

Commission on Multicultural Understanding
Executive Council Meeting Summary
January 16, 2009 – Dogwood Room, IMU – 1:30-3:00pm

Attendance:

Chair: Pamela Freeman

Deputy Chair: Bill Shipton

Graduate Assistant: Jodi Benenson

General, At-Large, & Ex-Officio Members: Doug Bauder, Shane Bohbrink (IUSA), Indira Dammu (IUSA), David Hummons, Le Anh Nguyen Long, Rob Meyer, George F. Robinson (IUPD), Nathen Steininger, Sharon Wen (IUSA)

Committee Co-Conveners and Representatives:

Orientation and Welcome: Melanie Payne and Thea Heninger-Lowell

Retreats and Recognition: Babita Upadhyay

Teachable Moments: Not present

Student Coalition: Not present

Faculty and Staff Policy Issues: Not present

Training: Ashleigh Klingman

Student Policy Issues: Sandy Britton and Jen Yu

I. Welcome

- Pam welcomed everyone to the meeting, and all attendees went around and introduced themselves.

II. Sponsorships

Women's History Month Lunch

- It was discussed that the Women's History Month lunch does not meet the criteria of COMU. Sandy noted that the program is not entirely multicultural in nature.
- Particularly, Thea mentioned that this event is not advertised to students, and the fee may deter students from being able to attend.
- The Commission determined that the event falls outside COMU's sponsorship guidelines. For this reason, COMU will not sponsor this event, even though it is an important community endeavor.
- There are several COMU Executive Council members who will be attending the event and will therefore be representing COMU in this way.

MASTI 2009

- MASTI 2009 is an annual college conference that is planned by the Indian Student Association. The event will take place on February 28, 2009 and involves students from all over the country.
- There is not a specific fee for this conference, and there are components that all students can attend (such as a dance competition, a formal dinner, guest speakers, and networking events.)
- Doug motioned to contribute \$100 to this event. He mentioned that this appears to be a great event that is being initiated by students, and they are clearly thinking ahead by securing funds well before the event.
- Melanie P. seconded Doug's motion.
- It was voted to provide \$100 for the MASTI 2009 event.
- Bill mentioned that it might be nice to develop a simple application form for potential sponsors to have. This form could be put on our website.
- Jodi will put together a simple form for the February 20, 2009 COMU meeting.

III. Committee Updates

A. Retreats and Recognition

- The COMU retreat will be February 6, 2009 from 10:30am-8pm. Linda Sue Warner, President of Haskell Indian Nations University in Lawrence, Kansas, will be the keynote speaker. This event will be taking place at the Neal Marshall Black Culture Center.
- Babita mentioned that the Bridgewater Lounge has also been reserved, but it is still unclear what type of panel discussion will be occurring in that room.
- Pam noted that Haskell is the place the Cultural Immersion trip is visiting this weekend, over Martin Luther King Jr. Day.
- Bill mentioned that the trip left on Thursday, January 15 and is currently on their way to Kansas.
- Ashleigh mentioned that Haskell used to be a boarding school, and it has a lot of poignant stories. The Federal government turned the boarding school into a university, and now it is one of the most recognized universities for Native American students.
- Regarding the Culture Immersion trip, Doug mentioned that the legacy of MLK Jr. has been expanded to other issues, such as Native American issues. Bill mentioned that about 45 people went on the trip this year.

B. Student Coalition

- No report – the student coalition is again in need of a student leader.

C. Teachable Moments

- The committee was not present, but they will be meeting on January 21 at 4pm in the IMU to discuss the issue of labels, language, and multiculturalism.

D. Student Policy Issues

- Sandy mentioned that the committee is going to meet and will hopefully have an update about religious discrimination/accommodation policies. The committee will report next month.
- Regarding the student accommodations and events form at the IMU, Sandy mentioned that the committee reviewed its first round of applications. Not all groups met the guidelines to obtain the rooms, so the committee will be meeting again after contacting the groups, to see if the students can tweak their application to meet the criteria.

E. Faculty & Staff Policy Issues

- Pam updated the group and explained that Hilary will be using one of her courses to allow students to help write content for the Benton Mural project.
- Hilary received clearance from Overseas Studies to share the display case outside of Woodburn 100. She also talked with the building manager and found out that we have to go through the Committee for Teaching and Learning, a faculty committee, to receive additional clearance.
- Hilary also heard that several faculty members have complained about disruption of classes in Woodburn 100.
- Hilary feels strongly that we need to have something outside of the room, whether it is a TV monitor outside of the display case or a brochure that people could take with them containing information about the Benton Murals. Another idea would be to create a website, which would provide information about the mural.
- Melanie said she supports pursuing minimally a display – perhaps not highly interactive – but at least something that moves. This could be a great compromise. Things have not changed in the display since the 1990s, and something needs to be done.
- Also, Pam mentioned that a sign could be put outside of the door so people would not interrupt class.
- Shane mentioned that there are several IUSA representatives on the Teaching and Learning Spaces Committee, which discusses building expansion and classroom allocations. Pam will make sure that Hilary knows that IUSA representatives are on this committee. Hilary has been in touch with several individuals to answer questions about the mural.
- Pam believes that we will compromise if we must, but first let's figure out what the best doable plan is. If we do compromise, we'll have to rewrite the proposal and receive the Provost's approval.

