

President's Commission on Affirmative Action Final Report 2005

Submitted by Cindy Meneghin, Vice Chair

At the first meeting of the President's Commission on Affirmative Action (PCAA) for the 2004-2005 academic year, President Susan A. Cole described Montclair State University as committed to diversity, having established our commitment to equal opportunity and diversity throughout our campus community, but that we now need to focus on protecting and nurturing that diversity. Dr. Cole also charged the PCAA to action. Using the resources available through our own membership, and through the support of senior administration, she called on us to gather information and take appropriate steps. Those steps could include taking direct action when possible, and through the resources available, or by submitting recommendations to appropriate offices.

This report details the issues presented to the PCAA during the 2004-2005 academic year and all responses and any actions taken or recommendations made, divided by subcommittees, submitted by respective chair(s).

Executive Committee:

The PCAA is perhaps the most diverse commission or committee on campus, with representation from academic, administrative, caucuses, and student organization constituencies, with a great diversity of gender, ethnic, race, age, culture, orientation, abilities at one table. The Commission meets once a month during the academic year. Subcommittees are: Executive, Education, Mentoring, and Recruitment and Retention. All Commission members are committed to at least one subcommittee. The meeting dates and approved minutes, as well as a list of current members, is available on the PCAA Website: www.montclair.edu/pcaa.

Meetings

Attendance to our monthly Commission meetings was up approximately 51% from the previous year with an average of 26.5 members attending meetings. We began recording constituency representation in an effort to assure well-rounded attendance and equal voice at the meetings. (See attached for details).

Readings

A vital part of our Commission's work is our own education and enlightenment. One vehicle used is the group discussion of a relevant reading. This year we asked members to recommend readings for the Commission and to lead the discussion. The lively and very informative discussions to current events were highly successful. The readings are listed in minutes. (See www.montclair.edu/pcaa/minutes.html for links to the monthly minutes.)

Minutes

As in the past, the approved minutes of each full Commission meeting are posted on the PCAA Website. This year, in an attempt to engage the campus community more fully, the PCAA also emailed the campus a reminder about the approved minutes available on the Web, with an invitation to read the minutes and the list of constituency representation. This was done to encourage interaction between the members of the constituencies and their representatives. We will continue this communication effort in the future.

Affirmative Action Day

A major event provided through the PCAA is the campus community's recognition and celebration of Affirmative Action Day. This year a major undertaking was accomplished by the PCAA that included bringing a national figure to the campus as our keynote speaker, as well as coordinating a panel of highly respected state figures in the work of affirmative action, and the participation of over 30 MSU organizations in a full-day event.

The theme this year was "The Politics of Affirmative Action." The day began with a panel discussion with panelist Dr. Brigid Harrison, associate professor, Political Science, MSU; Ms. Michele C. Meyer-Shipp, Esq, director, Division of EEO/AA, NJ Dept. of Personnel; Ms. Nancy Hicks, assistant to president for Affirmative Action and Ethnical Standards, Richard Stockton College; and Mr. Luis Rodriguez, associate dean of Library Services, MSU. The Panel Discussion was broadcast via teleconference to The College of New Jersey (TCNJ) and The University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (UMDNJ), Stratford campus, and was available via live Web stream on the MSU campus.

The afternoon brought our traditional flag raising followed by a lunchtime gathering in the Student Center ballrooms where 32 campus organizations were represented at table displays for attendees to visit.

Political strategist Donna Brazile was our keynote speaker. The address was held in Kasser Theater with between 250-300 in attendance. A DVD of the address is now available for loan on reserve at Sprague Library.

Many academic and administrative departments, and campus organizations provided monetary support, and many individuals provided huge personal support in time and effort to make this day the success it was. While all aspects of the Affirmative Action Day were very successful, in an effort to improve upon this year, the Executive Committee is recommending that the panel discussion be held in the fall semester, while the flag raising, lunchtime and keynote address events remain in the spring semester. Also, coordination of the keynote address with academic departments, clubs and organizations and with the Kasser Theater's programming will begin this summer to better facilitate the event both in scheduling and for monetary support.

