Chair Potter welcomed everyone to the SRAC meeting.

Chair Potter suggested that we adjust the agenda to approve the minutes first before beginning the meeting topics. 2 changes were needed to be made to the minutes from the October Meeting. Dr. Nallasivam Palanisamy moved to approve the minutes contingent on the changes. Executive Associate Director Donna Hayward seconded this motion. The minutes were approved contingent to the changes.

Chair Potter called for introductions, thanked Greg Cole for sharing the tour and information about East Quad. Introductions were made around the table.

Dr. Laura Blake-Jones introduced the Theta Xi issue, introduced the students and thanked them for being at the meeting. She discussed how she was directly involved in the response to the report of behaviors. She turned it over to the students so the committee could hear their perspective, but noted that she has detailed information for context if the members need more information.

Erin Fisher began by explaining to the committee how she received a Facebook invite to a party, Hood Ratchet Thursday. She explained how she received this invitation because she was a member of a Greek organization and that many women were invited. After she received the invitation, she made the decision to email about the party. She filed an official complaint. After
the official complaint, an open, public trial was held where Theta Xi could defend themselves. They are still waiting on a verdict from that trial.

Erica Nagy went on to explain how the Daily ran an article from Erin and how there was a response to the article. She was upset by the response to Erin’s letter because the fraternity did not take personal responsibility. She went on to explain how the social justice community responded by forming meetings and open up conversation about the issue. The #BBUM movement was created to keep the conversation going. Dialogues were created amongst the Greek Life community about issues of identity.

Chair Potter commented on the article shared with the committee on micro aggressions. He commented on how it was valuable to this specific issue because people do not always set out to be offensive most of the time. He went on to explain how micro aggressions can be an important part of this learning moment because the atmosphere created is unconscious to those in it or creating it. He described how we need to learn from this in order to move forward from this to be more inclusionary.

Associate Vice President Simone Himbeault Taylor explained how this is a key example of campus climate and a key area where students and faculty can come together to create a stronger voice and add to the dialogue on the concerns around campus.

Chair Potter spoke to the students saying that often there is a tendency to have faculty and students in different places and asked what they would like to from this meeting.

Dr. Laura Blake Jones gave the committee more context as to the GARP process. The fraternity’s National council is concerned and sent representatives to work with the chapter. The chapter is small with only 24 members. The Greek community is made up of 4 councils, IFC, PanHellenic, National PanHellenic, Multi-Cultural IFC. These 4 councils are very diverse. IGR, MESA and OSCR went to IFC and did a 2 hour educational debrief. She went on to explain that more educational work needs to happen from here, and she agreed with Chair Potter that more education needs to occur on micro aggressions. Conversations need to occur on the difference between intent and impact. Work is being done on the everyday micro aggressions that occur and the impact they have on others. She reiterated that this is on-going work.

Erin Fisher reiterated that continued education needs to occur. She explained that when conversations occur with privileged students about identity they can be met with resistance. She is worried that if these conversations are met with resistance then these kinds of issues will just continue, but hopes that there will be a realization about target identities and how they affect everyday life. She went on to explain that the Theta Xi fraternity is a group of men of color, and sometimes people of color do not believe they can affect other people of color, but they can.

Brian Thomas echoed Erin’s sentiment of concern over mandatory discussions with people of privilege. He worries that if they are mandatory they will be met with resistance. He went on to discuss the Race and Ethnicity requirement and if there was pushback if it was mandatory or low attendance if it was not.
Erica Nagy continued this sentiment by saying it isn’t enough just to have a Race and Ethnicity requirement but also need a gender or other identity requirement. We run the risk of only a self-selecting group of students taking the course if we don’t make it a requirement. She also discussed how micro-aggressions happen at every level and sometimes there is a power play with faculty and staff. Students sometimes feel uncomfortable to speak-up. She gave a personal example of this from her theater class when her professor made it uncomfortable for her to say anything. She asked where she was supposed to go. Who was she supposed to talk to when the person who she should have been able to go to was making her feel uncomfortable?

Chair Potter responded saying this is a serious issue. He was on the committee for the Race and Ethnicity requirement that chose the courses, but it has not been looked at since the inception of the program, as far as he knows. He also commented that the rules aren’t necessarily stringent. He posed the question: how well are we set-up to deal with these issues?

Dr. Laura Blake Jones commented that the IGR class is ideal for this but it can only fit so many people and it is only available for LSA students. This prevents students who want to take it from being able to many times. She also discussed the Bias Response Team, as active and functioning, but still clarifying it’s role. Should it be used for curricular issues as well? More clarification is needed before they can further refine the role.

Chair Potter agreed that more robust conversation is needed about distribution requirements and departmental economics and function. Jean Krisch agreed with this sentiment.

