

**DIVERSITY COMMITTEE
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT AND STATE AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE**

A meeting of the Diversity Committee of the Board of Trustees of the University of Vermont and State Agricultural College was held on Friday, September 8, 2006 at 1:30 p.m. in Room 428 Waterman Building.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Thomas Little, Vice Chair Ian Boyce, Claire Ayer, James Leddy, and Kami Patrizio

REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT: Alumni Representative Melissa Sandoval, Staff Representative Marilyn Eldred, and Student Representative DaVaughan Bryan

PERSONS ALSO PARTICIPATING: Executive Director of Diversity and Equity Kathryn Friedman, Associate Director of Student Life Dani Comey, Assistant Director for New Orientation Jill Hoppenjans, Director of LGBTQA Services Dorothea Brauer, and Students Ellen Hansen and Rhian Waters

Chair Little called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes of the May 19, 2006 meeting.

“The Next Step” Student Retreat on Diversity and Social Justice

Dani Comey, Associate Director of Student Life, and Jill Hoppenjans, Assistant Director for New Orientation presented a report on “The Next Step” Student Retreat on Diversity and Social Justice, a two and a half day retreat held off-campus last January. Sixty students and eighteen facilitators participated in small and large group activities in a forum in which to further develop knowledge and skills to help them become better change agents and activists around areas of racism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism, religious discrimination, classism and other identity differences.

The three goals of the retreat are: 1) to allow students to tell their own stories and hear the stories of others; 2) to provide an introduction to students that privilege and oppression intersect; and 3) to engage students to work together to build coalitions between students from different identities and life experiences. Two of the student participants, Ellen Hansen, a senior in Nursing and Health Sciences, and Rhian Waters, a senior in Arts and Sciences, shared their experiences with the Committee, and enthusiastically endorsed the program, describing how their participation was life-changing in a very positive way.

Campus Climate Survey Full Report

Dorothea Brauer, Director of LGBTQA Services and member of the Campus Climate Survey Committee, provided a presentation of the findings of the Campus Climate Survey Study

Report. There were just under 3,000 survey respondents out of a total campus population of 14,000. Although sample size and certain other statistical methodology factors limit the usefulness of the survey as a statistically reliable resource, there are valuable data that can be used to help improve the campus climate.

Understanding the survey's limitations, some findings indicate: respondents with marginalized identities (race, gender, disabilities, religion and sexual orientation) were more likely to experience offensive, hostile or intimidating conduct, were less comfortable with the overall climate at UVM, and were less confident in the university's leadership to foster diversity. Also, respondents identified negative conduct as coming from students, staff and faculty and identified negative conduct as occurring throughout campus. The Committee made a number of recommendations including involving all parts of the institution in the change process; reviewing and considering other available data; and developing a priority list of action steps.

The Office of Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity plans to disseminate the results to the entire community through a campus-wide letter including an online link to the AA/EO website. Copies of the results will be distributed to each of the President's Commissions for further analysis and discussion. Recommendations will be presented to President Fogel. A key factor will be the appointment of the Interim Vice Provost for Multicultural Affairs.

Acting President Bramley and Provost Hughes spoke about the actions that have already been taken to address climate challenges. They reinforced the institutional commitment to continue to work on the important challenges presented and identified some next steps the administration expects to take, including the actual implementation of the six credit diversity requirement for the undergraduate curriculum.

Other Business

The Committee discussed the Resolution Approving Equality Opportunity Statements and developed a consensus in support of it.

Lastly, the Chair explained the impact of the Board's expected action to restructure the Committee's of the Board: the proposal would fold the Diversity Committee and its mission into a larger committee ("Education Policy and Institutional Resources") as part of a plan to make the Board's work more effective. Trustee Rob Cioffi, Chair of the ad hoc Board committee that has developed the proposal, joined the discussion. Concerns about the ongoing integrity and strength of the Board's diversity agenda and strategic goals were aired. Committee members stressed the need for strong Trustee leadership in assuring that the agenda and goals continue to be a vibrant part of the Board's work.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas Little, Chair