Budget

The annual budget of \$5,000 was supplemented with various contributions from various departments and clubs/organizations toward our Affirmative Action Day speakers and costs associated with the reception events. The remainder of the budget was dedicated to costs related to the 2004 Advance and monthly meeting refreshments (we have and will continue to carefully review with Russ Muter's office appropriate use of funds). A detailed report is attached.

Adhoc Committee on Parking and Transportation for People with Disabilities

The issue of available parking on campus for people with disabilities was brought to the PCAA in the 2003-2004 academic year. This year the PCAA formed an Adhoc Committee to investigate the issue and provide recommendations to the full Commission. In the investigation it was found:

1. The University meets all requirements for available parking spaces for people with disabilities.
2. While the number of spaces meets requirements, the location of those spaces are limited to the outer areas of the campus.
3. Current procedures for those who need transportation from those outer areas to locations within the center of campus are inconsistent at best. Several reports of non-response to requests or several hours in delay for service were noted.
4. The policies and practices that relate to parking and transportation for those with disabilities were not easily found and were incomplete.

While MSU is following the letter of the law, the actual information, policies, practices and services related to parking and transportation for those with disabilities is insufficient to the spirit of MSU's commitment to accessibility and unsupportive of our effort to open our campus to our community and the greater community.

The Adhoc Committee has made two recommendations:

1. That documentation about the law, policies and procedure be improved.
2. That some form of shuttle service be a regular route on the main part of campus.

The recommendations (see attached) include editing of the Transportation and Parking Services Web documentation and the investigation of small vans for a campus shuttle route. The Adhoc Committee reached out to the Procurement Office for information about possible vehicles. V.P. Hain brought our recommendations to Transportation and Parking and the PCAA is awaiting their response.

Bias Response

At our November Commission meeting V.P. Pennington spoke with us about a free speech issue precipitated by an incident on campus that raised concern among some of the PCAA constituencies. V.P. Pennington explained the policies and procedures

implemented by MSU and also informed us of a Bias Response training program to be created. The PCAA is very pleased to participate as a focus group at our May 25 Advance, for the forming of a Bias Response Taskforce, with whom the PCAA would like to form a close working relationship.

Education Committee:

James Harris, Chair

The Education Committee had a very productive Academic Year 2004-2005. Consistent with strategic goals decided at the 2004 Affirmative Action Advance, the Education Committee concentrated on informing the President's Commission on Affirmative Action and the Montclair State University Community about the evolving dynamics of Affirmative Action in general and in higher education specifically.

During the fall semester the committee focused on planning for "Conversation on Affirmative Action 2004". Planning meetings involved decisions regarding responsibilities for confirming speakers for the program, publicity, co-sponsorship and funding. The program was designed to update the campus community about the importance of Affirmative Action.

The "Conversation on Affirmative Action" program was successful because it attracted a diverse group of faculty, students, administrators, librarians and support staff.

The second project engaged by the Education Committee was promotion of Affirmative Action Day 2005, which was held Thursday, March 3, 2005. The theme was "The Politics of Affirmative Action" and featured guest speaker Ms. Donna Brazile, a Student Activities Fair and a teleconference. (See details above.)

The Education Committee was successful in helping to recruit co-sponsors and disseminate publicity about the program throughout the campus using, fliers, posters, email and word of mouth. Affirmative Action Day 2005 was the most successful event ever sponsored by the PCAA.

The third activity initiated by the Education Committee involved use of Graduate Assistants at Montclair State University. Research is now being developed with a view toward increasing the number of students of African and Latino/a ancestry in the Graduate School and in the Graduate Assistantship Program.

Mentoring Committee:

Margaree Coleman Carter, Co-chair

Esmilda Abrue, Co-Chair

Goals and Objectives:

A. The committee's goals this year included Identifying a target group or groups for participation in an on campus mentoring program. Women at MSU were selected as a pilot group.

