Open Forum

Wednesday, October 03, 2012

Fowler Athletics’ Auditorium
8:30 – 9:30 am

Minutes

Dr. James R. Kitchen, Vice President for Student Affairs, welcomed the group of approximately 65 attendees.

Dr. Aaron Bruce, Chief Diversity Officer, today’s moderator, discussed the importance of the community’s input and reviewed the questions and scenarios President Hirshman would like the task force to consider during this process.

Concerns and issues from the audience included:

*Bicycles locked on rails and how they impact wheelchair accessibility. We need better enforcement.

*Accessible documents for all students and how these documents are scanned and/or made available for students. We need to market and advocate that there is help available for the disabled student.

*Want to ensure that the university’s definition of diversity includes LGBTQ issues.

*Continue working toward securing and funding an LGBTQ Resource Center on campus. UCs and many CSUs have resource centers and SDSU is about ten years behind on this project.

*We need to look at policies relating to transgender issues and not ignore them.

*Currently, African American students make up approximately 4% of our student body. Would like to see more discussion on how we can increase these numbers.
Moderator - We are building more robust partnerships with the African American community, organizations and community colleges to recruit more African American students for SDSU.

*What is our role regarding growth and development of ethnic studies?*

*How are we going to be different in terms of defining “diversity?”*

*Is the task force working with the campus climate task force, and looking into what experience(s) the current African American students are having? How is this impacting recruitment efforts?*

*There is an ongoing concern about American Sign Language (ASL) and the availability of ASL to students.*

*Would like to see a fraternity created that supports and focuses on the disability experience.*

*We need to educate the non-disabled community about the disabled community.*

*Loss of Mary Shojai is a great concern to all. How do we replace her?*

*There is a perception of disability as a “problem,” and we need to shift that to a conversation that disability is an “asset.” We need to show the common experience and how it crosses all ethnic / cultural boundaries. There is a much larger cultural and shared experience for all.*

*The Task Force should re-examine the general education requirements that focus on the (7) learning outcomes capacities on which GE is based. The capacity that is missing is how and why and when to make appropriate inferences relating to certain groups / populations. There is nothing in the GE curriculum that addresses the needs to understand “diversity.”*

*There is an increase in mental health issues within the student population. We need to try to minimize the stigma for seeking help for mental health and suicide prevention.*

*Recruitment of Native / American Indian students. Historically, our numbers are low. We are hoping to establish a better program on campus and on the reservations. Currently working with NASA to engage the community. President Hirshman has met with tribal leaders and is learning about the challenges and tribal policies.*
*Skateboards on campus present an ongoing hazard to the disabled student. How do we educate the campus on the challenges created by skateboarders and how do we enforce the rules?

Moderator - "Teachable" moments may be a great way to enforce and/or educate all communities about the challenges and issues the disabled community faces.

*How do we partner and/or include local companies in our diversity efforts?

Moderator - We have (2) community representatives. SDG&E and the Barrio Logan College Institute, on the Task Force.

*How do we include the “commuter” student experience? They are a more diverse population, living at home and having a different experience than the on-campus student.

*How are we going to be strategic in our efforts to recruit Latino students into STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) majors, rather than historically traditional majors?

*Student groups within disabled community reaching out to create more support, social and networking experiences for one another. Important to understand that the deaf community is part of other diverse communities, as well. Often, these groups work in silos and we need to have more inclusiveness and interconnectedness among all groups and communities.

*American Sign Language is known by many, but experienced by few. There is a strong interest in offering ASL to students on campus.

*Diversity can be a critical component to the “solution” to problems. Would like to see that diversity is inherent in all the other strategic plans.

*The Cross Cultural Center is hoping to support the disabled and all groups on campus. Student groups are encouraged to work with the Cross Cultural Center to enhance their visibility and awareness on campus.

*Concerned about the budget, administration and policies that define our infrastructure and how can we protect our diversity programs when faced with these budgetary issues and times? There is a big “disconnect” here.

Moderator - We are prioritizing. There is a shift / change in the community. We are creating unique collaborations and having great
conversations. **How do we create sustainable programming? How are we going to pay for it? Do we consider fees?**

*We need to **incorporate diversity into the bottom line.** Diversity successes are good for business. It creates pride. Create a culture where people want to work. We need to show leadership where we are **lacking** in diversity.*

*As academics, we **need to be bold** about what we are doing.*

*In some parts of campus, diversity and excellence are considered **mutually exclusive.** Don’t feel we earned HSI status, but evolved to it. Want to be part of the action, not the evolution.*

Forum adjourned at 9:30 am.