

**Commission on Multicultural Understanding
Executive Council Meeting Summary
March 27, 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: Beverly Calender-Anderson, Indira Dammu (IUSA), Sachiko Higgins-Kante (for Audrey McCluskey), David Hummons, Rob Meyer

Committee Co-Conveners:

Orientation and Welcome: Melanie Payne

Retreats and Recognition: Lillian Casillas and Barry Magee

Teachable Moments: Not present

Student Coalition: Not present

Faculty and Staff Policy Issues: Not present

Training: Rob Aspy and Eric Love

Student Policy Issues: Sandy Britton, Rachel Peterson, and Jennifer Yu

I. Welcome and Introductions

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

II. Sponsorship Updates and Requests

A. IU MASTI

- Jodi hopes to hear from the philanthropy chair of the Indian Student Association (ISA), Jagan Kansal. He may attend today's meeting, but if not, Jodi will email an update to COMU Execs and Co-conveners when she hears from the Indian Student Association.
- Jodi let everyone know that the event occurred on February 28, 2009.

B. Slam Poetry Event Request

- COMU received a request for an event occurring on April 8 at McNutt Residence Center called "Slam Poetry – Open Mic Night featuring Joaquin Zihuatanejo." Joaquin is an HBO Def Jam Poet and is was the #1-ranked Slam Poet in the World in 2008 and 2009.
- The event is being put on by the Indiana University Student Personnel Association (IUSPA), the Latino Graduate Student Association, and the Black Graduate Student Association. The request came from a Masters student in the Higher Education and Student Affairs (HESA) graduate program.
- Eric explained that Slam Poetry came out of the environment of nightclubs, and is loud and aggressive poetry. Slam Poetry is socially conscious, anti-racist poetry.
- Office of Diversity Education gave the students planning this event a \$500 grant, and they have support from other groups including the Residence Halls Association, La Casa/Latino Cultural Center, and Residential Programs & Services.
- Pam mentioned that we have about \$200 left in our sponsorship budget for this year.
- David moved to give \$200 to sponsor this event. Sandy seconded the \$200.
- The Commission voted to give \$200 to sponsor the Slam Poetry event on April 8.

III. Committee Updates

A. Student Policy Issues

- Jennifer met with Padraic Kenney who is the chair of the Educational Policy Committee of the Bloomington Faculty Council. They discussed concerns from students (ie: lack of ease in filling out the religious accommodations form, inability for students to find the religious accommodations form, unawareness of some students and faculty that the form exists, unawareness of the IU faculty and administration that religious observances and holidays occur, scheduling of exams during these religious observance periods, and insensitivity to accommodating students who need to have an exam rescheduled.)
- During her meeting, they discussed adding “as well as lecture and discussion to” to “...alert them to the need to schedule exams and other requirements around the holidays...”
- Jennifer also noted that the Dean of Faculties Office does not exist anymore, so on the current form this must be changed. She would also like to add “but not limited to” after “prepare a list of dates for the major religious holidays” part of the form. Finally, they discussed adding “or within two weeks after any posted changes to the syllabus” to “a reasonable accommodation for that observance by the end of the second week of the course.”
- Jennifer mentioned that they came to a few solutions during the meeting, finding that: 2 weeks is long enough (2 weeks is the same timeline for other accommodations), that a link could be put on the Course Registration website and on the COMU website, including a paragraph that includes the link e-mailed to professors so they can copy and paste it into their syllabus, and finally, students should be told to fill out a form even if they do not think they will need to (just to be on the safe side.)
- Pam said that she is working on a website that will display the official Indiana University code. This website will be going live pretty soon. Since this is a Bloomington campus procedure, Pam mentioned that a link could be put under the “procedures” section of this website.
- Jennifer mentioned that not every professor puts this policy on their syllabus because there is not a standard paragraph. Pam added that people mentioned this issue to Vice Provost Sonya Stevens.
- Bill said that one of the debates was whether there should be a list of specific holidays included in this “standard paragraph.” Jennifer said that including a list of specific holidays is a possibility, but only if they add “the list is not limited.”
- Padraic was going to bring up this conversation with the Educational Policy Committee.
- Pam mentioned that on April 7 there is a Bloomington Faculty Council (BFC) meeting, and if the BFC committee is going to get something changed in time for something to be implemented for next fall, they need to be working on it right now.
- Jennifer is going to follow up with Padriac about what COMU can do to help move the process forward, and ask what steps have been taken by his committee since their last meeting.
- Jennifer said that he seemed to support the recommendations we talked about. She said that he referred to a lot of his experiences at the University of Colorado.
- Rob thinks there may already be a pre-made statement that exists but will get in touch with Jennifer about whether this is happening.
- Bill said that if he were rewriting the form, he would change what is bolded at the bottom and make it a little more inviting. Change the quote “Faculty do not have to consider accommodations for the purpose of allowing students to travel away from Bloomington for a religious observance.” and make the statement more inviting. This will allow for students who want to leave Bloomington to spend the holiday somewhere else to have the opportunity to do so.
- Regarding the Teaching brochure, the resources section needs to be updated and the content may need to be updated, but not a whole lot. This will be updated by the end of this year in time for next fall.

