



*Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity
127 Woods Hall
One University Blvd
Saint Louis, MO 63121
314-516-5695
314-516-5673 (FAX)
www.umsl.edu/services/oeo/*

July 29, 2013

UMSL Chancellor's Cultural Diversity Council 2012-13 Summary

The Chancellor's Cultural Diversity Council for the 2012-13 academic year was comprised of 23 members representing faculty, staff, and students from all segments of the campus community. Robert Bliss, dean of the Honors College and Deborah Burris, director & chief diversity officer of the Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity continued to serve as co-chairs of the council for the 2012-13 academic year. The council was provided tremendous support from a newly appointed graduate assistant Ms. Lisa Busalacki. Six meetings were held throughout the academic year.

Meetings included discussions of campus concerns, updates on equal opportunity regulations and presentations from members of the campus community. Below are the highlights of the year.

- **Presentations**

- Ryan Barrett, interim director of the UMSL Veteran's Center, informed the council about the challenges of opening the Veteran's Center as well as the difficulties veterans may face as they return to the university environment.
- Nermana Huskic
Nermana, a Muslim undergraduate student in the social work program, presented to the council. Sparked by an incident (a joke from a fellow classmate about a bomb in her book bag), she developed a presentation to her classmates about the harassment and discrimination directed toward Muslims. Nermana presented to the council about the Muslim religion and culture. She discussed many misconceptions.
- Christina Pope is a student advisor at the Office of International Student and Scholar Services. She spoke about the challenges and mistreatment that UMSL international students face.

- **Climate Study**

- Dr. Susan Rankin of Rankin & Associates came to UMSL in November of 2012 to reveal the climate study results to UMSL and the surrounding communities. Overall, the results were positive. The majority of the individuals who filled out the survey felt comfortable on campus. In addition, most people support diversity efforts and want to see more diversity on the UMSL campus. However, according to the survey, people of color and those in the LGBQ groups are in general, less comfortable on the UMSL campus. The survey data demonstrates ¼ of the respondents reported they had been aware of or believe they had observed harassment on campus. People of color and those in the LGBQ group were often more aware of this harassment. Other results indicated that staff members (the

largest group of respondents) do not feel valued and part of the UMSL community.

- Expanding the council. Due to the climate study results, the CCDC invited new members. The council now includes staff members from hourly positions and a representative of the Veterans Center. This not only represents more UMSL community members, but has brought new perspectives to the council and created a more inclusive group.
- CCDC Retreat
After the climate study results were revealed, the CCDC developed a subcommittee to plan a retreat. Retreat goals were twofold: to engage in self reflection and to produce recommendations for the university that will address the issues of the climate study. The retreat was held on May 3, 2013 and was facilitated by the Educational Equity Group. The committee members spent part of the day engaging in exercises that focused on privilege, racism, and internalized oppression. During the second half of the day, the members looked deeper at the climate study results and generated ideas for a diversity plan.

- **Diversity Plan**

Using the ideas suggested by the CCDC members at the retreat, a subcommittee developed the first draft of a Diversity Plan.

- **Student Enrollment**

The council's concern with student enrollment issues continued into the 2012-13 academic year. A subcommittee addressed the issue. These individuals, with the collaboration of the manager of the Cashier's Office, developed a solution. As a result, the subsequent words were added to the payment policy: "Students with a small balance of \$200 or less may have their financial hold preventing enrollment removed if their account is in good financial standing." The policy change does not come without continued accountability; the student accrues interest and late fees if the fee is not paid. There are about 1,700 students who fall into this category and are now eligible to enroll. The council hopes this policy change will improve the situation for UMSL's student body.

- **Jubilee Oral History Project**

The council organized a Jubilee project spearheaded by Raleigh Muns of the Thomas Jefferson Library. The project consisted of interviewing UMSL alumni to illustrate UMSL's history. The interviews are posted on the UMSL website.

- **Support**

The council received much needed support from the Chancellor via a graduate assistant and a budget for the FY 2013. Ms. Lisa Busalacki provided tremendous support for the Council via coordinating meetings, gathering data, following up on various tasks between meetings and working with the co-chairs, individual council meetings and subcommittees. For the first time, the council also received funds to pay for various expenses, i.e., the retreat. The council was able to carry out its mission because of the support provided.

The Chancellor's Cultural Diversity Council continues to work to make diversity a positive hallmark of their community. In the 2013-14 academic year we will continue to work on the initiatives recommended by the Climate Survey and seek to widen campus conversation on the meaning and the central value of diversity.

Submitted by

Robert Bliss, Co-Chair
Chancellor's Cultural Diversity Council

Deborah Burris Co-Chair
Chancellor's Cultural Diversity Council