Diversity Council Minutes
Wednesday, June 13, 2007

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

As the first order of business, the committee charge was read:

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.

Diversity Activities Update: August is National Inventors’ Month.

Chapter 8, Underinvesting and Overpromising was discussed at length. One of the key factors in the discussion is that valuing diversity gives hope to individuals who might have felt marginalized or excluded in the past. An important caveat, however, is that when an employer’s rhetoric about valuing diversity far exceeds its action, employees can become cynical and demoralized. An organization’s follow-up actions must be consistent and strong if employees are to remain convinced that culture change is real.

The committee members divided into small groups to discuss the two scenarios in Chapter 8: The Lure of Diversity and Been There…Done That.

The Lure of Diversity
1) Under what conditions is it ethical to use the “valuing diversity message” in recruiting to increase racial diversity? It would only be ethical to use the valuing diversity message when it is actually true.
2) When would it not be ethical to do so? It would be unethical to use the valuing diversity message if an organization does not have a plan in place to address mentoring of new employees.
3) Once an effective recruitment strategy is in place, what else must an organization do to ensure high employee retention across all diverse groups? Strategies need to be fair, they need to encourage collegiality, and they need to help new employees develop meaningful relationships with their peers.
4) Thought #1: Good mentoring comes from within. Relationships between existing employees and new employees need to be encouraged.
5) Thought #2: It is both the responsibility of the new employee and the mentor to work through the issues of socialization.

According to Loden, organizations need to foster mentoring relationships, assign new employees highly visible projects, and provide opportunities for new employees to interact in informal settings with senior staff members. All employees, regardless of their diverse status, should be afforded these same opportunities in order to ensure a valuing diversity paradigm and broad culture change.

Beyond the rhetoric:
When companies are sincere about their commitment to valuing diversity, it is apparent in:
• the policies that are employed to manage human resources
• the benefits that are offered
• the sensitive, ethical, and inclusive actions of senior managers
• the hiring and promotion patterns
• the comfort and enthusiasm displayed when people cross cultural lines to mentor, socialize, or get work accomplished
According to Loden the ease and frequency of cross-cultural interaction…is the truest measure of whether this change…extends down into the fabric of the corporate culture.

The organizational commitment must extend beyond hiring practices to include: employee development, customer service, systems alignment, and culture change.

**Been There…Done That**

1) Based on your understanding of this implementation effort, it is likely that this Diversity Task Force’s work is truly done? No, in fact it is very unlikely.

2a) How long do you anticipate it will take your own organization to fully adopt the value of diversity? Truly implementing a culture of valuing diversity is an ongoing process; it is a journey, not a destination.

2b) Is leadership prepared to invest the time and resources required to do so? Yes; if the college administration were not committed to the valuing diversity paradigm, the Diversity Council would not exist. The College is committed to this process.

According to Loden, some substantive change is required to fully adopt the valuing diversity paradigm. Exactly what that change might be is a question that the committee will attempt to answer in the coming months.

Committee members were asked by the chair to participate in a closing activity entitled: Candy Array for ‘Investing in Valuing Diversity.’ (see attached)

Dr, McBride shared and article with the group for reading and reflections entitled *The Value of Diversity*\(^1\) with the goal of promoting more effective teaching and learning in higher education through dialogue among colleagues. This led to a discussion about innovative teaching techniques and diversity in the classroom. In an effort to focus our thoughts and plan, at our next meeting (Monday, July 16, 2007 at 1:30) the group will view the movie *Freedom Writers* which has a similar focus.

**Freedom Writers**

*Erin Gruwell became a teacher at a high school rampant with hostility and racial intolerance. For many of these students—whose ranks included substance abusers, gang members, the homeless, and victims of abuse—Gruwell was the first person to treat them with dignity, to believe in their potential and help them see it themselves. Soon, their loyalty towards their teacher and burning enthusiasm to help end violence and intolerance became a force of its own. Upon discovering that many of her students had never heard of the Holocaust, Gruwell confronted a room of “unteachable, at-risk” students.*

*Inspired by reading The Diary of Anne Frank and meeting Zlata Filipovic (the eleven-year old girl who wrote of her life in Sarajevo during the civil war), the students began a joint diary of their inner-city upbringings. They called themselves the Freedom Writers after the Civil Rights Activists “The Freedom Riders”. Told through anonymous entries to protect their identities and allow for complete candor, The Freedom Writers Diary is filled with astounding vignettes from 150 students who, like civil rights activist Rosa Parks and the Freedom Riders, heard society tell them where to go—and refused to listen.*

*Gruwell fostered an educational philosophy that valued and promoted diversity and she helped them change their beliefs, decisions and change their futures by shattering stereotypes to become critical thinkers aspiring college students and citizens for change. Freedom Writers promotes acceptance and uses innovative teaching methods to shape lives and to bring about positive change.*

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“Candy Array for “Investing in Valuing Diversity”

Please choose the candy bar that more closely helps confirm the statement made:

1. To keep from “scoring a ________” companies must be serious about institutionalizing the “valuing diversity” change. Their commitment must extend beyond hiring to employee development, customer service, systems alignment and cultural change.
2. For employees who embrace diversity, there is a strong expectation that the organization will become more inclusive, open, and accepting of the contributions of employees from a diverse, “mix” of cultural backgrounds. __________
3. To fully adopt the valuing diversity paradigm, there must be a serious investment of both time and human resources. __________
4. What famous baseball player is known for home runs. To hit one in diversity, there must be “sustained corporate support—willing to commit and invest in long-term change.” __________
5. Employees today are looking for data to support corporate claims that diversity is valued—such as training, recognition, reward systems and corporate communications, in other word they are looking for “more than just _____________(hundreds, thousands, …).
6. If “premature closure” occurs any real benefits can be “_________ goodbye.”
7. No quick fix. And no free lunch, “__________ must come.”

Correct Responses:
1. Zero
2. M & M’s
3. Twix
4. Baby Ruth
5. 1000 Grand
6. Kisses
7. Payday