

Summary of September Campus Climate Meetings

The meetings began with a summary of some tasks suggested by last year's Campus Climate Project that have already been initiated. For example, the Admissions Office has appointed Ms. Marylyn Scott to focus on diversity recruitment, and Professor Lavina Shankar has joined that office to represent the faculty's voice in promoting a multicultural community.

Dean Reich has met with chairs of departments beginning searches for new faculty in order to demonstrate strategies for publicizing positions to a more diverse candidate pool. When Houchins consulted faculty diversity officers at other campuses, she learned that projects for equity in the professoriate succeed best when they originate from suggestions and programs generated by the faculty and that arguments promoting institutional demographic, curricular, and pedagogical diversity must first appeal to the intellectual interests of faculty. So some faculty have suggested that a few faculty meetings this year include roundtable discussions modeled on previous Gen. Ed. conversations to brainstorm about ways academics can promote diversity. The DOF has asked the aid of Division Chairs to establish a speaker series that will feature scholars from both outside Bates and on campus whose work uses the lenses of gender/sex, race, sexuality, and/or class through which to analyze the subjects of their research. Following this series, Bates faculty members who have included an aspect of diversity in their proposed research will compete for summer stipends to support their work. The Dean will also schedule some faculty panels to discuss issues of diversity as they pertain to pedagogy.

During the Climate Project, students suggested that the college investigate diversity training as a way to create spaces for meaningful dialogue on campus. Over the summer, Professor Houchins and Dean Gurney attended a program in Boston called "Facing History and Ourselves," and Houchins attended Steve Wessler's training of the residential staff. Both Gurney and Houchins are forming a task force to select (a) program(s) that Bates might adapt to its needs for sensitizing the community to issues of diversity.

Students also noted that the Campus Climate Project provided a forum for those interested in promoting diversity to meet and plan activities that advance multicultural understanding. Michael Wilson volunteered to facilitate the creation of such a group this semester.

Some students and staff who visited Carleton last year said they wanted to institute an activity like "Chili Night" during which the entire campus would be invited to discuss a topic focused on some aspect of diversity. One or two in the meeting said they had begun to plan such an event and that they would report back to the intern, Rose Schwab (rschwab@bates.edu) for the Special Assistant to the President as they proceed.

Because the Climate Project Report observed that better campus communication helped in promoting a more tolerant and thoughtful atmosphere, Dean Reese promised to see that the bulletin boards for recording incidents that have stymied the creation and maintenance of openness to campus diversity would go up in Ladd Library and the Atrium again; the DOS will institute a permanent Hate/Bias Response Group; and Houchins will institute an advisory group to the Special Assistant. President Hansen has also authorized a search for a new Director of Affirmative Action.

Houchins also said that she would begin to talk to representatives of staff to schedule projects that would work for their interests.

Those who had worked with Elizabeth Tobin last year expressed an interest in completing and refining the draft of the report on the Climate Project and said they would reassemble in their working groups to edit their portions of the report. The entire Climate Group will meet again this semester to put together this final edition of the report and to give an account of their progress in achieving some of the goals articulated by their subgroups.