B. Explore strategies and methods to gather mentoring needs of the target group.

C. Continue to familiarize ourselves and the PCAA about the formal and informal mentoring programs on/off campus.

The following groups and their mentoring components were identified for review by the committee, ACE/NET, The Brotherhood and the SGA/Organization Advisors

Accomplishments:

In November 2004, submitted a reading and at the December 2004 meeting, the committee lead a discussion on “Mentoring.” The article written by Holly M. Hull generated much discussion regarding traditional and contemporary views on mentoring. Also, the number and variety of informal mentoring program taking place on campus were discussed.

The ACE/ NET program was revitalized in the fall semester. Esmilda Abreu and Carole Lange were instrumental in resurrecting and structuring this important program for women at MSU. Co-Chair, Margaree C. Carter serves on the MSU ACE/NET Advisory Board.

In late January 2005, the committee initiated the first “Thank Your Mentor Day” activity on campus. The campus community was encouraged to send MSU E- Cards to persons who they consider mentors in their life. It’s estimated that a significant portion of the e-cards sent during that period were for Mentoring Day. (Approximately, 562 cards were sent)

Also, Orville Morales, President of LASO, reported the development of a mentoring program with local schools (k-12) by Lambda Sigma Upsilon Fraternity.

February 2005, the committee assisted in the advertising and support of the successful Affirmative Action Day program with Donna Brazile.

March 2005, the formation of the Women’s Caucus at MSU was announced to the campus community. The kick off meeting was held on March 22, 2005. Through the efforts and hard work of Esmilda Abreu, Carole Lange and supporters, the caucus has had three meetings and generated interest among women on the campus.

Finally, the Mentoring Committee met regularly throughout the semester. Special thanks to the 2004-2005 committee members, members of the PCAA and Executive Committee for their support and encouragement this year.

Goals for 2005-2006:

A. Expand “Thank your Mentor Day” to include more E-card choices. Create a photo Gallery of MSU Mentor- Mentee Pairs. Sponsor a small reception for participants. Repeat program twice a year.

B. Work with PCAA and Human Resources to create a questionnaire concerning mentoring needs.

C. Create a comprehensive list of formal and informal mentorship opportunities at MSU.

Recruitment and Retention Committee:

AJ Kelton, Co chair

Ofelia Rodriguez-Srednicki, Co Chair

Quinn Vega, Co chair

In Academic Year 2005, the President's Commission on Affirmative Action (PCAA) Recruitment and Retention Committee met with individual caucuses to discuss the committee report from the previous year. Each caucus was asked to focus on the most important actionable item from the previous year's report. Shown below is a summary of the requested items including the need for the particular item.

GLFSA

Actionable Item: Resource Center for the GLBT population at MSU, including faculty and staff. Center would involve both space and staffing.

Reason: They serve as safe spaces where GLBT people can bring issues to light; they program events for both the GLBT and general population; they refer campus members to GLBT community services and organizations; they unofficially monitor campus climate and recommend solutions should problems affecting the GLBT population arise; they constitute a social gathering place for likeminded individuals. GLFSA and SPECTRUMS since they are both obliged to attend full-time to school- and work-related priorities, do not have the time and resources to accomplish what a staffed resource center can. Such a resource center would be a boon for both the GLBT community at MSU and the general population because it would join the ongoing campus dialog on the need for full acceptance of differences among individuals and groups that can enrich communities.

Additional Information: Both Syracuse and Rutgers University have resource centers. Additional information concerning GLBT centers can be found at www.lgbtcampus.org/resources/index.html.

APIC (Asian Pacific Island Caucus)

Actionable Item: An Interdisciplinary Academic Conference that focuses on Asia.

Reason: Such a conference could involve both students and faculty in an academic environment that would have some prominence on campus. Moreover, such a conference would bring the scholarly achievements of MSU APIC scholars -- many of whom present at national conference and have national reputations -- to the attention of the MSU campus.

