Social Justice Committee Meeting Notes

Tuesday, October 18, 2011

In attendance: Melissa Holmes, Monique Nri, Earl Scott, Tim Marshall, Elizabeth Ross, Shannon Logan, Amy Minter, Tsuya Yee, Doris Chang, Chris Crews, Shana Agid, Judy Mejia, Karen Merson, Katayoun Chamany, Kesha Davenport, Sydney Kopp-Richardson

Facilitators: Chris Crews, Judy Mejia, Shana Agid

- **Introduction**
  - Intro to the meeting
  - Agenda reflects thinking about moving forward with mission of work
  - No subcommittee report-outs; first priority is to begin to think of a way to make decisions. Subcommittees will not stop meeting, but can reassess purpose.
  - Goal is not to start over, but to start with what we have so far
  - Part of decision-making scheme talked about is this not being a moment where the subcommittees stop meeting

- **Decision-Making: Four Models Based on Last Meeting Discussion**
  - Top-down, Consultative, Majority Vote, Consensus
  - How does SJC make a determination as a group to either push through and reach consensus, or to move forward with some form of voting process?
    - 1) Keep working and reach consensus, or 2) Keep working and move forward to a voting structure
    - "Consensus" and "Unanimous" are different
    - Consensus: use "stand aside" to disagree, can move to a vote
    - "Block": Stopping all decision process, used in rare circumstances; Significant move where a person exercises choice in how to move forward (In extreme situations, someone has left a group, someone might abandon the process--either the group stops or the person exercises choice in how they move forward)
    - Encourage everyone to participate and inform the decision-making process, SJC members can send co-chairs emails with feedback
    - If agreeing to work as a group, need to de-escalate standing aside or blocking and understand it as a form of communication, using language that seems less confrontational
  - Use key points of the SJC mission statement: Do decisions meet the needs of the SJC? This will reflect the responsibility of the SJC members to one another

- **SJC Questions Regarding Decision-Making Process**
  - How will the SJC deal with people not present at meetings? Will SJC agree to allow proxy voting?
  - Are people comfortable expressing opposing views? Does absence of opposition reflect a lack of comfort with opposing?
    - Role of facilitator is to pay attention to who is NOT speaking in the room, requires careful facilitation
  - How do you know you have consensus? Procedure?
    - Role of facilitator is to listen and get a sense of where the room is, explaining what facilitator senses as proposal and see how the group responds--informal process of facilitator gauging the room
  - What types of decisions will be made using consensus? Particularly

complex decisions that require resource allocation?
    - Some decisions are routine and complex
    - Time sensitivity
    - Need balance of what the subcommittees can take action on and what full committee must take group action on
    - Need clarity on what the SJC has responsibility on; some areas SJC does not have jurisdiction over and should not spend time in these arenas
        - Example: Communications Committee: How is the subcommittee making decisions within or outside of SJC? Must be mindful of the fact that subcommittees cannot decide on every single thing with SJC approval
        - Relationships and Decisions: SJC? Office of Social Justice? SJLI? Subcommittees?
  - Modified Consensus
    - How does this work with a block?
    - Ask question, vote on decision, goal is to work through the issue that kept someone blocking it by processing the issue as a group; unappealing issues can change shape and form and consensus might be changing the decision so that people can come to it

- **SJC Member Concerns**
  - Need to prioritize decision-making to make the group process work through building a culture of trusting whatever decision-making process the group has decided to take on
  - Members should feel comfortable standing aside to recommend an amendment to a proposal
  - In large body, unanimous agreement is often not possible, but need to assume there will be some moving forward with consensus
  - Hard rules are not always useful, uniqueness of events and issues will vary the process--requires flexibility. Possibly not have strict triggers but let the body vote when it is deemed necessary?
  - “Block” language connotes a person stopping the process, but not one individual should be able to block the process indefinitely; can people block simply due to discomfort? Discomfort might halt process.
  - Vote not appropriate to get “around” a block: Need to decide as a group if a block halts the entire process. Potential for it to be undemocratic?
  - Robert’s Rules? Call for a vote for floor proposals?
  - *“Comfort”* may be problematic in a social justice setting. Due to the nature of social justice issues, the group will not always be comfortable, but there needs to be ways to sit in the discomfort. Being uncomfortable will not be action-oriented
  - If concerned about social change, group must agree on the responsibility towards moving forward as the SJC navigates various decisions; move forward towards action.
  - Issues can be tabled if issue is important enough to set aside; allows for review and reflection
  - Tabling: also need to acknowledge members’ responsibility to learn and become informed
    - Responsibility for members to “do the homework”
    - Responsibility for learning when there is misunderstanding and do the work around specific issues that members may not have knowledge

