

June 11, 2004

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Special Committee on Diversity:

Warren M. Thompson, Chair
G. Slaughter Fitz-Hugh, Jr.
James W. Head
Glynn D. Key
Lewis F. Payne
Georgia M. Willis
John O. Wynne
Gordon F. Rainey, Jr., Ex Officio

and

The Remaining Members of the Board:

William G. Crutchfield, Jr.	Mark J. Kington
Susan Y. Dorsey	Don R. Pippin
Thomas F. Farrell, II	Terence P. Ross
W. Heywood Fralin	Thomas A. Saunders, III
E. Darracott Vaughan, Jr., M.D.	

FROM: Alexander G. Gilliam, Jr.

SUBJECT: Minutes of the Meeting of the Special Committee on
Diversity on June 11, 2004

The Special Committee on Diversity of the Board of Visitors of the University of Virginia met, in Open Session, at 3:20 p.m., Friday, June 11, 2004, in the East Oval Room of the Rotunda; Warren M. Thompson, Chair, presided. G. Slaughter Fitz-Hugh, Jr., James W. Head, Ms. Glynn D. Key, Lewis F. Payne, Ms. Georgia M. Willis, John O. Wynne, and Gordon F. Rainey, Jr., Rector, were present.

Present as well were Ms. Susan Y. Dorsey, W. Heywood Fralin, Don R. Pippin, Terence P. Ross, and E. Darracott Vaughan, Jr., M.D.

Also present were John T. Casteen, III, Leonard W. Sandridge, Alexander G. Gilliam, Jr., Ms. Patricia M. Lampkin, Ms. Angela M. Davis, Michael J. Smith, Gene D. Block, Robert E. Reynolds, M.D., and Ms. Jeanne Flippo Bailes.

BECAUSE OF A MALFUNCTION IN THE RECORDING EQUIPMENT, MOST OF THESE MINUTES ARE A RECONSTRUCTION

The Chair explained that he and the Rector and the President had met with Ms. Davis and Mr. Smith, the Co-Chairs of the President's Commission on Diversity and Equity, on May 17th to hear a report on the work of the Commission. In lieu of a regular meeting of the Special Committee, therefore, he had asked Ms. Davis and Mr. Smith to make a presentation on the work of the Commission so far. He asked the President to introduce the members of the Commission present.

In introducing Mr. Smith and Ms. Davis, the President explained something of the methodology the Commission has used in pursuing its inquiries.

Ms. Davis and Mr. Smith made their presentation, which they called "Embracing Diversity in Pursuit of Excellence." A transcript of the presentation is attached to these Minutes.

The report was well received by the Committee and provoked a lively discussion. None of this, unfortunately, survived the breakdown in the recording equipment.

The final report of the President's Commission is due in September.

On motion, the meeting was adjourned at 4:50 p.m.

AGG:jb

These minutes have been posted to the University of Virginia's Board of Visitors website.

<http://www.virginia.edu/bov/specialcommminutes.html>

Embracing Diversity in Pursuit of Excellence

A written transcript of the Oral Presentation to President Casteen and the Board of Visitors' Special Committee on Diversity

presented by

**Angela M. Davis and Michael J. Smith, co-chairs
President's Commission on Diversity and Equity**

11 June 2004

Our Hope and Our Vision

In this report we challenge the entire university community to embrace diversity in pursuit of excellence and as part of our collective goal to be ranked among the leading universities of the world. In 1816 our Founder, Thomas Jefferson, wrote that

Laws and institutions must go hand in hand with the progress of the human mind. As that becomes more developed, more enlightened, as new discoveries are made, new truths disclosed, and manners and opinions change with the change of circumstances, institutions must advance also, and keep pace with the times.

We believe that the University is uniquely positioned to "advance" to a position of leadership among public institutions, not merely to "keep pace with the times" but to provide a model of how to educate students both in and out of the classroom. We seek no less than to equip our students for the global challenges of the twenty-first century. Students in the changed circumstances of our rich national and international world can no longer be content to have only the most cursory understanding of other cultures, historical experiences, and communities. They must have the real experience of learning about themselves and others in the challenging context of education and opportunity.

