Minutes: April 4, 2012

Attending: Tim Becker, Joe Burke, Matt Carcella, Casey Carr, Linda Croll Howel, Betsy East, Kathy Edmondson, Greg Eells, Kappy Fahey, Michele Fish, Mary Beth Grant, Christine Holmes, William Horning, Catherine Kim, Elizabeth Lewis, Neil Lewis, Anne Lukingbeal, Sly Mata, Tim Marchell, Alan Mathios, Beth McKinney, John Mueller, Celia Muoser, Susan Murphy, Andy Noel, Patricia Nguyen, Barry Perlus, Kirsten Post Eynav, Rebecca Robbins, Keba Rogers, Lisa Ryan, Laura Santacrose, Janet Shortall, Janis Talbot, Catherine Thrasher-Carroll, Shawkat Toorawa, Don Viands, Elise West, Janis Whitlock, Wai-Kwong Wong, Kathy Zoner, Betsy Shrier, Saadiya Mutawakil,

Upcoming meetings: Fall, 1012 TBA

Welcome and Introductions: Susan Murphy
1. Joining the Council today are William Searle, Research and Planning Associate, from Institutional Research and Planning, and A.T. Miller, Associate Vice Provost for Academic Diversity Initiatives. In today’s discussion on diversity we will review differences that exist between groups of students and their mental health.
2. In conversations with students about their experiences, gender, race and disability often shape how safe they feel on campus and how well they feel they fit into our community. As a campus we need to consider how well we engage these students, and in turn how well our diverse students can engage with others in our community.
3. Tim Marchell, Director of Mental Health Initiatives, shared recent research data on mental health and student diversity as a back drop for A.T. Miller’s presentation on new campus diversity initiatives.

Overview of Research Findings on Student Mental Health and Diversity
Review a presentation of the research findings on Mental Health and Diversity (pdf).
1. A report prepared on cultural influences and mental health by the Department of Health and Human Services for the Surgeon General identified many ways in which inequities influence the mental health of individuals and how the cultures of our service systems also can shape their experiences.
2. Using an Ecological Approach toward diversity and mental health, allows for a focus on the extra-psychic needs and stressors as well as the intra-psychic needs and stressors. Through a social justice lens, the need for systems change versus focus on individual change can be examined, and problems, such as bias or micro-aggressions, can be addressed within the community or systems in which they occur.
3. Several campus-wide surveys have been conducted over the past few years that offer information on differences in self-reported mental health among different groups, particularly in relation to racial/ethnic background and citizenship (i.e., U.S. vs. international).
• In the 2010 National College Health Assessment (NCHA), over 90% of students say they would see a counselor if needed. However, about 13% of Asian and 12% of International students say they would *not* see a counselor if needed.

4. Council member comments in relation to this data:
   • A potential barrier for Asian International students in using counseling services is not having written materials available about counseling services in their languages.
   • “When do students most often use CAPS (Counseling and Psychological Services)?” 
     Response: Visits spike during October/November in the fall, and March/April in the spring.
   • Data for the graduate and professional student population shows that while their behaviors look healthier (e.g. alcohol use, sleep, nutrition) than those of undergraduate students’, they utilize counseling services at a higher rate.

*Toward a New Destination: Overview of New Campus Diversity Initiatives*

1. A.T. Miller opened by reading a short poem he wrote entitled “At Home” that describes the inner process and changes experienced as one moves toward embracing diversity.

2. “Toward a New Destination” is a diversity initiative that allows many different projects to get underway at the same time and across every aspect of our university. In so doing, this initiative aims to show the many ways in which our diversity can be used as a means to cultivate diversity.

3. President Skorton set several goals for diversity efforts between 2010-15, which represent the full reach of Cornell’s commitment to diversity and inclusion. These goals are to:
   • Significantly increase the diversity of faculty through new hires and enhanced retention efforts.
   • Increase the proportion of underrepresented minorities and students from other cultures.
   • Implement support mechanisms to promote academic success and retention of minority graduate and professional students.
   • Attract and retain a diverse staff workforce.

4. To meet these goals, “the University Diversity Council is taking new approach to Institutional Diversity Planning. This plan includes a specifically-focused menu of annual initiatives, which define a set of local advances and target particular constituencies.”

5. Each school, college, and major unit will select five Annual Initiatives that best match their particular contexts, goals, and strategic plans. Past diversity efforts cannot be included in this plan, and activities meant to bring a unit up to compliance will not be considered an effective initiative. Progress made in these areas of focus will be documented in annual reports.

6. By embedding responsibility under collective leadership that is guided by professional expertise, an effective model for significant and multi-faceted progress can be created across the institution. “It is this responsibility structure that is charged with bringing to reality our values and statement on diversity in “Open Doors, Open Hearts, Open Minds.”

7. The framework for this new approach is structured according to four *Core Diversity Principles* with potential Annual Initiatives from which units may select:

   **Composition:**
• **Increase diversity in a target area** - measurably increase diversity for a target dimension of the school/college/unit.

• **Increase targeted pipelines** - develop or enhance relationships with strategic partners, institutions, organizations, and communities.

• **Evaluate and reduce attrition** - develop and implement processes to evaluate attrition and create retention strategies.

**Engagement:**

• **Increase engagement for a target group** - enhance opportunities for career or professional development, and for campus and community involvement.

• **Strengthen academic, co-curricular, and professional development initiatives promoting engagement across difference** - increase and enhance co-curricular and academic offerings and events that promote engagement across difference.

