

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Duluth Campus

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To: Bilin Tsai, Associate Vice Chancellor of Academic Administration
From: Susan Maher, Dean, College of Liberal Arts
Re: Unit Change Team Report
Date: 4 May 2011

The College of Liberal Arts Unit Change (CLAUCT) Team started meeting in the spring semester of 2011. We held two meetings, and most of the eighteen members, comprised of students, staff, and faculty members who were nominated by their department heads, attended. These members are: Susan Maher (dean), Jason Ford (faculty), Susan Peralá-Dewey (faculty), Cindy Christian (staff), Runa Das (faculty), Hannah Bengston (student), Jake Caceres (faculty), Joe Gill (student), Suzanne Bonomo (staff), Suzanne Lyndon (staff), Ken Risdon (faculty), Krista Twu (faculty), Laura Stolle Schmidt (staff), Michael Duvall (student), Milan Kovacovic (faculty), Qiang Fang (faculty), Rebecca de Souza (faculty), and Amnessa Kemna (student).

Meeting One: 29 March 2011

During this meeting, the group introduced themselves, and Njoki Kamau, who represents CLA on the Campus Change Team, and Bilin Tsai, Co-chair of this group, provided handouts on the Change Team structure at UMD and other information on the larger efforts to create a more inclusive climate on the UMD campus.

The group shared perspectives on the need to advance cultural change at UMD and agreed to prepare three assignments for the next meeting of the group in April:

- a) **Look at the two words "diversity/inclusivity" and provide some working definitions for them. Do you prefer one term over the other, and if so, why?**
- b) **Begin a study of your program's curriculum, and if you have time, look over the college curriculum. Do you feel that your program is doing an excellent/good/adequate/inadequate job of providing courses that address the complexity of the U.S. and the world that our students will need to negotiate and that you and your colleagues are studying?**
- c) **Examine what events occur during the year for your department. Do they address this national and global complexity? What about college events like Welcome Week? Since most event programming is in departments/centers/institutes, should we consider an all-encompassing college event?**

Meeting Two: 12 April 2011

During this meeting, members shared their comments on their assigned questions. The first assignment, on diversity and inclusivity, provided a lively, interesting, and complex discussion that took nearly 90 minutes of our time. The group clearly preferred the connotations of inclusivity, and that consensus signified an important starting point for strategic planning during AY12.

Because we spent so much time on diversity/inclusivity, I asked members to review their department-specific web pages and to make recommendations to departments, to CLA tech support, and to me on improvements to content. Over the summer, Peter and I can work with programs to add visual materials that help articulate inclusiveness. Departments will look into any textual changes to their web pages, course descriptions, and other materials that reflect curriculum.

AY12

The CLA Unit Change Team will meet again in early fall 2012. We will add an alumna member, from Women's Studies. Molly Larson will contact members in early September to establish a first meeting. At this meeting, I will give the committee its charge: the CLAUCT will select co-chairs, members will be working on a section of the CLA strategic plan, and members will determine other actions and changes to recommend to the dean, associate dean, and department heads for implementation. Though I organized the spring 2011 meetings, I will step back from any leadership so that the CLAUCT will have autonomy. I told members that I would be happy to attend any or all meetings, if members wanted me there.

The CLAUCT made these recommendations for next year. First, they have asked me to speak with Paula Peterson in Psychology about a series of workshops next year for CLA members (students, faculty, and staff). The CLAUCT would like to sponsor some "difficult dialogues" to help CLA community members develop effective communication and listening skills when it comes to the hard work of changing attitudes, habits, entropy, and other obstacles in understanding difference.

Second, the group thought that developing a virtual library could be a useful resource for college members. Peter Angelos will help the team organize such a digital library collection.

Conclusion

While the CLAUCT's work this spring was brief, I am confident that members of this change team will work well together to articulate a vision for the college, to recommend events, changes, and actions for the college, and to make a real effect on the climate of our CLA community.