

University of Minnesota
Office for Multicultural and Academic Affairs

C.O.P.E Cultural Diversity Committee Report
December 11, 2002

Members present included: Sallye McKee (Multicultural/Academic Affairs); Karen Anderson, (Multicultural/Academic Affairs); Fred Smith, (Coordinator, Center for Urban and Regional Affairs); Jenny Keyser, (Associate Director, CYFC); Juavah Lee, (Asian/Pacific Learning Resource Center); Not present: Shane Price, (Program Director, Hennepin County Planning/Development); Liz Wielling (Faculty member in department of Family Social Science)

Committee Charge:

- Consider the implications of cultural diversity for research, teaching, and community connections
- Develop practical proposals for enhancing diversity as an aspect of the engaged university

Vision (Committee Goals):

Strengthen the covenant of the land grant mission through cultural diversity

- Think about the needs of the multicultural community:
 - Health issues (e.g., diabetes project);
 - Family life and school achievement;
 - Economic development;
 - Selected legal services;
 - The digital divide; and
 - Create new ways of talking about diversity and civic engagement.
- Access the resources within C.O.P.E. that will help us to:
 - Develop an interactive website addressing the needs of diverse communities;
 - Develop community-based interactive map listing resources in each neighborhood;
 - Build on existing databases to identify University resources;
 - Engage multicultural nonprofit organizations to plan for celebrations that mark national and local milestones in improving civic engagement. For example the 50th anniversary of the 1954 Supreme Court Decision Ending Legal Discrimination in 2004; and
 - Enhance student success through technical systems that help students of color to:
 - Build stronger partnerships with financial aid in order to educate students;
 - Explore the feasibility of a pilot demonstration “Stop Out” program with the goals of:

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- Providing exit counseling for students of color who leave the University before graduation;
- Increasing student retention if the exit counseling is used as a tool to inform students about their options, e.g., financial aid resources, course enrollment issues, personal counseling resources;
- Develop a strong program that informs the University as to problem areas and how to correct them;
- Build on civic engagement programs and actively encourage students of color to participate; outcomes from several national studies suggest that student retention and graduation rates increase when students work in the community.
- Survey communities of color about what they want and expect from the U of M, as well as the strengths and contributions of what they have to offer in the area of civic engagement. The subcommittee thought that we should identify the existing University-community partnerships that have strong relationships with communities of color and ask them to help with this assessment, and in general with the broad goal of understanding the intersection between civic engagement and cultural diversity from the points of view of both the community and the University.

Future Projects (or Next Steps)

- Explore the development of an information resource for diverse communities from the ranks of retired UMN faculty and staff; the proper training coupled with the dedication and knowledge of our retirees, would result in a valuable resource.
- *“Minnesota nice; making Minnesota better”*: working title for Sallye McKee’s proposal that plan programming with the goal of actively working towards a better understanding and implications of the ethos/philosophy of *Minnesota Nice* from diverse, multicultural frameworks.
- Campus and community celebrations of diverse civic engagement.
- Identify existing University-community partnerships that have a primary or secondary focus on cultural diversity in research, teaching and outreach and enlist their assistance with developing practical proposals for enhancing cultural diversity as a component of the University’s commitment to civic engagement. (This might mean we would pass through small amounts of funds to four or five programs that can help us survey students and community groups, try a few new approaches, and find out where value can be added to what is already working.)

Additional Information

- Liz Wieling (faculty member in the department of Family Social Science) was not present, but has accepted our invitation to serve on the subcommittee. Her participation is important as she will be the only faculty member on our group and faculty leadership is an essential component of moving forward our work. We have also discussed adding an undergraduate and graduate student for similar reasons.

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