

EQUITY, ACCESS & DIVERSITY  
MINUTES OF MEETING  
OCTOBER 28, 2002

[In these minutes: Approval of September 23, 2002 Minutes, Issues Faced by the Office For University Women and the University Women of Color Council, CLE Update, EAD Review Update]

[These minutes reflect discussion and debate at a meeting of a committee of the University of Minnesota Senate or Twin Cities Assembly; none of the comments, conclusions or actions reported in these minutes represent the views of, nor are they binding on, the Senate or Assembly, the Administration or the Board of Regents.]

PRESENT: Mary Lay, Chair, Beverly Balos, Shezwae Fleming, Rose Blixt, Don Cavalier, Julie Sweitzer, Stacey Aronson, Eric Burgess, Carol Chomsky, Margaret Moss, Srilata Zaheer, Vanessa Bailey, Nena Fox

REGRETS: Jeffrey Roberts

ABSENT: Sallye McKee, Jacquelyn Zita

OTHER(S): Joas Petithomme

GUEST(S): H. Jeanie Taylor, Charlotte Voight, Tina Jackson, Lori Young-Williams, Jaki Cottingham-Zierdt, Felecia Franklin, Nasreen Mohamed, May yer Ly, Huanna Sullivan-Jansen

I). Committee members unanimously approved the amended September 23, 2002 minutes.

II). Professor Lay welcomed guests from the Office of University Women and the University Women of Color Council. H. Jeanie Taylor, Director, Office for University Women, introduced those in attendance: Charlotte Voight, Assistant Director, Office for University Women; Tina Jackson, Interim Coordinator, Minnesota Women's Center; and members of the University Women of Color Council - Lori Young-Williams, Felecia Franklin, May yer Ly, Jaki Cottingham-Zierdt, Huanna Sullivan-Jansen and Nasreen Mohamed.

Ms. Taylor provided members with the history of the Office for University Women which grew out of the University's Commission on Women. It was noted that the University of Minnesota has had a long-term commitment to women's issues dating back as far as 1960. During the mid 1990's, the Commission on Women went through a series of transitions that led to the formation of the Office for University Women. Central to this change was the acknowledgement of the importance of having an office that addressed the needs of all University women.

Two major goals of the Office for University Women over the past couple years have been:

1. Raise the visibility of gender equity issues.
2. Reinforce connections with individuals across all campuses.

The office strives to balance community building efforts and efforts toward institutional change. It is the OUW's philosophy that its community building efforts lead directly to this institutional change.

Next, Ms. Voight described two on-going partnerships as well as two new initiatives the office has undertaken. The two on-going partnerships are:

- University Women of Color Council (UWOC)
- Civil Service and Bargaining Unit Women's Initiative (CS/BU Women's Initiative)

The Civil Service and Bargaining Unit Women's Initiative grew out of the Commission on Women. This initiative is devoted to addressing both the community-building and networking needs of Civil Service and Bargaining Unit women on campus as well as the present institutional change in professional development needs of CS/BU women. During 2001 – 2002, the CS/BU Women's Initiative sponsored several events that were very well attended.

The two new initiatives for '02/'03 include:

- The Women's Organization of Graduate and Professional Students, a campus-wide group of graduate women from various disciplines and colleges with a dual mission of promoting professional development and support for graduate student women.
- An unnamed anti-racist working group/task force in partnership with the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action is exploring how women on campus can work together on institutional change around issues of racial justice and racism.

Ms. Taylor distributed a handout that outlined the pressing issues for 2002 – 2003 faced by the Office For University Women (OUW). Additionally, the handout included ideas for the Senate Committee on Equity, Access and Diversity on ways to support OUW. Pressing issues include:

1. Conduct an evaluation of the Minnesota Women's Center. The goal is to create a dynamic center for women students in the 21<sup>st</sup> century by evaluating the Center's mission, programs and structure. The Minnesota Women's Center deals with undergraduate women's issues. For additional information concerning the Minnesota Women's Center and this or other initiatives contact Tina M. Jackson, Interim Coordinator, at (612)626-8241 or via e-mail at [jacks101@umn.edu](mailto:jacks101@umn.edu)

2. Measuring and preserving gender equity by:
  - a. Conducting a campus-wide climate survey of all faculty and staff.
  - b. Administering a University-wide gender audit.
  - c. Drafting an equity impact statement for new University policies.
3. Improve the University's parental leave policy.
4. Provide platforms for gender issues. The Senate Committee on Equity, Access and Diversity could help OUW find other venues where these and other issues of diversity are on the agenda at the University.
5. Improve OUW's resources and staffing. During the transition from the Commission on Women to the Office for University Women, financial resources as well as staff were lost.

