

Chancellor's Committee on the Status of LGBT Issues
Minutes from March 31, 2009

In attendance: Teri Blain, Scott Boots, Brent Braveman, Melanie D'Andrilli, Linda Deanna, Brad Elwood, Francesca Gaiba, Becky Lowery, Sohail Murad, Nick Popovich, Patrick Robinson, Bernie Santarsiero, Liz Thomson, Richard Williams, and Dana Wright.

I. Welcome and Introductions

II. New Business

1. UIC's Diversity Strategic Thinking and Planning Committee (DSTP) members
Linda Deanna, Sohail Murad, Dana Wright, and Nick Popovich were present at the meeting to lead a discussion about the DSTP and to get ideas from our committee. The DSTP committee has been co-chaired by William Walden and Lon Kaufman since Fall 2008. The DSTP committee is trying to create a campus document that institutes diversity in all aspects. They have broken the committee down into smaller groups who visit various groups and committees on campus to gather opinions. Dana Wright took notes from their meeting with us, and synthesize notes from all the meetings so the DSTP committee at large can look at the findings.

Linda Deanna stated that their goal was to know more about the CCSLGBTI, our mission statement, and how we think about diversity. Co-chair Bernie Santarsiero spoke about his confusion between the DSTP committee and the Diversity Advisory Committee (DAC), since the DAC as well is trying to formulate a diversity statement for the UIC campus. Linda spoke of needing a less narrow, more inclusive definition of diversity. Bernie disagreed with her about the DAC definition, and said that it is not exclusive. Co-chair Francesca Gaiba commented that the definition of diversity depends on the goal of the committee and what they are trying to do, and what their end document is going to be.

Patrick Robinson stated that diversity is far beyond recruiting and hiring figures ; it is about creating a safe space where people can go and feel comfortable coming to UIC –.

Francesca pitched her own idea of creating a Chancellor's Committee for poor students, which would not just be about financial aid, but also teaching students about finances, helping first generation college students, immigrants, second generation students in the US, and refugees. This is because class is a component of diversity, though it is not spoken about. Becky Lowery suggested that Linda speak to Fefe Logan in the Library, because she is in the midst of studying first generation students from four area colleges, and documenting their troubles accessing facilities.

Linda Deanna raised the three questions that the DSTP committee wanted our feedback on:

- What is the mission and vision of your organization?
- How does diversity intersect with your core mission?
- What is your evaluation of the current state of diversity at UIC?

Bernie gave the DSTP committee a brief overview of what we do on the CCSLGBTI, our programs, research and scholarship work, funding, and miscellaneous tasks such as fighting for domestic partner benefits at the University.

Sohail Murad made a suggestion that the CCSLGBTI make a 1-2 page handout that we can give to UIC recruiters going to recruit new students; the handout should state what the CCSLGBTI is, that UIC is a friendly and welcoming campus, and also list the available services.

Brent Braveman said that the definition of diversity depends on the context. In his program, diversity is very different than in the majority of the UIC programs, because in occupational therapy, males are actually an underrepresented category. Francesca and Patrick spoke about the low number of African American males who graduated from UIC last year (six), and how UIC may do a good job at recruiting a diverse group of people, but not such a good job in the retention.

Teri Blain of CCSLGBTI spoke about her personal experience in regards to being discriminated due to her sexuality. She said we are still very far from making it clear that UIC will not discriminate on sexuality. There are still problems with the domestic partner benefits. We have come a long way in some areas, but still are so invisible in other areas. The LGBT population or services for LGBT students is not included in orientation and the available programs are not integrated into the rest of campus.

Liz Thomson of GSC brought up that it has been a while since a new GLBT climate survey has been done. This should be done every ten years. We should also have a sheet or brochure on diversity offices and all the different chancellor's committees. Liz suggested having an optional sexuality box to check on incoming application forms...but how would that be funneled? It would allow us to work with those LGBT students from the start at UIC, which would be a great difference because many students are upset they only find out about the Gender and Sexuality Center late in their UIC career.

