

February 17, 2005

Dear Colleagues: Please add to, or correct the summary, as you deem appropriate based on your own recollections.

Thanks so much.
Amber and Flore

The Minority Affairs Committee met on February 17. Three informative presentations were made:

1. Adam Brigham , coordinator of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Trans-gender Center (LGBT) met with the Committee, and presented a lot information about the services of his center. These services revolve around three main functions: Education, support, and advocacy. The LGBT center is intended to be a safe place where students can come and discuss issues of concerns to them, and be assured that they will be addressed. It also seeks to inform the campus community about the needs of this particular group, so that no member faces discrimination. The center funds a couple of publications such as Shout, where members can add their perspectives and thoughts to those of the MU community. In addition the Center maintains a library where interested individuals can check out materials: books, magazines, and videos.

Adam also shared information about how LGBT students can be-- perhaps unintentionally- discriminated against and humiliated in the classroom. One such instance happened in a beginning level Spanish class where the TA corrected a male student for saying in Spanish that he went out with his "novio" (masculine form) instead of of "novia "(feminine form), perceived by the instructor to be the only appropriate choice of a mate for a male student. Adam explained that there was still a need for faculty sensitivity. One of the committee members who is also a professor in the Romance Languages department stated that these sensitivity issues would be brought up to the attention of the department to ensure that no student feels corrected unduly because of his/her sexual orientation preferences. Others concerns expressed included those or roommate selection in residence halls.

The issue of restrooms was also brought up in the discussion of LGBT persons, and it was suggested that more "single person restrooms" be added to campus buildings to serve the needs of people who might be dealing with "multiple gender identities." The committee was in agreement that such recommendation be made to the higher administration.

2. The second presentation about Benefits for Domestic Partners was made by Professor Linda Reeder and Professor Chip Callahan. Both colleagues are members of a Chancellor's committee established to look at this issue. It was pointed that this issue had to do primarily with equity, recruitment and retention, compliance, and social justice.

The committee is also looking at how peer institutions deal with this issue on their campuses.

Basically, domestic partners are at a disadvantage under the current system because it is implicitly discriminatory: Such discriminatory examples include:

- a. no spousal accommodations are made for employees who cannot marry their partners because of state law;
- b. they cannot request parental leaves to take care of their partners, or children they are raising together who may not be their biological children;
- c. partners are not covered under the tuition allocation given to spouses and children.

In sum, our homosexual employees do not enjoy the same benefits as our non-homosexual employees. These issues in themselves constitute instances of discrimination. These issues were identified in the Campus Climate Survey conducted last year. The Domestic Partner Benefits Committee is looking at ways to make sure that the University complies to non-discriminatory principles in all its policies.

3. The third presentation was by Ann Korchgen, Vice Provost for Enrollment Management. Dr. Korchgen told the committee that there were three fundamental issues pertaining to the recruitment of minority students:
 - a. MU's reputation as being traditionally unfriendly to minority students;
 - b. the pipeline issue, which has to do with the limited number of minority students throughout the state of Missouri who are eligible in the first place to attend MU based on our selective admission criteria;
 - c. the competition issue, which has to do with the fact that other colleges/universities in Missouri are competing with MU for the same pool of students.

To be more effective, the admissions office has established direct relations with urban schools in St. Louis and Kansas City; as well as the Black Legislative Caucus. Counselors and Students from urban schools are bused to MU where they can see firsthand the various programs that exist to facilitate the retention and success of minority students. In addition a summer Bridge Program headed by Jeff Williams, an African American Professor from English, is in place to assure the transition from High School to MU. Dr. Korchgen stated that these various efforts have begun to pay off, and that the recruitment and retention of minority students was on the rise. She also stated that minority students were graduating more or less at the same rate as the general population.