Erica Nagy commented that while the Bias Response team exists not everyone knows it exists. If students do not know about a resource then it isn’t helpful. How should we get this information out to the students?

Chair Potter commented that often times there is information overload in the first week. Students are often times away from their families for the first time so they aren’t necessarily interested in hearing about the available resources. Maybe the information should be spread over multiple weeks in order to ensure that the information is absorbed by the students.

Erica Nagy agreed and expounded by giving an example of something that could be done with the first year students. She recommended offering bystander workshops, maybe piloting them in the Living Learning Communities.

Vice President Royster Harper stated that the goal for fall 2014 is to be ready to do the same thing on issues around identity that we do on sexuality. An online course, Community Matters, required for incoming first year students is being worked on to put in place for the upcoming fall. She is excited about this because many people are coming together to put this into place.

Dr. Laura Blake Jones explained that conversations around first year 101 are in place. This would continue the conversations being had today around extending the workshops and information around first year orientation. She said because of the size and scope it is difficult to plan, but not impossible.
Chair Potter suggested it might be more effective if 1 department doesn’t have ownership, but instead it draws on faculty and staff from different departments.

Associate Vice President Simone Himbeault Taylor expounded on this by saying there should be a student layer and faculty and staff piece, in order to ensure that the information is being disseminated properly.

Vice President Royster Harper introduced Chloe Brown to the group. Chloe has met with Provost Pollack and others to discuss the FreezeOut Forum and the work she is doing to create conversations around this issue. She thanked Chloe for coming and asked her to share her perspective on a similar issue.

Dr. Desmond Patton discussed how similar conversations are being held in social work around issues of identity and social justice. Professors have a need to quell the issue when things get uncomfortable, so a forum to bring students and faculty together to discuss this would be helpful. It would prevent this from being dealt with in silos and bring diverse groups together to discuss one central issue.

Chair Potter mentioned that the general reaction from the university is that when you have a problem throw a course at it, but we see that the Race and Ethnicity requirement has not been that effective at solving this problem.

Dr. Charles Koopman made a few points. First, we will never achieve success no matter how many courses we offer because there is not any action being taken by the university. Second, people might complain if they are required to take something in lieu of a course that they actually want to take. Third, is that sometimes it is difficult in larger classes to keep everyone comfortable.

Chair Potter responded by saying that the number of requirements does not help, especially if they are not understanding the transferable skills being acquired through participation.

Vice President Royster Harper suggested that the faculty use learning analytics to utilize the structure and requirements we already have but to integrate the lessons and skills we want our students to have.

Chair Potter commented that coming from the humanities he has to justify everything.

Laurel Ruza shared the amazing experience she had in her Race and Ethnicity requirement but that she had opted in to that experience. She also felt that this was an issue of intent vs. impact and wondered how that issue could be integrated into the classroom. She commented how learning it in a classroom and experiencing it in real life is very different and she didn’t really see the impact vs. intent until it was played out in front of her.

Erica Nagy commented that this is why everyone likes the IGR course because as people become uncomfortable they institute respectful open conversations. The model is there but people aren’t using it. How can we use the Race and Ethnicity requirement to the best of our ability? What are
the students paying for...are they paying to becoming better citizens? Students who have privilege don’t think about this everyday but others do. These courses could plant the seeds for the real life experiences.

Dr. Charles Koopman commented that the Race and Ethnicity requirement should be broader than just race and ethnicity. If you are going to plant the seeds, than it should be about everything.

Dr. Laura Blake Jones commented that the IGR courses cover all aspects of identity.

Chloe Brown discussed that the data shows those enrolled in the Race and Ethnicity requirement loved it. She says that the requirement is outdated and should be expanded to talk about all of the “isms”. The courses should also go more in depth and relate to campus climate issues in order to make it more meaningful for the students. She also discussed how when we talk about race and ethnicity we sometimes get too ambitious and cannot pull back to solve the issues that we are currently facing. She expounded this by saying that is where the intersectionality comes in but we need to make that mandated. If we can’t make IGR for the entire student body, we need to encourage faculty to utilize it more. She also said the Race and Ethnicity should be a series of requirements, like the writing requirement.

Dr. Desmond Patton asked what other spaces can we utilize to bridge the gap from the classroom to life outside of the classroom.

Chair Potter then asked Chloe to give some more information about the FreezeOut movement.

Chloe Brown explained the #BBUM tweets and how some of the experiences shared on twitter were frightening. She said alums and current students were sharing similar experiences and it doesn’t seem like the university is progressing and many students are feeling disenfranchised by UM. She commented on the lack of interaction between diverse groups and that the university needs to be more accountable for encouraging those conversations. She is not sure what will happen from this movement but was surprised by the horrible responses to the movement from other students. She asked why students can’t just be a student without having to carve out a space to feel comfortable?

