

**MINNESOTA STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
DIVERSITY AND MULTICUTURALISM COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
March 17, 2009**

Diversity and Multiculturalism Committee Members Present: Trustees Duane Benson, Chair; Clarence Hightower, Vice Chair; Tom Renier, Louise Sundin, Terri Thomas.

Diversity and Multiculturalism Committee Members Absent: Allyson Lueneburg

Other Board Members Present: Trustees Cheryl Dickson, Jacob Englund, Ruth Grendahl, Christine Rice, Scott Thiss, and James Van Houten.

Leadership Council Members Present: Dr. Whitney Harris, Executive Director; President Larry Lundblad.

A meeting of the Diversity and Multiculturalism Committee was held on March 17, 2009 at Wells Fargo Place, 4th Floor Board Room, 30 7th Street East, St. Paul. Chair Benson called the meeting to order at 1:08 p.m.

1. Minutes of the January 21, 2009 Diversity and Multiculturalism Committee

The minutes of the January 21, 2009 meeting were approved as written.

2. St. Cloud Access and Opportunity Center

Dr. Mike López introduced Dr. Robert Johnson, a St. Cloud State University professor and Principal Investigator for the St. Cloud Access and Opportunity Center; Phillip Schroeder, Vice President of Student Affairs at St. Cloud Technical College; Henry Galloway, Access and Opportunity School Coordinator from St. Cloud Public Schools and Luis Saenz, St. Cloud Public Schools Director of the Office of Equity Services.

The center is a partnership between St. Cloud State University, St. Cloud Technical College, and St. Cloud School District with a service component, research component and demonstration component. The project seeks effective ways to improve academic achievement, high school graduation rates and college readiness, and to increase participation in post-secondary education by working with students from grades eight through twelve.

In addition, a goal of the center's work is to contribute to relevant research and provide a replicable model of an effective collaboration between public schools and institutions of higher education. The target population is 600 8th – 12th grade students who are

underrepresented in higher education because of ethnic background, immigrant status, family income, or because they come from a first-generation college family.

The program is based in public middle and high schools. Professionals and college students are placed in the schools to work with students, teachers, counselors and sometimes parents. Drawing on existing services and adding new components, the project connects or collaborates with other organizations with the aim of broadening student access to resources and increasing participation in higher education.

Schroeder spoke about three main areas of focus for St. Cloud Technical College in the project: increasing post-secondary participation, supporting the project with other grants and programs and using existing services to support the project.

St. Cloud Technical College is supplementing the Access and Opportunity Center grant with a portion of its campus allotment for recruitment and retention of underrepresented students. The college is focusing on changing campus climate to be more supportive to underrepresented students transitioning from high school to college and now has a recruiter targeting underrepresented students. Students of color have increased by about two percent. There are student support programs modeled on TRiO programs, a book loan program for underrepresented students, a tuition-free summer bridge program and a developmental track for English Language Learners. In addition, the school now has an active Somali student club and a Latino student club.

Mr. Galloway, from St. Cloud Public School District 742, stated that the collaboration has had a positive effect on the staff, the parents, the students and the public school district in general, and has provided the students with many opportunities and resources. Mr. Saenz described some of the programs that support access and success for underrepresented students in the district. The schools have been working in collaboration with the Minnesota Parent Center to provide assistance to parents in supporting their children's education. There have been special after-school targeted services for students and professional development opportunities for teachers. The school is now using a program entitled "Culture Navigators." Individuals, through the Culture Navigator project, provide direct services to help bridge culture gaps. The goal of the Culture Navigator is to assist students with enrollment and success in higher level courses.

Dr. Johnson said that the St. Cloud Access and Opportunity Center has many components. These include identifying and choosing courses for college readiness and careers, English Language Learning, tutoring, academic advising, enrichment programs, summer programs, career planning, mentoring, and an early warning system. Another aspect of the center is encouraging students to think about post-secondary education. At the beginning of the year, only 5 students were participating in the Post-Secondary Enrollment Options program; and the number has now grown to 34 taking courses at St. Cloud Technical College and St. Cloud State University. In addition, over 70 students have visited colleges and universities; and more visits are scheduled.

This is the first year of the project, and the class of 2009 is the first cohort of graduating seniors; the center will be monitoring test scores and grades, looking for improved graduation rates, and modifying the program as needed. The center has a data collection system in place and will be evaluating student success.

Both Trustee Benson and Dr. López said that the two access and opportunity centers which have reported to the Board have different approaches to the same problem. The Board had asked the centers to try different approaches and evaluate what is successful. Both centers have shown success. The third center, which will be reporting in May, will have a different approach.

3. Diversity and Multiculturalism Update

Dr. Whitney Harris reported that Dr. Craig Schoenecker indicated that there is a significant increase in underrepresented students for spring semester.

As part of the January Super Weekend event, the system served 25 faith communities and community organizations directly. In addition, there were six faith communities which had participated in previous Super Weekends to which the diversity division sent brochures and other materials in lieu of visits by system personnel.

The Diversity and Multiculturalism division has established its inaugural diversity awards recognition. These are monetary awards given to recognize effective diversity programs in five different categories and to assist them in expanding and developing further.

The division, with the assistance of a new staff person, is continuing its focus on the needs of the American Indian community.

The division delivered anti-harrassment/anti-discrimination training to approximately 130 employees at Inver Hills Community College and to approximately 70 at the Office of the Chancellor. This is a way to create more welcoming communities.

Trustee Hightower congratulated Dr. Harris on the enrollment increase in underrepresented students and asked for a breakdown between international and traditional students. He also asked when the retention data would be made available. Dr. Harris said that if there is data on the breakdown, it will be made available to the Board and that the retention data should be available at the September Board meeting.

Trustee Benson summarized by saying that many of the issues that the Diversity and Multiculturalism division addresses, such as behavioral changes, are hard to measure. Trustee Hightower cautioned that since there is not enough money to do everything, it is important to develop a system for quantifying success in order to prioritize work. Trustee Van Houten noted that different campuses handle diversity staffing differently and suggested each campus provide the system with the job description of its top diversity staff member. Dr. Harris said that the system has approximately 40 staff that the Diversity and Multiculturalism division refers to as chief diversity officers. About six of

these address diversity-related issues full time, with such duties as recruitment, retention and diversity training. Other chief diversity officers are shared between campuses or work in human resources or student affairs in addition to diversity. The challenge, he said, is to have common standards for diversity officers' duties while allowing the campuses the flexibility to address their own particular needs.

The meeting adjourned at 2:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Gale Rohde