

REPORT ON THE WORK OF THE DIVERSITY AND EQUITY COMMITTEE (DEC) IN THE 2007-08 ACADEMIC YEAR

This was a busy and most productive year for the DEC, and this report seeks to outline the principal activities in which the members were involved as they continued the work of safeguarding the interests of minorities on DePauw's campus while making the campus environment a healthy habitat for all Students, Staff, and Faculty. The year was significant in that it saw the monumental work of a Campus Climate Task Force (CCTF) set up by the administration to review the progress that DePauw has made in some twenty-two years of a diversity initiative. Four members of the DEC served on the CCTF. The preliminary findings of the Task Force have been reported, and a more comprehensive report should be released in the summer of 2008. This report, which concentrates exclusively on DEC matters, will be divided into THREE parts, viz. GENERAL ACTIVITIES, PROJECTED PROGRAMS, and the CONCLUSION.

(I) GENERAL ACTIVITIES

The committee met monthly, its members drawn from students, faculty and staff. Members decided during the year to invite certain individuals with responsibilities and experiences that touch on the work of the DEC to address the committee, and to field questions on various issues of campus welfare. Details of these visits were fully recorded in the committee's minutes. Our first invitation went to Neal Abraham, Executive Vice President of the University, Vice President for Academic Affairs, and Dean of the Faculty. Neal, among other things, reminded the committee of its charge, and he invited the members to support the work of the CCTF, expand the scope of its activities on campus, and coordinate more effectively its oversight of the multicultural relations that knit students, faculty, and staff together.

Bill Tobin, Director of Institutional Research, was also invited to address the committee. Members had several questions on matters of minority recruitment and retention, and the general turnover of students and personnel. Bill gave very thoughtful answers to these inquiries. He also supplied information on DePauw's experience with international students, with matters of religious preferences, and sexual orientations, and on the challenges faced by his office in gathering information in areas where individuals are not always forthcoming.

Denise Hayes, Director of Counseling and Health Services, and the Chair of the CCTF, was also a guest of the DEC during the year. Denise took members through the work of the Task Force, invited their support, and emphasized the determination of the CCTF to come up with recommendations that would consolidate the gains in multiculturalism that

DePauw has made, while introducing new initiatives that would enhance faculty preparedness in handling diversity, and expanding curricular programming that would make students themselves better citizens of the world beyond DePauw.

To get the perspectives of younger, minority faculty that have recently joined DePauw, the DEC invited TreaAndre Russworm and Sharika Crawford, Pre-Doctoral Fellows, to relate their experiences to the committee. Both brought very thoughtful, free-flowing observations on life on campus and in Greencastle, and made several suggestions on the ways in which minority faculty life could be improved, and retention enhanced.

Diane Hightower, Dean of Student Academic Support Services, and a member of the DEC, addressed us in February. Diane spoke on the work of the Admissions Advisory Committee, and examined new approaches to student recruitment, the work of tour guides with minority, and other, high school Prospectives, and the Admission Office's work with alumni, counselors, and consultants in ensuring a diverse pool of freshmen each year. She also circulated literature from the Office of Admission.

A panel of students appeared before the DEC in its March meeting to share experience of student exposure to issues of diversity. They were:

William "Grecco" Bray, a Native American; Brandon Monson, a student that communicated the LGBTQ perspective; Ruth Nduta, a Senior from Kenya; Aretha Butler, an African American student from New York; Jon Ferguson, a student of Hispanic and Caucasian heritage; Sainabou Musa, a Junior from the Gambia, in West Africa; and Stephanie Rivera, a Latina. This was a most useful session, for the students narrated their respective experiences, touching on positives as well as negatives, and suggested measures that could be taken to make DePauw more welcoming for all students.

For the final meeting of the year, Brad Tharpe, Director of Spiritual Life, examined issues of religious diversity on campus, with many recommendations on how we could better cater to the different constituencies, and provide more effectively the varied needs of people of faith on our campus.

Besides these activities, the DEC recommended, after exhaustive discussion, that single-stall restrooms at DePauw be converted to gender-neutral units to make them more accessible to individuals with special needs. This recommendation has been forwarded to the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs. VP Abraham reported that the President's Cabinet had approved this recommendation, and that Facilities Management has begun making conversions of signs to indicate that these are gender-neutral "Restrooms."

The DEC also learnt of an incident that occurred during the year on the nearby interstate involving some minority students who had been traveling in a car with an expired license.

On being accosted by the Police, those students had their car impounded, and they were made to walk several miles to get back to campus. This incident was not reported to the DEC in a timely manner, but on learning of it, members decided they would investigate the matter more fully in the next academic year.

The DEC also took up another issue of a non-campus nature that came up during the course of the year. The son of a minority DePauw employee was involved in a racial incident in the Greencastle Middle School which was ineptly handled by the authorities. The DEC gave moral support to the Greencastle chapter of the NAACP in its representations to the school's authorities, and the matter was ultimately settled to the satisfaction of the minority employee involved in the case.

PROJECTED PROGRAMS

For the coming year, the DEC decided that it would like to explore the following subjects:

----- invite a group of multiracial employees (Staff and Faculty) that are new to DePauw to discuss their campus experience with the committee;

-----organize a panel of disabled students, staff, and faculty to share their views on DePauw with the DEC;

-----get a panel of Greek-affiliated students, including historically-Black Greeks, to discuss campus life;

-----do more to encourage attendance of the DePauw community at off-campus Jazz festivals, and make the annual Black Caucus reception, and Women of Color luncheons, regular features on the school's calendar;

-----invite a group of international students to relate their experience of DePauw;

-----do more to promote continuing education on the sexual harassment policy of the University;

-----address more directly the balance that is being maintained between the recruitment of local US minorities and international students.

CONCLUSION

All meetings saw vigorous discussion of the tabled issues, and student participation, though sometimes marred by poor attendance, was a vital component of the deliberations. A noon meeting hour did not always work for faculty with teaching obligations at that time; the committee needs to identify a more suitable hour that would ensure fuller attendance.

David Alvarez is the Chair for the coming year.

Faithfully submitted,

Mac Dixon-Fyle,

Chair of the Committee.

Committee members for the year were:

David Alvarez
Erik Barragan
Bruce Burking
Robin DiRocco
Mac Dixon-Fyle
Abderrahim Elghanmi
Jazmin Gresham (student replacement)
Jana Grimes
Sally Harvey-Koelpin
Diane Hightower
Ann Jennings
Jeannette Johnson-Licon
Landon Jones (student replacement)
James Patton
Bradley Tharpe