• **Support and expand academic research, collaboration, and intellectual initiatives around diversity** - highlight and encourage intellectual work and conference presentations on topics relevant to the study of diversity.

• **Develop administrative mechanisms to record, recognize, and motivate engagement in diversity efforts** - build processes for recognizing active engagement in diversity efforts through annual activity reports, university or college/unit sponsored diversity awards, personnel dialogues and promotion reviews, outreach reports, or other motivational initiatives.

**Inclusion:**

• **Improve multicultural competency** - create or enhance initiatives designed to build intercultural skills and knowledge.

• **Increase the effectiveness of communication around diversity** - increase the visibility and influence of the college’s or administrative unit’s messaging about excellence, learning, collaboration, and achievement through diversity.

• **Provide grants in support of diversity programs** - fund competitive grant opportunities to pursue programs and initiatives relevant to diversity.

• **Improve internal administrative structures that support diversity** - provide opportunities or create processes to review and revise internal departmental structures and practices to support diversity.

• **Increase the availability and closer integration of work/life support systems** - provide for a review and revision of the approach to support a more flexible work and educational environment, and to the structuring of operations to support individuals from diverse backgrounds.

**Achievement**

• **Support and increase academic or professional achievement for a target group, area, or constituency** - improve the achievement of a target group in relationship to academic honors and awards, research, fellowships, publications, participation in specialty programs, or career/professional outcomes.

• **Provide for recognition for innovative research in support of diversity** - highlight and recognize outstanding or innovative intellectual contributions in the area of diversity.

• **Highlight and advance an understanding of the relevance of diversity to excellence in research and to the production of knowledge** - promote inquiry on the significance of diversity in knowledge creation and support awareness of the catalyzing effects of difference.
• **Support career development for a target area or constituency** - increase the diversity of participants in leadership training, conference participation, rewards and recognitions, strategic planning, and job rotational assignments.

8. The **seven constituency areas** included in the plan are:
   - Undergraduate students
   - Graduate and professional students;
   - Post-doctoral fellows and academic professionals (e.g., those who have responsibilities in research, teaching, or the libraries, but are not included in the tenure-track ranks)
   - Tenure track faculty
   - Administration and non-academic staff
   - Off-campus constituents (e.g., vendors/businesses, local community organizations)
   - Cornell’s extended community (e.g., parents, alumni, donors, and friends of Cornell)

**Diversity goals** for each core principle and constituency area are detailed in the [Diversity Goals PowerPoint presentation](#) (pdf).

9. In the coming months, efforts of the University Diversity Council will focus on:
   - Meeting with designated college and unit diversity councils
   - Enhancing transparent diversity metrics and creating a diversity dashboard
   - Unveiling a revised University Diversity web page
   - Identifying five diversity initiatives for each college and administrative unit
   - Hosting a summer retreat with deans and vice presidents for implementation of initiatives

Each unit will create a diversity council (i.e., Human Ecology and SAS) and establish metrics to mark progress. Institutional projects, such as the First Year Student Book Project, also need to be included in diversity plans.

**Overview of discussion themes and suggestions from CMHW members:**
1. One constituency group not mentioned is families (of students, faculty and staff). This group often goes unrecognized. Can they be added to the constituencies being served by this effort?
2. Several members talked about activities that focus on diverse cultures and how might these activities serve campus efforts:
   - When and how can minority groups inform people outside of their group about their community events/activities so others might attend?
   - Minority groups often cannot afford the costs (e.g., bigger venues) associated with putting on events open to the campus community at large?
   - Who are the student groups that can afford to do both?
   - What role, if any, do diverse students have to educate majority students about their culture? What are the responsibilities of majority students?
3. While the Cornell community claims to value diversity, some new members say they perceive a climate of conformity where the message is “you need to get your act together and act like us.” How can we change our campus environment to reflect our espoused values?
4. While our community often calls itself liberal, we need to remember that isn’t just a word…it’s an action. What is it we each need to do to advance diversity goals; and where else can we bring up conversations like the one we are having now?
5. We need to understand that equality doesn’t just mean “everyone gets shoes.” From a social justice lens it means “everyone gets shoes that fit.” Fairness is essential. We also must have a willingness to engage in what’s uncomfortable.

6. When we focus on individual resilience, are we avoiding discussions on how institutional systems may inadvertently thwart our diversity efforts? Will these broader issues be discussed by the University Diversity Council?

7. The CMHW looks at mental health from different perspectives and invites new voices into the discussion. As committees are formed to identify diversity objectives, will campus members who bring new and different ideas also be invited into the discussions? We need to have more conversations like the one we are having today, where we may share information or perspectives that are unfamiliar and/or uncomfortable to ourselves or others in the room.

8. We all belong to a culture in which the dynamics of power and control influence the process of social change. We each need to do self-examination on how we as individuals participate in these power dynamics, as well as how our institutional systems can perpetuate current dynamics. How do we hold each other accountable? (Can groups/individuals actually give up influence to advance our diversity goals?)

9. Each year there are 4,000 or more new students entering Cornell. How can we help them examine their values and beliefs around diversity?

10. Often, the bias experienced on campus comes in the form of microaggressions. Many people don’t know what these are or understand how significant the accumulated effects of these acts are upon individuals. This also needs to be included in educational efforts.

*Closing comments* by Susan Murphy: Our diversity work will need to be immersed in all aspects of life at Cornell, from academics to physical education. Today’s critical conversation and the many suggestions offered on things to explore will give us much to consider as we move forward with diversity efforts. I hope we can consider the ways we can foster social justice here on our campus.

*Minutes taken by Janis Talbot*