

Centenary College of Louisiana
Diversity Committee Meeting Minutes
10 October 2016

Dana Kress presiding.

Meeting began at 4:05

Present: Andia Augustin-Billy, Simone Byrd, Edie Cummings, Ashlie Daigle, Ben Green, Ayanna Griffin, LaToya Hemphill, Dana Kress, Cordara Newson, Deborah Scarlato

Absent: Heather Boucher, Chris Brown, Don Hooper, Mark Leeper, Anzhanne Mackyeon, Montgomery Mewers, Chandra Pokhrel, Monica Powell, Cecilia Rodriguez

Welcome and Introductions:

Meeting began with an anonymous comment that “Don Hooper is much more handsome today.” Pros and cons were discussed. No vote was taken.

Minutes: The minutes for the 3 October 2016 meeting were accepted as written.

Student Issues:

Ayanna Griffin brought up a concern that a student or students shared with her. This was just a discussion and not a formal complaint.

The gymnastics team works out in the pool two times a week and this is a problem for black women’s hair. The water/chlorine is very damaging to their hair.

After some discussion, it was decided that Dana Kress and LaToya Hemphill will discuss the best way to handle this, if the student wants to make a formal complaint.

Ayanna agreed to meet with the student(s) and give options of how to proceed should they want to take it further.

A comment was made that we should be sure that staff members are aware of the Diversity Committee and know that we are here to help the staff members also. It was brought up that, unlike faculty, staff members do not have any tenure or job guarantee and are therefore reluctant to bring complaints or concerns forward. The Diversity Committee might be a good venue for concerns.

Ashlie Daigle offered to put the Diversity Committee meetings in the What’s Happening to increase awareness of the committee.

Staff Issue:

Simone Byrd and Andia Augustin-Billy brought a staff issue forward for discussion. Both of these ladies live on campus and have heard from some of the custodial staff that the staff is very unhappy with the benefits.

The feeling seems to be that the service people on campus are black and the people of power are white. Centenary is viewed as a plantation style workplace.

The fact was brought up that Bob Blue a VP and on the cabinet, so things are beginning to change. The change is perhaps not far reaching enough. The custodial staff has voiced that they are being asked to cover too much territory with their cleaning, i.e. one person is in assigned to clean all of James dormitory, all the toilets, showers, halls, rooms, etc. The staff used to be larger but now that there are fewer on the custodial staff, there is more for each person to do, without compensations in the benefits. One example was that one staff member had a bad cut that required stitches. They were expected to work before the stitches healed and it delayed the healing process.

It was mentioned that the National Staff and Sodexo Staff have no retirement benefits and there is no pay if they do not keep working.

Discussion was held on what we as a committee could do. Since National and Sodexo are not employed through Centenary, would it be possible for Centenary to offer a benefit of tuition exemption for dependents of National and Sodexo?

Andia, Cordara, and Deborah offered to come up with a questionnaire for staff.

A motion was made and seconded that the Diversity Committee create a Staff Climate Questionnaire. Vote was taken. Motion approved.

Programming: Festival of Lights will be Wednesday Oct. 12th from 7:30–9:00 pm in the Quad (outdoor space between Library, Mickle, and Hamilton Halls)

Meeting adjourned at 5:02

Next Meeting: 24 October 2016 due to faculty meeting on 17 Oct.