

**President's Commission on Affirmative Action, Equal Opportunity and Diversity
General Meeting
February 21, 2018**

Attendance: M. Cascarano, M. Colon, C. Cottle, F. deCarvalho, A. Diaz, S. Farese, S. Gardner, S. Genise, A. Gomez, F. Hines, R. Judge, B. Lin, J. Liskoff, B. Matthews, A. Melo, C. Meneghin, N. Parente, S. Paulino, M. Re, C. Reyes Cuevas, D. Rogers, M. Shark, A. Tringali

I. Welcome:

Meneghin called meeting at 12:08 pm

Approval of January 2018 minutes: Motion by Gomez to approve; seconded by Hines.
January 2018 Minutes approved.

II. New Business

a. **Membership Update**

Meneghin mentioned that she will need assistance with reviewing and updating the membership list. She will work with each constituent group on members whose term is expiring, and well as those being replaced or new. New members and those leaving the Commission will be acknowledged at the May "Appreciation Day."

b. **Social Justice Institute Follow Up**

Gardner updated on the recent Social Justice Institute. She summarized that about 70 people attended including faculty, staff and students. There was a facilitator present, and the group stayed together throughout the day. The format did not include break-out sessions. The group discussed campus and action plans. Students felt it was important that they received a space to have these types of conversations, where they put out their experiences and looked at the issues, and talked about what is already out there, and what things can be improved. Topics included: mental health discrimination, more diversity in the staff and faculty, the lack of people attending campus programs, transphobia in the classroom, the use of incorrect pronouns, classroom seating accessibility, desk space issues, financial burden, and immigration policies. Faculty and were staff engaged in the dialogues which was appreciated by students. Finally, the group crated "to do" items and the facilitator agreed to assist on continuing the conversations via Skype on three upcoming Fridays.

There were technical updates presented:

Students can now change their name on Canvas, however, there is a technical issue being worked on. In regards to the student's preferred name it was noted that this is not always used by faculty member. Students were reminded that they should feel empowered to follow-up with the Dean of Students Office if there is a continuing issue.

Several students presented on desk accessibility issues in a number of classrooms on campus. They visited several locations and updated on several classroom issues including: the lack of accessibility, lack of wheelchair accessibility, limited desks for left handed individuals, overcrowded classrooms with excess chairs, uncomfortable desks for larger people, and lack of tables for individual using a wheelchair. It was mentioned that these issues result in retention issues, since some students may not come back if they are embarrassed, feel targeted or pointed out, and that some may experience anxiety due to their accommodation (also an issue for pregnant women, someone wearing a cast, or temporarily disabled).

A recommendation will be proposed to Academic Affairs regarding sizeism which will be presented at the March meeting.

c. **DACA Update**

Stephen Rusczyk from the Latino/a Caucus presented the Caucus' proposal for the Commission's review and endorsement. He explained this was a new approach to better support students on campus due to the current immigration issues in the country. Issues include stress, fear/uncertainty, and family security. He introduced a new model for better supporting students based on best practices, and a more comprehensive approach where more conversations can happen, and more MSU offices are involved. He explained that while MSU has a website which has some information, more up-to-date information is recommended. The proposal seeks endorsement on the following: 1. Creation of safe spaces (this exists at other universities) and 2. Creation of a coalition of staff, faculty and student offices to develop an adaptable communication system to share information, and provide better support when students have questions. Reyes-Cuevas stated that the AFT and University Senate recently endorsed the proposal. It will go to President Cole more formally with recommendations in the near future. Meneghin suggested that Elizabeth Gill be contacted to see what can be updated on the current website, and to explore what additional resources may be needed, including getting more people involved to create a more comprehensive and updated website. In regards to the Caucus's full proposal, Colon suggested that the Commission focus first on the recommendation to get the website updated because the Commission needs to receive more details regarding the safe spaces item in the proposal. Meneghin proposed that the Latino/a Caucus meet with Elizabeth Gill to begin immediate work to bring the communications recommendations to VP Vernon, President Cole as soon as possible.

III. Old Business

a. **Sponsorship**

Cottle received a request for \$150 for refreshments from the Latino/a Caucus for its "Latina Day" program; motion by Re to approve; seconded by Gomez; motion was approved.

- b. Affirmative Action Day-** Dorothy has not heard back re cornell brooks but we'll move ahead to possible fall visit; not sure where flag is; instead, we'll promote affirmative action not as a day but for its importance; library display will be up until next week; Monday, cindy will promote display; and promote through world's fair day on april 26 from 12 to 2; have a table with volunteers; get more string bags since we're not ordering food for aa day; will talk to gineen if funds are still available for bags (res life was going to sponsor before john left); also have materials/information in the bags; Yousef - sga may have funds for food; proclamation – Sidney will still do it; cindy will create a google folder for members to add docs for the bags; Re – will try to get Nutella; thanked for her efforts; well attended, student and departments participate; Brianna – share contacts of those dept/campus partners who might want to participate in wordls fair day
- c. Sidewalk cutouts** –Associate VP Connolly stopped by Meneghin's office and expressed his appreciation on the recommendation. He will go around campus in April to designate the sidewalk cutout to be painted.
- d. Lactation** – The room signs are ready. The designated rooms will be labeled soon Meneghin thanked member Menutti for his efforts. Meneghin provided the following lactation room updates:
- The lactation room in the Student Center will be scheduled through the SC information desk.
 - The School of Nursing lactation room and the Richardson room are signed now.
 - The Center for Clinical Services room will be signed immediately as well as the room at Overlook.
 - There will be a lactation room in the renovated Mallory and College Hall buildings.
 - The lactation room in the College of Education and Human Services will be managed and scheduled by the CEHS staff. Members expressed concerns about the limitation on access and use this decision is creating.

Motion to adjourn – Motion by Cottle; second by Re; meeting adjourned at 1:30 pm

Respectfully submitted by M. Colón