Diversity Action Council
August 27, 2013, 12:30 p.m.
HIG 235

Present: Jane Fernandes, Bill Haggard, Jimin Lee, Chris Dahlquist, Lamar Hylton, Debbie Miles, Keith Bramlett, Maya Newlin, Agya Boakye-Boaten, Surain Subramaniam

Guests: Skip Capone, University Counsel, Heather Parlier, Associate Counsel

Interpreter: Rebecca Poulter  Note taker: Elaine Warren

AGENDA:
1. Report on Supreme Court decisions/other matters (Skip Capone & Heather Parlier)
2. Update on AVID Scholarship (Lamar Hylton)
3. Update from Staff Development sub-committee (Deborah Miles)

Jane opened the meeting at 12:30 p.m. and welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the new academic year. She introduced Skip and Heather and then asked the committee members to introduce themselves.

I. REPORT ON SUPREME COURT DECISIONS/OTHER MATTERS:

• Skip gave some background on an affirmative action case in the Supreme Court, Fisher v University of Texas at Austin. He stated that he didn’t think the case changed the law, but did change what the Court is focusing on, using race as a factor for states to give/deny benefits, i.e., scholarships. The Court is very hostile to the use of race as a factor for decisions. It believes in “color blindness.”

• Heather provided information on how the University of Texas at Austin considered race in undergraduate admissions. Abigail Fisher, a white female, was rejected in Fall 2008.
  o The Courts ruled for U.T. She appealed to 5th Circuit which ruled for U.T.
  o Supreme Court – 7 to 1 decision in Fisher’s favor. Law remains the same but noted universities must look at all alternatives in achieving diversity and “critical mass.”
  o Heather recommended reading Ginsberg’s dissent.
  o Link to complete Supreme Court Opinion: http://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/12pdf/11-345_5gm.pdf

Skip stated each institution must make its own case. Regarding the use of race in scholarships, he does not know of any court that has upheld a race-restricted scholarship.

Explore alternatives to race-based scholarship:
1. 1st generation student scholarships
2. Top 10% of every class - scholarship
3. Socio-economic status as a basis for scholarship
4. Scholarships to students in a specific geographic area

II. UPDATE ON AVID SCHOLARSHIP:

• We have 5 team members: Lamar Hylton, Annie Burton, Kim Kessaris, Shannon Earle, Julie Heinitsch
• AVID Program – Stands for *Advancing Via Individual Determination*. National program, elementary through higher education, comprised of 1st generation students
• We have a strong and historic connection with AVID at Asheville High School (AHS). The primary demographics are 1st generation students and students of color
• We are ready for recruitment and retention; suggests attaching an internship program
• Identify funding sources
• Assessment Model
• Timeline: This academic year to continue development
  • Spring 2014 – market to juniors at AHS
  • 2014 – 15 – juniors will apply to UNC Asheville
  • 2015 – 1st cohort of students will arrive. Looking to bring 4 students
• Only targeting AHS for the initial years

A question was raised about whether the admissions standards will be the same for all students. Lamar clarified that we will look at all factors without putting too much weight on any one factor. Jane stated that Admissions uses a wholistic approach with GPA, level of high school course challenge, student essay, letters of recommendation, SAT/ACT, community involvement, long-term career goals, and so on to make offers of admission. Keith Bramlett would like us to aim for more than 4 students in the first cohort – he suggested up to 6. Lamar replied that it depends on the donors and how much money we can raise in support of the scholarship.

Maya Newlin expressed that if we could get current university students to go to AHS and recruit, that would be a big help. Keith Bramlett stated that there is a lot of interest in first generation students this year – reading circles are being held and other such endeavors. Maya asked if there is any effort in identifying third or fourth generation students, such as herself, to go and speak at AHS with the first generation students. Lamar did not know of any such effort at this time.

Skip Capone, after hearing the DAC discussion, found no reason to be concerned about it from a legal perspective. With his blessing, Jane congratulated Lamar on the successful initiation of a scholarship goal that the entire campus can rally around.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:30 p.m.