specific data do we have regarding minority faculty members who leave?
  How does the University account for diversity during the hiring process?
  Are there new administrative rules regarding hiring (i.e. compulsory advertising in minority journals or officially explaining why minority candidates were not hired)?

(The Committee met with Mr. Walesby April 16 2009)

A number of other investigations and activities were suggested but had not, by year’s end, been addressed.
There was a hiatus in the Committee’s activities at the end of the fall semester as Dr. Jones left the Committee. The Committee was, at least partially, resuscitated by the appointment of Dr. Holland as Chair. The Committee remained frustrated at the apparent lack of attention and activity given the diversity report by the University administration. To clarify the situation the Committee Chair met with Dr. Lester Monts to seek his advice as to how the Committee could best progress with this issue. At this and at a later meeting with the Committee Dr. Monts pointed out that his office was not the appropriate unit for the Committee to interact with and also that the faculty interest in multicultural affairs might be better served by dissolving the Committee and adding two faculty members to the Diversity Council.

The Committee discussed its charge at length and concluded that its mandate needed revision. It then passed a motion that the part of its stated purpose which currently says “To communicate regularly with and provide input from a faculty perspective to the Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and other relevant administrative groups” should be changed to “To communicate regularly with and provide input from a faculty perspective to the Senate Assembly and SACUA.” Further action on recommendations would thus, quite properly, become the responsibility of SACUA and Senate Assembly. **By way of this report the Committee asks that SACUA approve this change and bring it forward to Senate Assembly.**

Two serious issues have hampered the activities of the Committee. One is poor attendance at the Committee meetings. On average six of the twelve appointed members attended. It is suggested that SACUA take a more pro-active role in seeking more contributive members. The second is the apparent disinterest of SACUA in the activities of the Committee. No SACUA liaison was appointed this year.

The Chair of the Committee would be happy to meet with SACUA to discuss the issues contained in this report and to determine how the faculty interest in multiculturalism might most effectively be expressed.

I remain your most faithless servant

G. R. Holland

Chair, Senate Assembly Committee for Multicultural Affairs