Chair Potter thanked Chloe for her powerful and eloquent point. He raised the following question about classes in the first year: to what extent do they work against building community and acceptance? Is this teaching issues or the age of the students? Are we allowing the failure of community building? Where is the balance of responsibility?

Chloe Brown responded that everyone should be held accountable. She suggested summer bridge programs that allow students to take classes talk and feel safe, and that challenge students to take classes for identity development. She went on to discuss other courses that were not necessarily Race and Ethnicity requirements but brought up these issues in a constructive way. Professors should challenge students to talk about issues instead of just letting them go. Students who are feeling triggered need to acknowledge it at the time. Faculty should not rely on certain students to talk as a representative for their entire identity. This is an example of a micro-aggression that
happens daily in the classroom that people don’t know about. If these are not addressed, then people can’t get along. They aren’t able to be proactive, instead they are only reactive. The entire community should be invested in the conversations not just the outliers. We need to re-articulate what the Michigan difference is.

Dr. Desmond Patton commented that Michigan offers so many diversity programs and initiatives that other schools don’t, so where is the disconnect? Why is the practice different than the conversation?

Chair Potter expounded by asking what the roadblocks are to this?

Executive Associate Director Donna Hayward commented that maybe faculty do not know how to handle uncomfortable moments. She went on to explain how faculty are taught to teach but not how to handle difficult issues. They don’t necessarily have the skills necessary other than acknowledging the issue.

Laurel Ruza commented that it is also that white students are opting out of diversity initiatives. The word racist is hard for students to grapple with and maybe we need to re-frame how we discuss insensitivity.

Brian Thomas commented that this ties into his previous point that it is a self-selecting group of students that are taking advantage of diverse groups. We need to make it a requirement.

Dr. Charles Koopman asked if the requirement would actually change the behavior or just make them resentful.

Brian Thomas clarified and said it was more along the lines of what Vice President Royster Harper had suggested in pulling these discussions into general education requirements. Revisiting the requirements and seeing how they need to be changed.

Vice President Royster Harper further clarified by giving a personal example from a statistics class she took. The professor used examples that spoke to some kind of social identity disparity. He carefully constructed the examples to allow students to not only learn statistics but to think about identity. He snuck this into the course through examples and readings. Dr. Charles Koopman said that courses should be challenging and should look at both sides of an issue.

Chair Potter summarized that there needs to be serious rethinking of the Race and Ethnicity requirement, but that we have to cognizant of the issue of academic freedom. He suggested that maybe CRLT have the ability to help faculty institute some changes to the curriculum. The initial creation of the requirement was done in a rush so there should be a more open discussion of requirements and how courses get selected to fill it.

Associate Vice President Simone Himbeault Taylor posed the following question: what do we want in terms of the education of our students? Do we want to prepare them to be better citizens? What skills and learning outcomes do we hope to see? Is it just a reframing of the requirement?
Erica Nagy discussed that student involvement would make a big difference in these discussions since they are the ones that are experiencing this on a daily basis. She also asked how we will make sure students don’t feel alone or uncomfortable. Dr. Charles Koopman commented that there are allies and that not all faculty are unprepared. Erica agreed but said just like students; faculty can trigger these conversations and make them uncomfortable. Both Chloe and Erica gave examples of how this has happened in their classes.

Chair Potter and Vice President Royster Harper both agreed that this is not acceptable and should never happen. Vice President Royster Harper went on to say this is something that should be talked about and Chair Potter agreed. He went on to say this should never happen in a classroom, but we cannot address it if we don’t know about it. We cannot have faculty making hostile environments. Vice President Royster Harper suggested we discuss what is causing this behavior in the classroom. Chair Potter explained that there are many ways to get conversation going and this sounds like a pedagogical training issue. Dr. Desmond Patton agreed and said that PHD’s are not trained to teach.

Chair Potter said there seems to be a lot here for further discussion and hopefully we can advocate for re-examination of faculty skills and the Race and Ethnicity requirement.

Erica Nagy expressed how she was upset that there is such a disconnect between the faculty and the students.

Vice President Royster Harper commented that the committee can have a conversation on how to bridge that disconnect.

Chair Potter reiterated that we will continue to look at the nature of the requirement, nature of classroom preparation. He thanked everyone for their thoughts and time. He thanked the students for their time. He asked if there was any other business.

The committee moved to adjourn the meeting.

**Adjournment:** Meeting adjourned at 1:20 PM.

Submitted by:
Allie DeFries, SACUA Student Support