Diversity, as we understand it, encompasses an understanding and appreciation of the depth and variety of how we human beings group ourselves, and find ourselves grouped by others. Of course we begin by affirming, with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, that "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act toward one another in a spirit of brotherhood." But to achieve genuine mutual respect, we also need to study

the idea of human variety in the classroom, and we must experience it in a variety of contexts in our lives – through sustained service to our wider communities, through learning and participation in the rich variety of cultural events in and around the University, and – not least – by engaging in genuine, open, and sustained dialogue. Differences of age, race, gender, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, political affiliation, veteran status – all addressed formally in the University statement on non-discrimination – continue to affect the ways we interact with each other, and, in spite of our official policy, we do not always manage consistently to achieve genuine mutual respect.

We must understand our own history – nationally, internationally, locally – and its legacy to our present challenges. The University of Virginia, founded in an era of slavery, and built with the labor of enslaved people, finally began to accept African-Americans in tiny numbers by the 1960s – nearly 100 years after the end of the Civil War. In 1968 African-Americans made up only 0.4% of the entire university enrollment. Women were not admitted until 1970. Now, in 2003-04, women comprise 55% of the student body; African-Americans, 9%. In addition Asian- and Asian-Pacific-Americans account for 11%; Hispanic and Latino students 3%. We do not keep statistics on sexual orientation, but in recent years the Queer Student Union has been among the most active and successful of student organizations; one can safely say that this was not the case in the 1950s or 60s.

These percentages did not change automatically. Around 1970, we determined that our future as a university of excellence depended upon our success in diversifying our student body. Under the leadership of then Director of Admissions John T. Casteen, III, the university actively sought to persuade African-American families to send their children to this historically white institution. With our collective mind now more deeply “enlightened,” the university committed itself to make the necessary structural and institutional changes to make black students feel welcome and safe. This is a continuing task, perhaps never complete in a society in which racism has never entirely been defeated by enlightenment. Yet in January 2004 we were proud, as a community, to recognize the leadership of the Office of African American Affairs in helping the University of Virginia to achieve, for the tenth consecutive year, the highest rate of graduation for African-Americans of all American public universities.

We must recommit ourselves to this vision of leadership in diversity and equity, not out of a reluctant sense of obligation, but because *only* by enriching ourselves and embracing diversity can we become the leading institution we

aspire to be. Only if our students encounter a faculty and staff as diverse as the community we serve, only if they are challenged to move beyond the confines of the familiar, can they be prepared to take their places as leaders in science, technology, business, arts, education, and the humanities. Only if we accept the challenge to become a university known for its unfailing commitment to openness, inclusiveness, fairness, and equity for *all* the members of our community can we expect the respect and loyalty of all our graduates. We must work together to change a culture that too often seems to resist the challenges of a diverse university; instead we must embrace the change of diversity and reach toward the excellence that only that embrace makes possible.

From the time of our founding, we have always been a university that respects history and tradition but embraces the challenge of the new. Sometimes that embrace was reluctant and late; but, whether it be the unbridled violence among undergraduates that first led to a student-run honor system, or the call, in the 1960s by courageous members of the community, faculty, and students to leave behind the injustice of segregation, we have never allowed a hide-bound tradition to impede our pursuit of excellence. Our founder expected no less. In an early report to the University's Board of Visitors he wrote:

We fondly hope that the instruction which may flow from this institution, kindly cherished, by advancing the minds of our youth with the growing science of the times, and elevating the views of our citizens generally to the practice of the social duties and the functions of self-government, may ensure to our country the reputation, the safety and prosperity, and all the other blessings which experience proves to result from the cultivation and improvement of the general mind.

We believe that only by embracing diversity in the global village of the twenty-first century can we hope to "cultivate" and "improve" our minds; the alternative is an increasingly irrelevant defensive crouch as the world moves on. We can do better than "improve compliance with existing federal government regulations." We can *lead* in the study – and in the achievement – of genuine diversity in all components of our collective life.

Issues and Principles

It is no secret that this Commission was appointed in the aftermath of several disheartening incidents of racial injustice and insensitivity on the Grounds of the University. And it was no secret that other commissions and task forces

have worked in this vineyard before. Indeed we began by reading past reports, and have appended to our own report a tabulation of past recommendations and actions. Perhaps the first question we confronted, again and again, was “how would this commission be different?” To be candid, we often met with a response that the renowned scholar Albert Hirschman has identified as typical to efforts at change or reform: “it’s all pointless. What you propose will make no difference. Thus it is and thus ever shall it be.” Hirschman calls this the “futility response,” and says it is a common, and debilitating, tactic to avoid adapting to new realities and challenges.