around or be comfortable around

- **Governance Next Steps**
  - Consider best approach for more concrete proposal at next meeting; Co-chairs will put together proposal with discussion and what members bring
    - Consensus vs. other forms?
    - Modified consensus?
    - Blocks? Proxy voting?
  - Committee readings: Pick articles, books, blog posting? Set up resources for members to share and be better equipped for deep conversations
  - Six months from now, revisit chosen decision-making model for evaluation

- **Review of SJC Priorities: Brainstorm of topic areas**
  - Current priority list from 2010-2011 (Current? Changes? Everyone adds two):
    - Hire senior academic officer
    - Increase under-represented faculty
    - Begin to close the gap of under-represented students
    - Increase representation of people of color in senior academic and administrative positions
    - Develop a university-wide mission

- **Brainstorm of Priorities: Prioritized Grouped Issues**
  - ***Increase/retain under-represented students, faculty, and staff***
    - Increase representation of people of color (or other underrepresented groups) in senior academic and administrative positions
    - Close gap of under-represented students
    - Increase/retain under-represented faculty
    - Review termination and dismissals
  - ***Hire Senior Academic Officer***
    - Officer of Social Justice or Diversity
    - Create an office of support for students of color
  - ***Trainings***
    - Diversity trainings for SJC/students/University
    - Training to address infusing social justice into curriculum
  - ***Student Support and Participation***
    - Begin to focus on increasing SUPPORT SERVICES, not “increasing” numbers
    - Support for students and faculty
    - More student-led involvement
    - Identify and support student issues
    - Support student social justice leadership/activism
    - Student participation in decision-making (through SJC and University as a whole)
  - ***Address Power/Systems***
    - Leverage the University asking re: trans issues to address others that permeate: race, class, sexism, and S/F/S sustainability
    - Address the systems that serve as obstacles to fair and equitable practices and decisions

- ***Transparency and Process***
  - Address the opaque University processes that perpetuate inequity
  - Make more transparent major decision-making processes and increase accountability of those processes
  - Standards re academic integrity
- ***Ability/Transgender/Gender on Bathrooms and Forms***
  - Address ability and transgender challenges more fully regarding bathrooms
  - Bathrooms and gender on forms
- ***Mission***
  - Choose a theme e.g. poverty, and identify activities to participate in
  - Develop a University-wide mission
  - More promotion of the SJC and what we do
  - Develop a mission
  - Not a mission statement, but a PASSION statement

- **Response to Brainstorm**
  - Review updated issues at next meeting, decide where to reframe or combine with updated SJC issues
  - Previous priorities seem diversity-centered, but why focus on numbers?
  - Need to build on what we have a focus beyond only diversity and more on social justice--focus on outcomes of systems and processes does not focus on changing the systems and processes themselves (and outcomes will self-perpetuate if so)
  - Shift language from diversity to social justice outcomes surrounding power
    - High levels of pervasive sexism on campus; need to address structures and not numbers
    - Use issues (ie: bathrooms) to leverage as means to speak to other underrepresented issues
  - Occupy Wall Street: SJC involvement? Promotion? Addressing racism within the movement? Socially unjust issues within sj spaces? How does New School support?
  - Berkeley Bake Sale: representative of diverse points of entry for new students regarding diversity and social justice
  - Anti-racism groups within white spaces?