Next, Jaki Cottingham Zierdt provided members with background on the University Women of Color Council (UWOC). Throughout the years this group has had several fits and starts, and, as a result, maintaining momentum around issues concerning women of color on campus has been difficult. One of the problems in the past that hampered UWOC's progress was that its efforts typically resided within the energy of only a very few of its constituents. With this in mind, the University Women of Color has reorganized itself in order to avoid this problem in the future. The University Women of Color infrastructure has been designed to resemble a council format with shared leadership. Every council member has a piece of the leadership with UWOC organizing itself in action circles. Current action circles are: communications, development, hot topics, marketing and mentoring. The organizational design allows any group of women with a particular interest to form their own action circle. Action circles intersect with each other as well as the council. Each council member has a responsibility to be a facilitator of at least one action circle.

Ms. Cottingham-Zierdt distributed the University Minnesota Women of Color's vision and mission statement. Basically, it is UWOC's goal to focus on addressing and meeting with and on behalf of all women of color on campus. Regardless of why women of color are on campus, the goal is make these individuals feel supported, affirmed and connected. This year UWOC plans to be more action-oriented compared to last year when the organization focused on identifying resources and ways to connect. For 2002 – 2003, UWOC plans to move their agenda forward and take action to help women of color succeed at the University of Minnesota. The single unifying theme for the various action circles as well as the Council as a whole is the retention of women of color. The University Women of Color believes that issues of mentoring, professional development, and promotion need to be addressed in order to retain women of color.

The University Women of Color serves students, faculty and staff women of color. There are some issues specific to women of color and not all women in general. It was noted that issues that typically impact all women tend to impact women of color on a much broader scale.

Each of UWOC's representatives took turns passionately sharing their concerns facing University women and University women of color in particular. A request was made that

EAD be responsible and accountable for supporting UWOC and help them further their efforts and initiatives. There is great hope on the part of UWOC that they can work with EAD towards a common cause.

As a starting point, UWOC requested that EAD take an active role to help ensure that women of color on campus be allowed to participate in UWOC. Oftentimes women of color at the University are in non-privileged positions and it can be virtually impossible to get release time to attend events and professional development activities. A goal of UWOC is to pull together a variety of programming and networking resources so women of color can earn their degrees and prepare themselves to move to the next level at the University. If women, however, are refused release time to take advantage of these opportunities nothing will change and no progress will be made.

Eric Burgess asked UWOC representatives what else EAD can do to help? Because issues of retention are central to UWOC's mission it was suggested that whatever influence EAD has available them be used to advance UWOC's retention initiative. The University Women of Color Council suggested that EAD could:

- Draft of a resolution to support release time for professional development activities.
- Prepare the groundwork to facilitate a policy change to clear the way so women of color as well as all University employees can better themselves.
- Work to change union contract language to clearly define policies governing bargaining unit employees' rights related to release time for professional development.

While anecdotally it is obvious that women of color have higher termination rates than other employee groups at the University, it is virtually impossible to get statistics to quantify this theory. Currently, gender, race and ethnicity do not intersect on a form, making capturing this data impossible. The University Women of Color realize it is only a matter of time, however, before the numbers to support this hypothesis will be available but UWOC cannot wait and is taking action now.

An EAD member supported UWOC's efforts around making professional development opportunities available to those in less privileged positions. A recommendation was put forward that the University put in place an accelerated undergraduate program similar to that offered by many private institutions and smaller universities. Along these lines, it was noted that the University of Minnesota has never been a very welcoming place for non-traditional or part-time students.

Unfortunately, the attitude of promoting the better good and access for all that should be pervasive at the University is missing. Professor Lay explained that EAD does have the power to suggest and review policy. A first step would be to identify the current release time policy, review it and make recommendations for change. Besides the ability to take classes at the University the policy needs to take into account other activities that promote professional development such as The Women's Leadership Institute, The

Emerging Leaders Program, and the ability to sit on search committees, to mention a few. The current University policy related to taking classes stipulates “educational leave for not more than four hours per week (or more if make-up schedule for additional time is approved by supervisor) to be used for such purposes as attending class on a Regents’ Scholarship; allows employees up to 4 hours/week at the supervisors discretion.”