Today’s reality is that, all too often, we encounter a negative racial climate at the University and within the Charlottesville community. A chronically covert, and frequently overt, atmosphere of racial insensitivity characterizes this climate. Our greatest challenge is that we simply do not engage one another on equal footing with a demeanor of civility. We need this bare minimum of civility before we can move on to real learning and mutual respect. The “futility response” would urge us to accept this climate as inevitable and beyond repair.

From the beginning we rejected this cynical counsel of despair. A university should *never*, by definition, give up in advance on a project of education. In fact we adopted instead the idea of a “working commission” – specifically not waiting to act until we wrote the perfect report. Rather, we sought to leverage our existence to gain information, and to make corrections in course or policy right away; or, perhaps more happily, by recognizing existing good ideas and seeking to support and encourage them. We had no wish to write another well-crafted, well-meaning report to be added to the long history of such reports. So what we say today reflects our survey of past efforts here at Virginia, and our look at the practices of other universities. Today, in each area of our report, we present an issue we think needs to be addressed, and we try to identify a principle by which we can begin to address it. We have no magic solutions, and we caution that success in the area of diversity and equity will require genuine commitment and some real resources. Earnest good intentions are not enough.

We have identified some common themes. Success in diversity and equity results from a combination of several key factors:

Namely

- Commitment to change and success at the highest levels of University leadership
- Well-designed institutional structures for goal setting and achievement throughout all units of the institution

- Clearly understood criteria for assessment and accountability for results
- Clear, consistent policies that apply fairly and equally to all
- Transparency in the processes by which policies are determined and administered
- Rewards for innovation and creative thinking; room in existing structures to embrace and adapt to change
- A community-wide embrace of the principles of inclusiveness, integrity, and mutual respect; acceptance of responsibility for the observance of these principles by all groups and members of the wider community

In our extensive work this past year, we have learned that there is considerable good will and desire for change, but some uncertainty about how to make it happen. We seek to address that uncertainty and provide some ideas about how – together – we can move forward.

Chief Officer for Equity and Diversity

Commission member James Trice, a pioneering Engineering School graduate of 1963, undertook for the Commission a survey of best practices in the world of business. Among his key findings were these points:

- Diversity and Equity must be given equal footing to other goals, and accountability must be part of an organizational strategy
- Make the Diversity and Equity Strategy an integrated management strategy vs. a stand alone initiative
- Have the Diversity and Equity function/office report to a senior level – preferably to the most senior officer
- Implement the “best practices” together, not one at a time
- Senior level employees must model the desired behavior. Diversity and Equity must become an ongoing executive passion.

Our own extensive consideration of practices at our peer institutions yielded similar conclusions; and over the past months Angela and I have met with countless people all over the University, at all levels, to try out our developing ideas and to seek help in defining a way for us to become leaders, not simply responders to events. Consultations with our peer institutions have suggested a series of points that parallel those found by Mr. Trice in his survey of practices in private industry. First, most universities do have a dedicated office and/or officer to track issues of equity and diversity.

- Need for central place of coordination and locus of accountability for all divisions of the university.

- A properly staffed and funded office demonstrates the commitment of institution to the issues
- The office and/or officer can provide staff help for President and leaders of the institutions Board of Trustees. We found that many people stressed the importance of a structural connection between the officer and the highest leaders of the institution.

And so our overarching recommendation to establish a Chief Officer for Diversity and Equity. Here we would like to highlight several key points.

The University needs a visible, visionary, effective leader who can advocate, coordinate, encourage, work with, evaluate, report, and, yes, *inspire* all of us here to reach for higher goals in the area of diversity. As Mr. Thompson said, “we need someone who wakes up every morning thinking about this.” How can we more effectively leverage our existing efforts? Where will a timely expression of support – preferably tangible – help us to succeed? How can problem areas be addressed, not in a spirit of blame and recrimination but in a constructive way that prevents greater difficulties?

