

SOMC Meeting
Oct. 3, 2005

Attendance: Andy Effrat, Mike Gargano, Ernie May, Ingrid Holm, Anne L. Moore, Stephanie Luce, Mari Castaneda Paredes, Lee Edwards, Buju Dasgupta, Gianpaolo Baiocchi, Joan Roche

Subcommittee reports

1. Monitoring subcommittee has not been able to find a time to meet before now but will be meeting next week. They proposed merging with the research subcommittee, because both groups are small.
2. Research subcommittee: Anne reported that the Academic Affairs CDSJ met. Each college/school will focus on internal issues this year. Anne Herrington and Bailey Jackson (from that CDSJ group) felt that we need to talk to Esther Terry about her committee, and feel we should have a role on that committee.
3. Advocacy subcommittee met, and agreed that they need to talk to Esther Terry.

Meeting with Esther Terry

Mari (chair of SOMC) met with Esther Terry. Esther will try to have someone from her staff – Brenda Young – attend these meetings, and serve as a liaison. She gave our committee 1 copy of the report on Affirmative Action for the campus. She said that it is very loaded to talk about how to define ‘minority.’ There are at least two levels of the term, including the federal and state definitions. She said that once her office gathers more data, we can have access to it. Esther herself won’t be able to attend these meetings, but Mari will stay in regular contact with her.

Report from Andy Effrat

My position is new: it came in part out of the Chancellor’s Plan, though not solely. We all need to be concerned about these issues. I see my role as one of facilitation, especially working through the Deans. We will do some monitoring, and some data gathering. We will look at outcomes: in particular, numbers of new hires, retention and loss. But we will also look at the process: what is the composition of the search committees, how pro-active they are, how are they advertising. We want to look at the wording of ads, and go beyond the conventional working – a notch beyond the usual. We need to vigorously contact people one on one.

We will attempt to document what is going on, and look to other higher ed institutions to see how we are doing.

Question: Is it true that all search committees now have to have a person of color on them, even if it means bringing in an outside person? I was told this. In our department there are 50 faculty, and only 2 people of color – 1 of whom is new. Does this mean that I have to be on every search committee?

Yes, this is the decision. It is a Catch-22: we have a lack of diversity in the current faculty. This makes it hard to recruit new faculty. We want to have a person of color – faculty or graduate student – on every search committee. We want to look for kindred people to be on searches. But we need to balance out all the constraints we are living with.

In terms of the definition of minority: there is a particular concern that there is an under-representation of African-American and American Hispanics on campus. Gender is also a concern in some fields. People with disabilities are recognized in the definition of minority.

Question: How will we collect this data? All the data at EOD is self-reported. The data is collected for black and Hispanic, and doesn't detail where they person was born.

We will have to do the best we can. It is not perfect. We have to do some of this quick and dirty. Certain things serve as a proxy.

Question: Search committees want the official information – who counts? Who doesn't? How do international faculty count? Where does citizenship and ethnicity fit in?

International faculty do count once they get permanent residency.

Question: Have there been consultations with departments about this process, and the idea of a faculty of color on every committee? It might make no sense to have outside people on search committees. They might not know anything about the technicalities of the job and the field.

It is a Catch-22. Perhaps having someone on the search committee who is diverse could help. It helps for the candidate to see diversity at the table. My sense is that there is an enormous amount of goodwill out there about this.

We're pulling together data of likely available candidates – the availability pool. I will be working with the Deans on this. Some of this data does exist, but in some cases is not broken down by department or field.

If the availability pool is 50% and we get no applications, there is a problem. If the pool is only 1%, it is a different story.

Question: Is there some baseline data that we can have access to?

All the data is on-line. It is not broken down by ALANA – only black and Hispanic.

[Mari noted that she has a hardcopy of the report, and will have a copy sent to each of us.]

“Diversity tax” and Special opportunity hires

There is a lack of clarity on this issue. We discussed the fact that the Chancellor’s Plan called for a diversity tax on colleges, to hire diverse faculty. The colleges have been taxed. There should be up to \$600,000 available from this tax, but no one is clear about where that money went. The Deans asked this at the Sept. 1 meeting. There is no clear answer – no one knows where the money went!

In the past, some departments were able to appeal to the Provost to do special opportunity hires. Some say this was skirting the edges of legality. Others noted a strong frustration with the process: they had highly qualified applicants, but the Provost would not approve a search, or not move quickly enough, and the candidate would go elsewhere. Psychology lost two strong faculty this way – people of color that were very strong in their field.

These kinds of hires, when done poorly, just further isolate faculty of color, and make them feel like “add-ons.” But it can be done well. Unfortunately, the UMass bureaucracy is too slow and clunky to do this well.

We discussed the idea of having permanent lines, and on-going open searches – that would allow strong departments to hire people if they come along.

However, some mentioned that the goals of the administration are unclear, and at odds internally. Lombardi’s corporate model and the Provost’s top-down approach may be incompatible with departments being allowed to move quickly to hire good people.

Undergrad issues

Mari asked Mike Gargano what services are available for undergrad ALANA students, and how the students are notified about these. Gargano went through the steps his office takes to notify students about services. Mari asked if there is a URL to send students to: she was directed to the Center for Student Development web site, where all the services are housed.

NEXT MEETING: NOVEMBER 7