A UWOC representative suggested that the issues of retention and professional development discussed today be brought forward to the administration for support. Retention and professional development endeavors are as important and should be given the same resources afforded other campus-wide initiatives such as the Community Fund Drive, etc.

Earlier this year committee member, Vanessa Bailey, had a conversation with David Johnson, Departmental Director, Employee Assistance Program, concerning what can be done to make supervisors more accountable in terms of creating a welcoming environment in order to retain employees. Ms. Bailey volunteered to continue her conversation on this topic with Mr. Johnson who is very passionate about the issue of retention.

In closing, Ms. Taylor hoped that today’s conversations do not stop here because they represent only a small fraction of the issues facing women and women of color at the University. Ms. Taylor is confident that there are many ways in which EAD can make a difference on behalf of the Office for University Women and the University Women of Color Council.

Professor Lay asked members to reflect on what they heard today and to decide how best to proceed. A subcommittee was formed to draft questions for Vice President of Human Resources, Carol Carrier, who is scheduled to address the committee at its February 12, 2003 meeting. Vice President Carrier will speak about the administrative review process and the role diversity plays in that process. Today’s presentation segues nicely into issues that will be discussed at the February 12<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Because the last time a comprehensive employee survey was conducted was in 1997, Professor Lay also requested Julie Sweitzer, Director, Office of Equal Opportunity and H. Jeanie Taylor, Director, Office for University Women draft a statement in support of such a survey that the committee can endorse. A comprehensive employee survey would help to facilitate the work for EAD by quantifying human resource issues related to equity, access and diversity. In the meantime, Professor Lay agreed to investigate the path this statement should take once completed and approved by the committee.

Eric Burgess requested information on alternative degree programs, distance learning and professional development opportunities for employees of the University. Professor Lay charged Renee Dempsey, Senate staff, with collecting and distributing this information to members.

### III). OLD BUSINESS:

- Professor Lay asked that members take time to review the University's Faculty/Staff Diversity Report provided by Julie Sweitzer. It was noted this report will be used as a resource tool for future committee conversations.
- Professor Lay noted that through her conversations with Laurel Carroll and Rick McCormick she has been told that the Council for Liberal Education's (CLE) review of undergraduate courses with a liberal education/cultural diversity theme is going well. In a separate but related conversation, Professor Lay discovered that the Center for Teaching and Learning Support Services offers faculty information and assistance ranging from developing a course module to designing an entire course if requested. Because these two entities were unaware of each other, Professor Lay took the liberty of introducing them in hopes they can work together to expand the number of courses with cultural diversity content available to undergraduate students.
- It has been confirmed that EAD will be reviewed. To help prepare, Ms. Dempsey, Senate staff, will provide committee members with the charge to the EEOWC (Equal Employment Opportunities for Women Commission) because EAD has absorbed some of their duties.
- There was no new information to provide the committee on previous conversations concerning the possibility of offering a multi-cultural minor and certificate program or taking advantage of the press to raise aware on issues of equity, access and diversity. Professor Lay announced that anyone interested in taking the lead on either of these initiatives by setting up a subcommittee is more than welcome to do so. Otherwise, these issues will be postponed for now.
- Because other committees such as SCFA, the Social Concerns Committee and the Workplace Steering Committee have all indicated an interest in investigating the faculty and staff childcare issue, EAD will not currently pursue this matter.
- At the bottom of the agenda, Professor Lay brought to the committee's attention the definition of cultural diversity used by the Council for Liberal Education (CLE) when it reviews new courses and re-certifies old courses. This definition had been requested by one of the committee members.

### IV). OTHER BUSINESS:

- A member expressed a desire that the committee conduct a swat analysis to get a better sense of its direction. In response, it was noted that because the committee is still fairly young it will probably spend a significant amount of time continuing to gather information this year. Hopefully, however, discreet tasks with tangible results will be accomplished along the way, thus allowing the committee to feel more satisfied.
- Ms. Sweitzer noted that the Social Concerns Committee is scheduled to discuss a proposal to divest of all University held stocks in Israel at its November 4, 2002 meeting. This topic has real equity, access and diversity implications.

- A subcommittee was formed to look into the possibility of the University offering a multi-cultural minor and certificate program. Subcommittee members included Vanessa Bailey, Shezwae Fleming and Dr. Sallye McKee.

Professor Lay reminded members that Athletics Director, Joel Maturi, will attend the November 25, 2002 EAD meeting. Mr. Maturi will speak to the men and women's athletics merger.

V). Hearing no further business, Professor Lay adjourned the meeting.

Renee Dempsey  
University Senate