B. Teachable Moments

- Jodi reported that Sharlene, Becca, and Ashleigh have been working on a program called “Respect Identity – Avoid the Labels.” This event will be taking place on April 1 at 6:00pm in the Georgian Room at the IMU.
- This program was created in response to the November 2008 IDS editorial that brought up controversial questions of labeling. This event will facilitate students teaching other students

about what labels bug or even harm them and why, while sharing methods for redirecting harmful labels into valuable expressions of respect.

- Jodi passed around flyers and encouraged everyone to spread the word. Eric suggested creating a Facebook Event for the program, and he will help publicize in this way.

C. Retreats and Recognition

- Lillian mentioned that the 2008-09 COMU Awards Recognition Ceremony will be taking place from 4:30-6:00pm at the Federal Room in the IMU. In order to get to the Federal Room you have to take the escalators up until you can't go any more.
- The winners of the 2008-09 COMU Awards include: Undergraduate Student Ruchi Shah, Graduate Student Delphine Criscenzo-Boyer, Staff Member Debbie Melloan, Faculty Member: Hilary Kahn, Community Member Choonhyun Jeon, and Outstanding Program MLK Unity Summit. Also, a Special Merit Award will be given to Dean McKaig for his commitment to diversity and COMU.
- Jodi found a photo of the entire COMU retreat group from 1984, and Pam thinks there might have been additional photos from the 1984 retreat. Jodi will continue to look for these photos this week.
- Melanie P. also added that there was a time capsule made about COMU from a retreat in either 1992 or 1996, so Jodi will look through those files as well.
- Barry asked whether we received many nominations this year, and Bill said it was more than we've had in previous years – particularly in the category of Outstanding Program.
- Barry said that next year we could possibly add something to the website that will allow people to attach documents to nominations.
- Since there were so many programs nominated, Bill can give the impressive list of programs to Dean McKaig and he can read it during the ceremony. We will ask nominees stand if they are present at the event.
- Bill said that the IMU donated Tudor Room gift certificates to the winners, and we are still waiting on Barnes and Noble in the IMU.
- There was discussion about inviting the IDS to the event, and also creating an "advertorial" (a press-release like event in the IDS. We should also contact Nicole Brooks from the Herald Times, and representatives from the MCCSC.

D. Faculty & Staff Policy Issues

- Jodi spoke with Hilary yesterday and she received a positive response from the campus space committee about pursuing the Benton Mural project in Woodburn 100.
- Hilary and Pam have to revise the proposal in order to let Provost Hanson know that we may be changing a few parts of the project and that we may be taking a little longer to complete the project than initially expected.
- Pam mentioned that Hilary has worked tirelessly with her students and with this project. Although the ideas are forming in a way that are taking a little longer than anticipated, we need to remain committed to figuring out the logistics for the project as to not disrupt the activities going on in the classroom.

E. Training Committee

- Eric explained that the committee discussed having three events. The first one is called the Diversity Olympics and individuals from different student groups would be invited to the challenge. As the students arrive in their respective groups, individuals from each group will be placed on different teams. The premise behind the idea is that people from different backgrounds come together on one team. The committee would be working with CASTL (Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning), the Union Board, and the Neal Marshall Black Culture Center to put this program on.
- Additionally, Eric mentioned that part of the program will entail a Multicultural Mastery game, and the goal is for the team to learn that in order to do well on the Multicultural Mastery cards, the team needs to have different people from diverse backgrounds comprising the team.
- The second idea was to do a project that was a Unity Summit type event for students who have not been attracted to diversity types of events (ie: representatives from SAA, IUSF, etc.). This

event would have a “train the trainer” component for CASTL and other groups who have been involved in diversity trainings themselves. The idea is that when the student leaders from typically non-diverse organizations experience these events they will want to continue to promote diversity in their organizations.

- The event is scheduled tentatively for Tuesday, April 7th at 7pm.

F. Orientation and Welcome

- Melanie P. said that there are 21 days that we need to cover the COMU booth for summer orientation. The dates range from June 16-July 23. She hopes everyone can give at least a day to cover the booth. Our presence there is important in a lot of ways to show students and their parents that something like COMU exists.
- Eric brought up putting the calendar on the IU Campus Guides website. Melanie will look into this.
- Melanie mentioned that September 9, 2009 is the tentative date for the Student Involvement Fair meeting. We will probably have the COMU Information Meeting the day after, September 10 at the International Center.
- Melanie will work on making a card to hand out at the COMU booth during summer orientation that has information about the September 10 call out meeting.