Authority

- Derived specifically from the President
- Under the supervision of the President and Board of Visitors, the Chief Officer for Diversity and Equity will address issues of equity and diversity throughout the University
- Allocated a dedicated budget line reviewed annually for sufficiency by the Board of Visitors
- Seen as more expansive than other existing University diversity/equity-oriented positions; President’s agent for advocacy, focus, ideas, and accountability in this area

Supervision

- Directly reports to the President
- Serves as staff for Board of Visitors Committee on Diversity, however structured

All Vice Presidents would annually report progress in her/his area related to diversity and equity in matters of hiring, promotion, etc., through the Chief Officer for Diversity and Equity to the President.

It is important to stress what the Chief Officer for Diversity and Equity is *not*.

The Chief Officer for Diversity and Equity will not replace or take responsibility and authority away from the Vice Presidents.

The Chief Officer for Diversity and Equity will not process legal compliance issues or replace the authority of the Office of Equal Opportunity Programs.

The Chief Officer for Diversity and Equity is not a conduit for legal matters that should go directly to the President.

On legal matters, the Office of Equal Opportunity would continue to be a direct report to the President, not through the Chief Officer for Diversity and Equity.

A Sampling of Specific Ideas from our Detailed Subcommittee Reports

Our goal for the chief officer is to make the position part of an integrated package of initiatives, and as the focal point for getting the people with the good ideas all over the University talking together, collaborating; I'm tempted even to invoke the much abused term of *synergy* – a wonderful idea perhaps spoiled by its use, it seems, in every corporate merger.

Our commission has generated a whole raft of ideas that we think could give this officer and office a good start, and today we offer only the barest summary of these ideas to give you a sense of what our final report to the President will contain.

Our committee on Student Recruitment and Retention, Student Life and Climate identified three key issues to address, and offers what we think is an exciting initiative that will, in fact, generate the kind of leadership and synergy we seek. The challenges are:

- How to encourage the *majority* of students to examine and explore the opportunities and problems that diverse perspectives create in an increasingly cosmopolitan world;
- How to narrow the divide between a significant minority of students who feel that racial, gendered, and other forms of insults are everyday experiences at U.Va. with few outlets for even reporting the problem and others, who do not perceive a problem at all

How to increase the number of under-represented groups who are enrolled in graduate school in the Arts and Sciences. Addressing this last challenge is not only essential if we are to represent a full range of perspectives in graduate training, but crucial, if we are going to increase the pool of qualified minority candidates for teaching positions.

Initiatives to Address Student Life and Climate

- Expand the First Year Experience to provide a residential component of Sustained Dialogue. Residence Life is already planning future collaboration with the student leadership of Sustained Dialogue to develop first-year, residentially based dialogue groups and open forums.
- In addition to Sustained Dialogue discussion on topics of race and culture, we will also include a series of conversations on Ethics, Honor and Integrity, and Ethical Decision Making. In short we're recommending an integrated approach to all these topics that will include students, faculty, student facilitators.
- Develop community values of mutual respect and civility

A Community Engagement Program

- A set of opportunities and incentives, not new requirements, available to all undergraduates. We are determined to provide opportunities rather than *mandate* particular courses or programs
- A chance to earn "community engagement points" by participating in wide range of specially designated academic and cultural programs, specific courses, service learning, sustained community service.
- Opportunity for a final project, perhaps along the lines of existing Harrison Awards, with faculty supervision
- Possibility for recognition not only with course credit but with a note on the transcript, e.g. "successfully completed Community Engagement Program"
- Full details to be worked out with faculty task force, working with Provost and Student Affairs

We have also been investigating the viability of a standard process for the reporting of incidents that violate principles of mutual respect. Cornell

University has such a system in place, and we are still examining its appropriateness for Virginia. A system that acknowledges incidents, and has a transparent, fair, and educational response to them will clearly help to promote a positive environment.

The Commission offers no specific recommendation for providing gathering spaces that enable students, staff, faculty, and community members to come together in an organic, informal way. But we emphasize that future planning should include this as a vital component of any building. We currently lack enough common space for informal interaction along the lines made possible by the newly opened Kaleidoscope Lounge in Newcomb Hall. We know that plans are in the works to increase space for interaction: we simply remind everyone of the vital need to consider accessibility and openness from the very beginning of the planning process.