- Also, Hilary and Natalie want to receive information from students, especially groups of students who may be directly affected by the mural. They are working to contact various student groups.
- Le Anh is going to be having a meeting with the Women of Color Leadership conference planning committee, and will bring up this issue.
- Pam also intends for someone to make a comment about the project at the Unity Summit on MLK Jr. Day.
- Thea also mentioned that the Forest Living Learning Center may be helpful as well.
- Pam noted that the committee may be looking to hire a graduate student with knowledge in informatics to help design the website and brochure. Doug suggested seeking a student through the School of Informatics about this opportunity.
- The committee is also going to get an estimate from IU Creative Services to see how much it will cost for them to design a website and/or brochure.

F. Training Committee

- Ashleigh mentioned that Rob wants to do a Lunch and Learn about being more open with students about multicultural issues.
- Ashleigh was going to meet with Deb Getz, as she wants to do a pilot project of peer discussions on different issues, and actually try to get her students to lead these discussions. Ashleigh is going to help with the facilitation of these events.
- Bill mentioned that on Monday (MLK Jr. Day) from noon-3pm in the Willkie Auditorium there is a Unity Summit. The program this year is about “how do we react when friends/family members make derogatory comments about people.”
- Doug mentioned that the program has been gathering information from people about potentially derogatory things that have happened to them, and at the summit, people are going to talk about what we can do to recognize statements or actions that have occurred in people's lives.

G. Orientation & Welcome

- Thea discussed the New Student and Transfer Student evening, and described it as a nice evening where incoming students got to learn about the history of IU. There were activities such as trivia questions and prizes. Students appeared to be engaged the whole time, which was great.
- Thea and Melanie say thank you for all of those who were involved.
- Doug noted the importance of this event at a time of academic transition.
- Pam thought it was great to find out where students were from, and it was an interesting group of new students who came to IU in January.
- Melanie thought that her favorite part was hearing where all of the people are from, and listening to them tell their stories.
- Thea thought about putting together a blog for COMU events and for people to find out what exactly COMU does. Jodi will plan on setting up the blog by next meeting.
- Melanie mentioned that we will be asking people to staff the COMU table this spring, and COMU has also teamed up with Hillel. This summer we will make it a goal to get all of the shifts filled.
- Le Anh, Ashleigh, and Jodi will be here to help for some of the summer.

IV. Announcements and Discussion Items

A. Campus Community Partnership Meeting

- Pam mentioned that the date for this meeting will be March 12, 2009 at the Bloomington City Hall from 3pm-5pm.
- More information will come at our next meeting.

B. Boots to Books – February 12 at the IMU

- Doug talked about how much Margaret does to help students, and Pam noted that Margaret helps students to figure out their courses, advises students, and helps in other academic ways when students deploy.
- This event is in the Dogwood Room at the IMU on February 12, 2009 from noon-1:30pm.

C. Director of Student Legal Services Interviews

- Pam mentioned that we have very interesting candidates for this position, and there will be an opportunity for you to hear from the candidates and interact with them next week.
- There are five candidates, two internal from IU and three external (from Indiana, New York, and Minnesota.)
- Please let Pam know if you are interested in attending these interviews, especially students.

V. Reports from Culture Centers

- Sandy mentioned that IU has over 100 new international students this spring semester, and they came to the International Center for a movie and pizza night. Coffee hours start next week at the International Center and are from 4-6pm.
- Melanie talked about the electronic newsletter the Office of Orientation puts together for new students. If you have upcoming events, you can email them to Melanie (mpayne@indiana.edu) and they can be put in your newsletter. It usually goes out the second week of the month, between the 5th and the 10th.
- Doug mentioned that there is a three day conference from February 13-15, 2009 – MBLGTACC 2009 – which will bring together students, staff, and academics from all over the Midwest. Thea also mentioned that she is looking for volunteers for MBLGTACC 2009, so if you are willing to give up 2-4 hours of your weekend, please let her know.
- David talked about Elaine Brown, who is a former leader of the Black Panther party and will be speaking on Sunday, January 20th at the IMU. David noted that between the City of Bloomington and the campus, we celebrate the spirit of the King holiday as well as anyone.
- Melanie P. asked if we will be having the Bloomington Multicultural Festival this year. Jodi will email Lillian to find out.