This initiative would help recruitment in that many students and faculty from the region would see an annual (or bi-annual) commitment to scholarly appreciation of this region. Moreover, highlighting this academic strength would complement the strong student organizations already on campus (Chinese Students Club, Japanese Students Club, Indian Cultural Club, Unified Asian American Students Organization).

Similarly, in terms of retention, an academic conference would, on a regular basis, emphasize the university's commitment to APIC students and faculty. Moreover, by highlighting the academic strengths of the APIC faculty, both faculty and students will feel that MSU will continue to be a good home for both.

The theme of such a conference might be, in its initial conception, "Celebrating Asia." (This modeled on the ways that the nascent South Asia program at Yale University is using a similar conference to draw visibility to its South Asian students, faculty, and programs.) Later themes may be: Containing Global Terrorism: An Asian Perspective, Spiritual Techniques and Productivity Growth, Economic Liberalizations and Socio-economic Trends: Asian Experience, Alternative Medicines and Intellectual Property Rights.

We feel that for such a conference to be effective we would need to draw on not only our own faculty but to invite distinguished scholars. For that, we would require some funding that would be cost-effective given the impact on faculty and student morale.

Additional Information: In the longer term, we hope that such interdisciplinary Asian Studies initiatives (like this conference) may coalesce into an institution on campus, a Center for Asian Studies that would be supported by external grants but housed at MSU. Grants for such a center would require that the campus community demonstrate a commitment to Asian Studies; at the same time, we would be able to gather the enthusiasm on campus for such a center through such initiatives as this conference.

African American Caucus

Actionable Item: Address the internal process used to fill professional staff and managerial positions.

Reason: There is a pervasive perception that existing processes lack transparency and seem oftentimes downright arbitrary. There is a pressing need for delineating a clear and unambiguous procedure that includes the posting of positions to be filled in an established central bulletin site.

Additional Information: Could the Administration shed light on the search mechanisms that is used for internal appointments?

Latino Caucus

Actionable Item: University set up a fund to help finance conference attendance costs for Latino/a employees.

Reason: In order to increase recruitment of Latino/a employees. Many Latino/a professors and employees attend conferences where they not only participate but actively bring forth Montclair State University's name as a great work place. Many of us would like to attend conferences and would engage in this recruitment endeavor but cannot afford it. If there was a fund to assist with conference attendance costs our conference attendance would increase.

Additional Information: The fact that we are Latino/as and are from MSU has served as a point of contact for future applicants and as a good recruitment tool. It's important to communicate to the Latino/a community that MSU is a friendly work/school environment and it has people working there who are from similar backgrounds.

Women's Caucus

The Recruitment and Retention report of the PCAA identified two issues relevant to women at Montclair State University. First, the report noted the absence of a Women's Caucus or similar Women's Group or organization to address and present the concerns of female employees and students on Montclair State University's campus. Second, the report noted the need to educate women on bargaining and negotiating strategies at the point of hire to improve their compensation packages.

The single most important issue for women, it was determined, was the absence of a Women's Caucus or other similar group to address the unique needs and concerns of women on campus. To that end, members of the Recruitment and Retention sub-committee worked with Esmilda Abreu and Carole Lang to help establish a Women's Caucus on campus. The Caucus introduced itself to the community at the Affirmative Action Day fair and has held two additional meetings since that time. It will meet at least once over the summer to plan a schedule of events and strategies for increasing participation from all University departments and student organizations. In acknowledgement of the special mention made of the need to educate women on negotiating compensation packages, the Women's Caucus plans to sponsor a seminar on this topic. Other topics will be identified

Conclusion

This year, the PCAA continued its work to strengthen itself through greater membership participation, exchange and interaction within the Commission and with our constituencies, and focused response to issues and concerns. We are growing, with the University, with a clear commitment to diversity and equal opportunity for all. The work continues and we look forward to the coming year with greater awareness and appreciation of the importance of supporting and promoting diversity and equal opportunity here at MSU and throughout our lives.