Diversity Council Minutes  
Thursday, August 13, 2007

Present:  Lee Barrentine, Jeffrey Faust, Allen Gainer, Corine January, Susan McBride, Sherry Martin, Maurice Moore, Marilyn Nicholson  
Absent:  Kathleen Hall, David Jones, Latitia McCane, Cornelia Miller

The charge of the council was read as the first order of business:

Create and assist in the implementation of a plan to foster a campus climate in which there is a proactive commitment to diversity as a basic value of the college. This will include coordinating awareness and training activities. In all our initiatives we must emphasize the development of good character and must model the values of inclusion, mutual respect, and cooperation.

The minutes from the previous meeting were approved as submitted.

The Alabama College System Human Resources Management Association (ACSHRMA) Diversity Conference will be held October 17-18, 2007 in Birmingham, Alabama. There was a general discussion regarding conference attendance. The committee members who plan to attend are: Cornelia, Jeffrey, Kathleen, Marilyn, and Maurice.

The following Diversity Activities were discussed:

a) August—National Inventors’ Month—the library staff plans to provide related thematic displays during August.

b) A number of suggestions were given regarding Hispanic/Latino Heritage Month (Sept. 15 - Oct. 15). The following suggestions were offered: 1) a taster’s fair; 2) special dishes prepared in the deli; 3) a raffle for tickets to a Hispanic movie entitled El Cantante. The consensus of the group was that the raffle would be the best option.

The next portion of the meeting dealt with discussions from Chapter 9—“Fueling Backlash,”

The committee members read the group activity “Appeasing the Resisters” and discussed it.

Implementation Principle #8

Beating backlash requires building support among those who are ready to adopt change while minimizing the involvement of those who are still in resistance.

Loden makes the following points with supporting information:

a) Fear Fuels Backlash

Dr. McBride pointed out that people who are threatened by diversity initiatives are often simply expressing their own inner fears.
b) Organizational Response to Backlash—an organization cannot afford to back away from the backlash that inevitably occurs in the early stages of implementation of diversity, nor can it directly challenge or confront the resistance that will occur. (82)

Backlash can be very unpleasant, especially if is not anticipated or if it is handled inappropriately.

c) Work with those who are ready—build support among those who are ready to adopt the paradigm and minimize early involvement of resisters.

It was suggested that forcing employees to attend awareness raising workshops would probably not be a good idea.

d) Classic Mistakes That Fuel Backlash

1. Marginalizing the Mainstream—“valuing diversity must appeal to everyone’s enlightened self-interest.” (85).

   Dr. McBride mentioned studies which show that males still hold most high level jobs and are the most likely to have negative reactions to diversity initiatives.

2. Backing Away from Sexual Orientation

3. Expertness and Moral Superiority—open discussion and dialogue are a critical part of the diversity adoption process—efforts should be made to encourage communication and develop educational programs that increase knowledge, comfort, and confidence as they reduce fear. (87).

e) Innovators and Change Agents Help Manage Resistance—it is important that discussions take place in safe forums where everyone’s issues are recognized and respected.

   According to Loden—“the very heart of what valuing diversity is about…is the right of every individual to inclusion, respect, cooperation, and equal treatment.

The movie, “The Freedom Writers” was viewed by the group in July. At our next meeting, we will spend a few minutes sharing our reflections, inspirations, and innovative ideas inspired from the movie.

The next meeting is scheduled for September 12, 2007 at 1:30 in the library’s Multimedia Resource Center. The assignment is to read Chapter 10—“Minimizing the Business Case” in Loden’s book and be prepared to do the associated exercises.