

Math Department Climate and Diversity Meeting Minutes
9/27/07

Members Present: Nate Brown, Vaughn Climenhaga, Jim Hager, Cheryl Hile, Anna Mazzucato, Anthony Paglione and Mary Anne Raymond.

Agenda:

1. Feedback on scheduling.
2. Reports on constituent issues/suggestions.
3. Using synergistic room for non-academic purposes.
4. Request for lists of countries represented in the department.
5. Remaining C&D money.
6. Jim's report on college-level C&D committee.
7. Date of next meeting.

The meeting began at 9:30 AM with introductions.

(1) We first heard reports from Vaughn and Cheryl regarding scheduling issues. Cheryl reported that only one person responded to her email request for feedback, and this was more an issue of how rooms were assigned around campus, as opposed to internal scheduling issues. Vaughn received three responses – one good, one bad and one mixed. The main issue seems to be not getting the courses or times requested. Jim mentioned that last minute changes in TA assignments might have been a problem for some.

Two suggestions were made. Vaughn asked if we could compile a list of courses that graduate students typically teach, so newer students have an idea what courses are reasonable to request; hopefully this will reduce the number of newer students not getting the courses they request. Jim suggested getting more input from course coordinators, and others, in the scheduling process.

(2) Anthony informed us that one issue still dominates all others at the undergraduate level: Poor communication skills of many TAs. More training, both in language and in the art of teaching, for our graduate students would be greatly appreciated.

Cheryl reported that shared offices in the basement do not provide adequate space for instructors, especially during office hours.

Vaughn reported the need for more Teaching Seminars – graduate students are unable to attain Teaching Associate status without attending four such seminars, and there have apparently been few in the past two years.

Mary Anne reported that our lack of an official grievance resolution policy has been an issue for some staff members. Jim will check with the college-level committee to see if other departments, or perhaps the college itself, have such a policy. We will revisit the issue after hearing back from Jim. Also, there have been complaints about the men's

bathroom in the basement. We will post signs reminding everyone of their shared responsibilities.

(3) The committee feels that allowing our synergistic room to be used for non-academic purposes runs the risk of sliding down a slippery slope; we are opposed to the idea.

(4) The committee seeks lists of all the countries represented in our department, to complement our diversity related data. Nate agreed to gather the data for faculty, Cheryl for instructors and Vaughn for graduate students.

(5) The committee still has money that was given to us, by the college, for diversity related projects. Committee members were asked to think of creative possibilities and report back at our next meeting.

(6) Jim (who also chairs the college-level C&D committee now) reported that the college-level committee would like to improve communication with all department-level committees. The college-level committee has worked diligently on their web page, as part of this effort, and we intend to do the same. Jim distributed a summary of 2006-2007 accomplishments. He also mentioned some preliminary data related to the high drop out rate in the college of science. More statistical analysis is needed, but at present it seems that ignored FTCAP warnings are strongly correlated with drop out rates. Cheryl reported similar anecdotal evidence from her math 140 classes. Our committee will revisit this issue after further statistical analysis is complete.

(7) The next meeting was scheduled for 9:30 AM on Thursday, November 29.