

James Farmer Multicultural Center Faculty Advisory Committee Minutes

November 13, 2020

Online Meeting

Members Present:

Dr. Marion Sanford – Director of JFMC;
Dr. Melissa Wells (Education – Chair);
Dr. Alexandra Dunn (Business) – Secretary;
Dr. Suzie Kim (Art History);
Dr. Mehdi Aminrazavi (Classics, Philosophy, & Religion);
Dr. Marisa Martinez-Mira (Modern Languages & Literature);
Makayla Ferrell (Student representative);
Andy Chen (Student representative)

Absent: N/A

Approval of minutes: The minutes were presented from the previous meeting on October 9, 2020 and approved unanimously.

Student Representative Updates: No report

Director's Report:

- **Cultural programming:**

- *All of these events were held virtually during Fall 2020. Participants filled out a registration form to receive the Zoom link. All information is posted to the JFMC website.*
- Six cultural celebrations have occurred this semester!
 - Latino Identities Month – September 15 – October 15
 - Disability Awareness Month Celebration – October 2020
 - Gender and Sexual Minorities and Allies Celebration – October 19 – 24
 - Asian Cultural Celebration – October 26 – 31
 - Jewish Cultural Celebration – November 2 – 6
 - Native American Cultural Celebration – November 9 – 13
- One remaining cultural event for the semester - Kwanzaa on Tuesday, December 1 at 6:00 pm
 - Information can be found here:
<https://students.umw.edu/multicultural/programs/kwanzaa/>
- January 2021: MLK celebration will begin on January 24

- **Social Justice initiatives:**

- *All of these events were held virtually via Zoom.*
- 4 Social Justice Teach-Ins, 1 Social Justice and Leadership Summit, and the Human Rights Films Series
- Human Rights Films Series

- Theme: Protests and movements taking place in different identity groups in the United States
 - More information can be found here: <https://students.umw.edu/multicultural/jfmc-human-rights-film-series/>
 - Two films offered per semester (for the fall term, the second film is, “Awake: A Dream from Standing Rock” is being held on Tuesday, Nov. 17 at 5:00 pm)
- **RISE Peer Mentoring program:**
 - 3 workshops conducted this semester
 - 2 social hours hosted
 - End of semester gathering will be held on Wednesday, December 2 at 6:00 pm

Old Business:

- Faculty/staff listserv – over 100 names on the listserv!
- Other marketing efforts update
 - Working with University Relations to push as much information out as early as possible regarding upcoming events (especially keynote events)
 - Really have been creative this semester about how to get marketing materials out this semester

New business:

- **Guest: Michelle Pickham (Staff Advisory Council)**
 - Spoke with group regarding staff representation on our committee so that more staff have voting positions on certain university committees
 - Would like more representation on campus of staff below the sub-cabinet who have great knowledge of operations and activities of those departments
 - Have been having conversations with Andrew Dolby (UFC Chair) about where we can integrate/enrich committees and places for staff to help out
 - University budget committee, JFMC FAC, and Student Affairs and Campus Life Advisory committee came to mind
 - Other purpose(s): relationship-building between staff and faculty, opportunity for staff representation, provide an insight and perspective and have a voice in what is going on around the university
 - Question: how many staff members would be added?
 - Response: SAC is open to our (JFMC FAC) discretion of how many staff representatives would be added; 2-3 was suggested
 - Question: how would you identify staff to be on the committee? Would the SAC recommend names and JFMC FAC selects?
 - Response: Look at the SAC Council first; if nothing, then the executive committee within SAC would look elsewhere and

pinpoint specific areas/people who would add value to the committee

- Question: What will the term limits be?
 - Response: JFMC FAC can advise on how we would like to see this done; open to one-year or three-year terms
- Question: Is the SAC open to changing the wording submitted?
 - Response: SAC is okay with keeping the “nonvoting ex officio” language in the handbook
- Committee position after discussion:
 - Interested in pursuing this, but we need a few things: 1) more information about university policies on voting memberships in university committees, 2) more information about how SAC will select the member, and 3) how JFMC FAC would need to make this official (who needs to approve it – UFC, UFOC, etc.)
- Motion: explore further one staff member for a two-year term added to the JFMC FAC based on university regulations
 - Motion passed unanimously by the committee
- **Guest: Sabrina Johnson, Vice President for Equity & Access and CDO**
 - Discussion about a recent incident involving racial slurs in historical literature.
 - Faculty member was reading a historical text and the faculty member read a passage out loud that contained the N-word
 - Faculty member received an email from a peer mentor that a student felt very uncomfortable in class about using the word
 - Class had a discussion about the word being used in class after the peer mentor brought it to their attention
 - After hearing from student and conversation with the whole class, faculty member made the decision to not say the word in class (rather than to pay homage to the writer’s language)
 - We have a statement of community values and our students are holding us accountable to them, especially with the current climate
 - From other faculty conversations – we need to have some guidelines around this and be thoughtful about how we explain our stance to students; some resources should be available for faculty
 - After hearing about the incident, Sabrina Johnson opened it up to questions, comments, and feedback. The JFMC FAC provided their respective feedback. This feedback will be taken with the rest of the feedback collected on this issue from people and groups across campus to make any final decisions about how to move forward.
 - **JFMC FAC Opinions:**
 - If there is context for it, if the course calls for it, and it is important for the learning experience, it might be appropriate; there may be problems with saying EVERYONE has to follow the same rule/guideline

- UMW should create faculty resources and best practices
- UMW should offer faculty training and help with showing culture sensitivity if it is going to be used; classroom conversations can be very difficult
- This does not only pertain to the word used in this particular case. Whatever is decided will affect departments and faculty across campus. For that reason, the language and decision sent to faculty needs to be sophisticated and exact.
- Most students understand that the context is important. We have to remember when these things were written. We are not using it to target anyone today, which makes a difference.
- **JFMC FAC Suggestions:**
 - Offer trainings (like Safe Zone) for how to discuss race, religion, etc. in the classroom
 - Have students *read* the word themselves, rather than the professor or someone else from class saying it out loud
 - Warn your students the word is going to be used and give students the chance to decide if they want to attend the class or not
 - Do not let students feel singled out (or feel pressured) to voice the opinions of whatever minority group they belong to
 - Faculty need to be very prepared when opening up the conversations to the whole class. Students sometimes feel like opening discussion makes things more harmful than using the word and moving on. Faculty need guidance on how to do this.

Announcements:

- Center for Teaching event: designing your syllabus to be inclusive coming in early January
- JFMC, the Talley Center, the STP program, Student Activities and Engagement, and Campus Rec are in discussions about rolling out programming for students including mindfulness conversations, emotional resilience, and how to manage stress and anxiety better

Next meeting:

1. The committee discussed spring meeting dates:
 - a. No meeting in January
 - b. Tentative dates: February 19, March 19, and April 2 at 3:00 pm

The meeting was adjourned at 4:22 pm.