

MINUTES, APRIL 8, 2016

College of Arts and Letters, diversity council

Present: Andreas Broscheid (scribe), Erica Cavanagh, Jenny Davis, Mike Davis, Frances Flannery, David Jeffrey, Yenisei Montes de Oca, Christine Robinson, Vanessa Rouillon, Alexandra Vilela

1. Approval of minutes for March 18 meeting
2. Announcements
 - Fridays, 3:30-5, coffee and tea with international students, Hoffman Hall lounge
 - Hispanic Faculty Caucus, 5pm on Thursday, April 14
 - April 13: Guest Speaker Author Gayle Tzemach Lemmon, 6 p.m. book-signing session, 7 p.m. talk, Wilson Hall Auditorium, Gayle Lemmon, the author of the New York Times best-seller "Ashley's War: The Untold Story of a Team of Women Soldiers on the Special Ops Battlefield," speaks. Following the talk, Lemmon and Sgt. 1st Class Meghan Malloy and Capt. Christie Lamond, both members of Cultural Support Teams, will participate in a question-and-answer discussion.
 - Migration: A Phenomenon of Human History from its Ancient Origins to the Present Global Situation, James Madison University, Department of Foreign Languages, Spring 2016 Conference, April 14-15, 2016
 - Coming up: Sue Ranking, Dominion Lecture, September 14, 7pm
3. Faculty/staff diversity networking resource document

Christine Robinson kindly prepared a document listing networking groups and opportunities that the group has identified. We will add the Hispanic Faculty Caucus and information on the international faculty group. The list of networking opportunities will also be placed on the CAL diversity website. This requires a stable email address, so that people can send information about further opportunities to the council.

The council suggests that the list should be handed to job candidates. Once it is online, its link can also be included in job ads.

4. Resolution re. supporting first-generation students

The council agreed to add first-year student as one of the groups included in the council's mission statement on the website. Frances Flannery circulated a resolution that urged the Office of Access and Inclusion to add first-generation student status to its definition of diversity. The council adopted the following text, which David Jeffrey agreed to communicate to Provost Benson:

We recognize that first generation students face unique struggles at JMU and that this constituency intersects considerably with other groups that have been historically underrepresented in the university setting (with respect to ethnicity, class, disability and/or country of origin). Therefore, we request that the Office of Access and Inclusion determine how many students fit this category and support institutional programs to facilitate academic, social, and personal success in this student population.

Frances also reported on work on her IDEA grant project on taking first-generation students to lunch and conversation. At this point, a pilot program among several departments will be conducted. She still invites statements of interest from other departments.

5. Resolution re. external climate study

Christine Robinson circulated a short resolution calling for an externally conducted climate study at JMU. The text of the resolution, which was unanimously adopted by the council, is as follows:

The CAL Diversity Council supports the recommendation of the report from 2013 JMU Diversity Task Force Committee, which states:

"To gain a clearer perspective of what JMU faculty, staff, and students experience and where there are opportunities to make transformative change, we recommend that a first step be that an external group conduct a climate study. The DTF recognizes that barriers to access, information and the challenge of being a minority (of any type) can create challenges and stress amongst some members of the JMU community."

The resolution was justified by several points:

(1) The president's diversity task force called for an externally conducted climate study.

(2) While the council appreciated the work of Matt Lee's team on an internal climate study, its conclusions were limited by the fact that it only included student responses and oversampled first-year students (among other limitations).

(3) The current political climate makes it important for JMU to document the need for its engagement for greater access and inclusion of a range of identities. An externally conducted climate study would be a credible source to document these needs.

Dean Jeffrey agreed to communicate the resolution to Provost Benson.

6. The council selected Frances Flannery as its chair for the 2016/17 academic year.