G. Student Coalition

- Pam mentioned that Dr. Ellen Wu, who was just on an Asia Pacific Heritage Month panel that she attended, is now a faculty member at IU. Ellen was involved in COMU as a student, and was also the president of the Asian American Association.
- Pam added that it is nice to see students back as faculty members, and perhaps we can get individuals like Dr. Wu and other IU graduates in the community involved in COMU.

IV. Announcements and Discussion Items

A. Bloomington Multicultural Expo

- Lillian and the Bloomington Multicultural Festival committee met on March 25th and talked about having all of the festivals (Moon Festival, Soul Food Festival, Festival Latino, etc.) on one day. The name would be changed to the “Bloomington Multicultural Expo.”
- The vision for the expo is that the event could be held at Bryan Park, and they could have shelters/villages for the different nonprofits and other supporting events. Each individual festival would all share a stage to hold performances throughout the day.
- Beverly Smith, who is on the committee, suggested adding a children’s component (village) to the event with the help of the Mathers Museum.
- The tentative date for this event would be October 10, 2009. Lillian said that the one thing they are waiting for is to look at the festivals who already have things in the works, and make sure that this date is okay with them. They might need to have some staggering of the times, but ultimately this event will save on costs, time, and allow people to go to more than one festival.
- The question was brought up of when the Lotus Festival is, and this event does not conflict with the Lotus Festival, which will be two weeks earlier.
- Lillian also wanted to make sure that this event did not conflict with the Pow Wow occurring with the Native American student groups.
- Beverly Smith was going to check Bloomington High School South for a rain location.

B. Campus Community Partnership Meeting Update

- Beverly said we had about 26 attendees at the March 12 event, which was held at City Hall from 3-5pm. Pam mentioned that the late afternoon format worked out very nicely this year. The group came up with a large range of programs, including a program about relational aggression, the Unity Summit, “Start-up to Suit-up,” and the MOSAIC Diversity Film Festival.
- During the event, everyone gave introductions, at which time Doug had the idea of doing a history of Bloomington.
- Since this time, Beverly has been doing some research, and contacted the Agency for Instructional Technology, which does educational projects worldwide. They talked about doing a

“workshop in a box,” which would allow us to tell the Bloomington story. By creating this workshop in a box, anyone who wanted to go out and talk about how Bloomington has overcome issues of community bias and diversity would be able to do so with this educational workshop in a box.

- Sandy said it was her first time attending the event, and she learned about the MOSAIC film festival. She said that there were other things mentioned on the list that there were no tables for. Pam responded by saying that they did not want to make the event too structured, but this is something to keep in mind for next year’s meeting.
- Beverly mentioned that we are also going to send the list of all of the projects and potential projects out to the group who attended, and to those who were unable to attend.
- Lillian added, regarding the “workshop in a box,” that perhaps we could also look at some of the stories (like from Stories of the Spirit) that we could bring to the Bloomington in a Box idea.

C. IUSA Diversity Amendment Update

- Indira said that the amendment failed by two votes. The multicultural student groups who attended were really upset by the way the discussion had been handled and they did not feel that IUSA was being respectful.
- The students from these groups are planning on creating a diversity coalition and trying to plan this again. They felt that they only lost by two votes, and can advocate for the amendment, which would create a more diverse student government.
- Those in opposition saw the amendment framed as being a “quota” system; that you have ensure that a number of congressional seats were allocated to minority students.
- Those who supported the amendment believed that IUSA has to be representative of everyone at IU, and currently is not.
- Pam suggested inviting the group of cultural student groups to be on the Student Coalition. Eric will contact the group about the Student Coalition.

D. IMU Rooms for Student Organizations Update

- Rob said the IMU has given out over \$3,000 for student organizations to use the rooms. He mentioned that the most common reason why they deny applications is because the event is not open to all student groups or because it is not a student organization applying.
- He said it has been fairly successful – there have been a variety of programs that have been fundraisers and many that have not.

V. Reports from Cultural Centers and Offices

A. Report on Diversity Day

- Since he was on the committee, Eric asked for people’s reactions to IU’s Inaugural Diversity Day on March 25.
- David said that he thought the venue for the opening celebration was a problem for the first night, but better the second night during the Rita Dove event. He also did not think that the promotions this year were clear, and were very last minute. He added that it would be nice to have a master list from all of the departments that are participating in the day, so individuals can see what types of events are occurring, even if they cannot attend the events. The two things the day was missing: publicity and clarity.
- Sandy helped recruiting the international students performing. She found two people but they didn’t really understand what the program was about.
- Eric said that he thought the planning for the day was started too late. He also said that the publicity did not accurately promote what the event was. For instance, many students did not realize that Rita Dove was going to read her book during the event. They came into the event not knowing what to expect, and the information could have been related better.
- Eric also added that this was the first year of the event, so the committee is taking everyone’s suggestions and hoping to make the day more effective in 2010.

Meeting adjourned at 3:15pm.

