

President's Commission on Affirmative Action, Equal Opportunity and Diversity
General Meeting
September 27, 2017

Attendance: Y. Al-Khudairi, L. Candal-Fernandez, M. Cascarano, J. Clark, C. Cottle, J. Delate, A. Diaz, C. Drost, R. Gano, S. Gardner, F. Hines, M. Mann, A. Melo, C. Meneghin, C. Molinari, T. Morlando Zurlo, L. Petrozzello, D. Phillips-Clark, K. Ramirez, L. Raven, M. Re, D. Rogers, T. Seaboch, M. Shark, R. Swann-Jackson, J. Williams-Edmund

I. Welcome:

Meneghin called meeting at 12:05 p.m.

II. Dr. Cole's Annual Charge

President Cole offered two areas of concern for The Commission to focus on this year: #1 Environment external to the MSU (complex and worrying, stressful for people). Immigration issues are of concern to our Commission. We are all tied in to other constituencies and should relay through Cindy and Junea issues to bring forward. Additionally, there is a lot of distress and concern about values in our country. Our community needs to be a model to the world on how people from different countries and backgrounds with different ideas talk to each other when they disagree with something. President Cole added that while we are imperfect, the difference is that what brings us together is a respect for learning and understanding. We have to show others what it means to talk to each other, even if we have different views. Our Commission is a place where different points of view are shared and where we can talk together and have meaningful conversations. These conversations need to happen from within; we have to be part of the solution. Help things move forward in a democracy; negotiate moving forward with all sides, by using peace and respect.

#2. This year MSU will put tremendous effort on student success. Everyone's job on this campus is to help move students towards successful graduation. Whatever the issue is we need to help (financial, emotional). Every single interaction with a student on this campus counts. Everyone is an educator on this campus. All interactions teaches students to be civilized, what it's like to be in a community, what it means to work in this world, the dignity of work, importance of work, and that is being an educator. President Cole asked that we explore on a larger scale what is important to the Commission so we can do specific things; look at larger issues to help the campus help these students succeed. What happened to those who didn't return? How did we fail them? How do we resolve it?

Questions/comments from members:

Rogers – Comment regarding graduate student who was laid off. Perhaps Career Services & Alumni Relations can offer resources.

Re – Civics; see discussions on fundamentals of civic responsibility

Students from Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands needing to continue their education; President Cole welcomed the idea of offering to take in some students. The Commission will do some research and include some resources if we recommend. President Cole cannot communicate with the President from the University of Puerto Rico due to communication issues but is working to establish communication; she welcomes the opportunity to help them.

President Cole ended by thanking The Commission for its work.

III. New Business

a. Sponsorship

Cottle requested approval of the following sponsorship requests:

\$750 – EOF's Boys to Men Conference – November 2017 (in its 7th year)

\$750 – EOF's Young Women's Leadership Conference – March 2018 (in its 5th year)

\$250 – LASO's October 11th Event – Carlos Ortiz Inaugural Lecture (Latino/a Caucus is Co-sponsoring) (for refreshments)

Cottle explained that sponsorship is used for food, advertisement, and venue, not for speakers. Motion approved.

b. Affirmative Action Day

Meneghin requested volunteers to help the executive committee begin planning now. Members Diaz, Swann-Jackson, Melo, Al-Khudairi, Gardner, Ramirez, Clark, and Morlando Zurlo volunteered.

IV. Discussion

a. Dialogues

There currently is a "concern" form available for faculty and staff to complete if he/she is concerned about a student.

Williams-Edmund explained that MSU has an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) where employees can call and talk to a counselor confidentially. Additional information is on HR website, including the vendor name (Concern). HR can make referrals as well and there are support services available. The HR newsletter is being

finalized and will include information on the EAP. Meneghin noted that we spread the word regarding the EAP.

V. Other

Meneghin reiterated that all are welcome to attend the meetings which are scheduled for 1 and ½ hours. She proposed that more time be spent talking and less on business and encouraged members to share ideas and discussion points via email with the Executive Committee beforehand so things can be put on the agenda.

Meneghin thanked members Re and Petrozzello for their upcoming work on the library display.

Meneghin explained that the Executive Committee discussed having dialogues. We are not a programming group but want to support those dialogues around campus. We need to get better at talking and trying to hear and understand the other person even if you don't agree. We can make suggestions if we see dialogues are not happening around campus. Small grassroots gatherings are welcomed. Members were asked to share anything going on at the college/school with the Commission. Opportunities need to be set up for faculty and staff to have conversations, as well as student-focused conversations.

Meneghin emphasized confidentiality. She stated that what you say is safe; that everyone has equal voice and respected; we all have something to offer at the table; and that everyone is important.

Rogers updated that she is still looking to bring Cornell Brooks, former NAACP President, to campus. She also suggested a written update to the Charlottesville incident would be helpful.

There is a link to MSU Cares from the student services page at:
<http://www.montclair.edu/student-services>

The Mental Health First Responder training link was sent today to faculty and staff. This training is highly recommended.

Diaz suggested having Yoga at the Student Recreation Center for folks to get relief from stress

Candal-Fernandez suggested issues of civility be discussed and brought into a conversation. Issues include what are the boundaries, and understanding roles within a community. Swann-Jackson explained an event held last year regarding this.

It was suggested that a training for members be arranged on being careful of what one says and how it is said to students, including sensitivity. This training was previously done by B. Milton. Williams-Edmund will look into this request further. Meneghin added that trigger words can cause issues and that perhaps a session can be set up about microaggressions and generational differences. Garnder suggested a true dialogue space for having difficult dialogue, using a team

based model (not just from coming from HR or other area) to allow people a space to be heard without threat.

Cottle suggested community conversations throughout the year (maybe 3) to hold these dialogues on a topic and invite people (can be for faculty & staff or students. Raven suggested the promotion of a topic each month (i.e., difficult conversations, religion).

Matthews explained that students are sometimes nervous about the outcome from protesting. Students are not all connected, and may sometimes disassociate themselves within their own communities. Students need to understand how to be better organized, and express themselves.

Meeting Adjournment – Motion made by NAME; Seconded by NAME; Meeting Adjourned at 1:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted by M. Colón