**Minutes from our October 6, 2021 meeting**

**Present**: Marion Sanford (Director of Multicultural Affairs, James Farmer Multicultural Center), Marisa Martínez-Mira (chair), Mehdi Aminrazavi, Melissa Jenkins, Dan Wolfe, Anna Bedal (student representative), Zahraa Mohammed (student representative).

**Absent:** Sarah Morealli (secretary)

Meeting began at 3:02 p.m. EST.

The committee’s chair, Dr. Marisa Martínez-Mira, introduced our new representative from the University Staff Council, Sandrine Stuphin.

Minutes from our previous meeting were approved unanimously .

**Director’s report**

*Cultural programming updates*

* Latino Identity Month (Sept 15-October 15). On Oct. 6 there is an event for this program: “Sabor Latino.” Students and faculty were encouraged to participate.
* October 13, 4:00 p.m. As part of our Latino Identity Month, there will be an event to honor and pay tribute to ESL teachers in our area. Dr. Maria Laura Bocaz from the Modern Languages and Literatures department will coordinate/facilitate that program. This event concludes the Latino Identity Month celebration
* Disability Awareness Month: The event “Intersectionality International Passport Experience” kicked off this program on October 4. There were student leaders in different tables representing different identity groups to discuss how these identities intersect and relate to disability culture.
* Table Fair sponsored by ODR on October 7. Table Fair. Approximately 14 community agencies, campus departments and student clubs will participate in this event. There will also be more events to celebrate Disability Awareness month.
* Human Right Film Series: On October 7, right after the Table Fair (6:00 p.m.), the first of 4 Human Rights Film Series will be shown. The one scheduled for October 7 is “Church and State” film.
* After Fall Break, on October 18th,  the Gender and Sexual Minorities and Allies celebration will take place. There will be other events related to this program, concluding with a PRISM Prom, decade theme.
* Joint keynote program (with the Disability Awareness Month) on October 20 at 4:00 p.m. This will be a hybrid program (people can participate via Zoom or in person at Chandler Ballroom). Anna Bedal, who is the president of PRISM, also commented on this, adding that there was a poetry competition on Tuesday, where they would have students reading their own poetry and/or other people’s poetry, so she requested that professors announce/get the word out for this event in their classes so that more people can attend.
* Sunday, October 24th. Beginning of Asian Culture Celebration kick-off event. 4:00 p.m. Other events coming up (e.g. Taste of Asia). The JMFC is still working out the details to host these event keeping in mind/accommodating our current COVID-19 protocols.

*Social Justice Initiatives*

* Due to an emergency situation related to Virginia’s Attorney General Mr. Mark R. Herring, the Social Justice Teach-in/Voter Suppression Event that was scheduled for last month could not take place. The JMFC is in the process of rescheduling this event for later and we are confident Mr. Herring will be able to attend. When that happens, the new date will be shared with members of the committee and with the university community.

*Farmer Fellows updates*

* Diversity Peer Educators/Farmer Fellows: Our DPE/FF continue offering diversity sessions throughout campus. They have received appropriate training, so they can now facilitate “safe zone’ sessions on campus. An announcement will be made campus-wide to look for new Farmer Fellows (8 of our current fellows will graduate in May).

**OLD BUSINNESS**

* *Faculty/staff listserv: Update*:All faculty/staff received an email to let them know they will now receive the JFMC bulletin with information about our programs/campus activities so that they are aware and can share this information with students. They will have the option to opt out if they are not interested. Dr. Sanford thanked the committee for their efforts to make this happen.

**NEW BUSINESS**

*Campus climate during election season & bias incidents*

- The committee discussed the latest issue of stickers found on campus publicizing White supremacy groups. In the past, the “Patriot Front” have posted these, although we do not know who did it this time (it happened at night, and it is believed that people outside our campus did it in order to intimidate our community, but also possibly to recruit new members).

- Members of the committee also discussed the incident about the message painted on the Rock about predators/sexual assault on campus. Several committee members shared their discussions with students about this topic, including information about a male individual who has been seen harassing some of our students, who have reported him several times, but their perception was that the university was not doing much about it. Dr. Martínez-Mira shared some students’ concerns about finding more information about this event in our campus paper than in official communications/messages from the university, which raised the topic of (lack of) transparency when discussing these incidents.

The committee also discussed how some students were disappointed with how the university approached this topic (i.e. just listing resources they could use instead of being more proactive); it made them feel that there was no actual closure on this issue since the official university communication basically only listed resources that students could use. Keeping in mind all the existing protocols and issues with privacy, the committee suggested that maybe sharing information about what specific steps are being taken would create more awareness and safety for our students and could be more effective.

Another issue discussed in our meeting was how the “It Matters” marketing campaign is being advertised, specifically, the committee discussed concerns about the way it is being done, and why we are doing it this way. The discussion centered on the marketing campaign and what image we are giving to promote our campus. Dr. Sanford added that there had been concerns about cultural appropriation of the “It Matters” slogan and discussed how it resonated with different individuals who might seem it an appropriation of the “Black Lives Matter” movement. Members of the committee also showed their concerns about the time of this rebranding, especially after the events that took place in downtown Fredericksburg during the summer of 2020 and our current social climate. Also, the rebranding might feel ‘empty’ to students. Dr. Sanford suggested that we invite Malcom Holmes to our next meeting to hear some insights about how the campaign was laid out, the spirit behind it and its context before producing an official statement from our committee to address this situation. The committee would like to ask Mr. Holmes questions about whether we are continuing with this campaign, whether they are planning to make any changes after hearing that there are concerns with it, how they are addressing these concerns and how/when data was collected to determine that this was the best way to rebrand the university.

*Exploring the use of preferred names in university systems*

Dr. Sanford began our discussion of this topic, which comes up every year within the university community (specifically when it relates to members of the LGBTQ+ community) to discuss how the university as a whole can advocate about this topic. In our discussion, it was pointed out how important it is that students are addressed by their preferred names/pronouns as much as possible, and how important it is to make sure that faculty and staff use these. The committee also discussed the logistical issues that this situation implies, especially when students mention which names/pronouns they prefer, but email addresses and platforms like Canvas show different ones, which can create confusion and difficulties for professors. It is important that students are given the option to decide how they want to be addressed as by professors, classmates and staff.

As part of our discussion, Dr. Sanford mention that this matter takes effort and time. Students understand that there might be confusion and understand if the professor does not remember their preferred names all the time. However, using their preferred names/pronouns is crucial for their identities. We should look for strategies in the university system to make this manageable and logistically possible while respecting the students’ name/pronouns preference. The goal is to make this process as inclusive and friendly as possible for all people involved. Students recognize when we are trying to be accommodating and are glad to see that the effort is there.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

*Upcoming Safe Zone events*

There are two upcoming Safe Zone events. The first one will take place on October 14 and the topic will be LBGTQ+ affirming mental health resources (Farmer Fellows will join this event). The second event is scheduled for October 20 and the topic will be pronoun use (i.e. educating about preferred pronouns to show respect and appreciation for the people who use them).

*Freedom Riders Historical Marker unveiled on Sept 22*

After a 2-year process, the marker was unveiled on Sept 22. Members of the UMW community attended the event. Dr. Sanford thanked all committee members (and other members of the university who contributed to this event) for their work and support.

*Next meeting*: It will take place the week of 15-19 November. Dr. Marisa Martínez-Mira will contact members of the committee a week before with information about the day/time in which it will take place.

Meeting was adjourned at 4:06 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marisa Martínez Mira (on behalf of Sarah Morealli).