Linda asked if we had any final important information we wanted the DSTP committee to take back with them. Bernie brought up the transgender issue on campus, and needing access to unisex and/or gender neutral restrooms. The trans population has a hard time feeling comfortable on this campus and there are steps that can be taken to rectify this concern. He also mentioned the blood drive issue in that gay males cannot donate blood, and making this known at UIC blood drives. We want to be able to distribute information, not cancel blood drives. Francesca mentioned that we have an obligation to make this campus safe and accessible to all, regardless of whether people want to disclose their sexual orientation or not. Brent compared this accessibility issue to the field of disability studies, saying that if you have a disability and are in a safe and supportive environment, you don't need to disclose your disability (unless you choose to). This should be a model for sexual orientation too. Teri suggested that if you have to become an expert on policy to get a benefit, or advocate to your employer to get a benefit they denied you, then there is something wrong.

Francesca brought up the fact that UIC was the only school to receive an A on a recent study of gay friendliness in Illinois schools. That grade looks great on

paper, but the climate is not always so friendly. And lastly, Liz stated that we need more of the chancellor's committees to meet and collaborate with one another.

Dana Wright thanked us for all the input and said she will give our comments to the rest of the DSTP committee.

2. Bernie talked about the fundraising letter that was sent out by our committee last year, and said that he will work on a revised letter with Francesca and get it out again this year.
3. The Office of Women's Affairs turned in a co-sponsorship request for their annual Women's Leadership Conference, which we co-sponsor every summer. The committee took a vote and unanimously voted to approve this request.
4. The 2009-10 CCSLGBTI committee nominations are due on May 1st. If anyone would like to nominate themselves or someone else, please do so as soon as possible (e-mail to mdandr2@uic.edu). We also need faculty nominations for a new co-chair to join Francesca Gaiba next year, as Bernie's two year run is coming to a close.
5. Teri Blain presented her mini conference agenda for a conference she hopes to put together titled "Conference on Supporting a GLBT Inclusive Workforce." This conference is modeled on the BAT (Bringing Administrators Together) conference. Teri met with the Office of Access and Equity about ready to go presentations on policies that they had that could be geared to GLBT people. She also spoke to High Impact Training (customized learning experiences for higher education, corporate and non-profit organizations) to see if they could be brought in for the event. Teri brought her ideas to us as a sketch and to ask for general impressions, as well as for people willing to help her do it. She is happy to take the lead but needs others to help out as well. The conference is specifically for UIC employees and supervisors, coming on their own volition, interested in supporting their employees. She is confident we will be able to get 100-120 participants.

Scott Boots brought up the concern that if people are not mandated to go to this event, then we will only be preaching to the choir. Bernie stated that he thinks the Provost will support this conference, and if he does, then maybe we can somehow mandate it.

The projected date is unsure, and could be next year. Brad Elwood, Liz, and Bernie volunteered to help Teri put the conference together. Teri is very excited and positive about this event!

6. Liz gave an overview of the recent GSC Town Hall. There were approximately 30 people in attendance, and not many from staff or faculty. There is a detailed write up of the event available at the GSC website: www.gsc.uic.edu. There was not enough time at the Town Hall to get through the 'how' or the characteristics of a new director. Most of the discussion revolved around outreach and support. There was a consensus that there is good retention, but recruitment is an issue. The current state of research is the most lacking area. More conversations need to be had, and there certainly is still time for them, because a search for the new GSC Director will not happen anytime soon.

Francesca attended the Town Hall and thought it was a good event but most of the attendees were students, so the idea of expanding the center into a research center was not brought up. Maybe we should just concentrate and listen to what the

students want? They are passionate and love the support the GSC provides. The Town Hall did not help in director possibilities.

7. The third annual Rainbow Banquet featuring Lavender Graduation is fast approaching! The event is Friday, May 1, 2009 from 4:00 – 9:30pm. The ceremony is from 4:00 – 5:30pm in the Illinois Room in Student Center East. The Banquet is from 5:30 – 9:30pm at Jak's Tap, 901 W. Jackson St. Please RSVP to moises@uic.edu by April 25 if you wish to attend.
8. We did not have time to review the Faculty Institute Proposal from Dr. Royster of the UIC African American Cultural Center. We will table this discussion to April's meeting. Before then, read over the proposal (previously e-mailed out). He is asking for support in the proposal, not monetary support. We will invite Dr. Royster to the April meeting.

The next CCSLGBTI meeting will be Tuesday, April 28, 2009 from 3:00 – 4:30pm, location TBA.