Some Curriculum Ideas

- Increase range of courses dealing with diversity and equity as well as diversity focus within typically non-diversity oriented courses (Garrick Louis' engineering class as an example)
- Develop and maintain exchanges with historically black colleges and universities for both students and faculty
- Make classroom more welcoming to diverse students; help faculty to become more effective at teaching a diverse student body; not simply a matter of adding more diversity-related courses to the curriculum. Teaching Resource Center (TRC) is quite effective here.
- Consider revising area requirements to encourage students to take more diversity related classes; ask Deans in each school, reporting through Provost, to show how diversity is addressed throughout the curriculum

Staff and Faculty Recruitment and Retention

- Message of past reports and strong recommendation here:
'There must be people in charge of diversifying the University's employee population, whether in their capacity as Deans and department heads, as search committee chairs, or as officers directly responsible for diversity issues. These people must appreciate that fostering diversity represents an important responsibility. They must be empowered to make diversity policy stick, and they must have the education and the resources they need in order to do this job effectively.

- For future assessment, design our own census that yields data better designed to track changes, recognizes race, gender, ethnicity, rank or status of all University employees
- Expand the scope of EOP workshops and mandate participation in these workshops by all personnel involved in hiring
- Junior faculty must get the mentoring they need to succeed in the promotion process. The general faculty must also have clear career paths to advancement and equitable salary scales and increases.
- Classified staff must have supervisor-supported access to the developmental programs they need to move up the pay scale. That staff must also have somewhere to go, and clear paths to advancement, within U.Va.
- Working with Provost's office, the Chief Officer for Diversity and Equity should create some fellowship funds for faculty development, e.g. for research and curricular support on diversity-related topics.

Community Ideas

In addition to the best practices gathered by Mr. Trice, the Business and Community subcommittee also has some good ideas that follow some of our earlier themes. For example, we already have some programs that mentor with students in the wider community. We recommend expanding mentorship opportunities that will bring our students together with students in the public school systems in Charlottesville and surrounding counties.

Recall that another of our key findings was a need for clear and consistent communication. Parts of the University and surrounding community often are not aware of what we here are doing, and we at the University don't always communicate as clearly as we could.

To address this, we recommend that the Office of Community Relations build on our existing *Community Resource Guide*, and bring it up to date. We also recommend that they create a booklet with a full list of current resources that could be mailed to the entire surrounding community.

- The current website needs to be updated and to be more inclusive of the opportunities that bring University and community together
- We're acutely aware that many members of both the University and surrounding communities do not have access to computer and online resources, so we need to develop other ways of reaching them: through mailings, newsletters, and timely announcements through places of worship and local media.

In short, we need to create a 'roadmap' into the University that is clear, user-friendly, accurate, and accessible.

Conclusion

We present this preview of our report to the President not as something set in stone, nor with the expectation that we can, with one set of proposals "solve the problem" of diversity and equity. If we have learned anything during our year of intensive consultations, meetings, and study, it is this: success in the arenas of diversity and equity requires continuing commitment throughout the institution at every level. One way to describe our current status is this: the whole of our efforts is considerably *less* than the sum of the parts. We need to change this. Much of the good work going on all over the University does not reach its potential because of a lack of co-ordination, communication, and transparency; and some of the problems go unnoticed because of a lack of clear criteria of assessment and clear lines of accountability.

We hope that the ideas we present here open the way to new progress and creativity throughout the University. We believe that the key component of our recommendations is the appointment of a Chief Officer for Diversity and Equity for the reasons we have described. We desperately need a focal point of leadership and responsibility, and a place to find and provide the information you on the Board, as well as the entire University community, needs. But we also wish to emphasize that no one office or officer can do this work on his or her own. This is a job for all of us.

But for now, we end as we began: with a challenge to the entire University community – from the Board of Visitors to the newest first-year student, from President and Provost, to the newest assistant professor, from the Vice President for Finance to the newest employee in Facilities Management. Let us, together, recommit this community to a vision of an open community, inclusive and respectful of our differences, united in our determination to pursue excellence with integrity and determination. Our year of work has left us convinced that, with your help, we are up to the task.

I speak for Michael and myself, as well as members of the Commission, in thanking you and the President for giving us the opportunity to serve in this capacity.