

DIVERSITY AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS COMMITTEE ACTION PLAN

Committee members: Barry Bergen; Lindsay Dunn; Jane Hurst; Patti Kunkle, Chair; Sandy McLennon; Jeff Panasuk; KP Perkins; Julia Pitt; Donna Ryan; Marcia Schweitzer, Keisha Scovens; and Jessica Young.

Charge to the Committee: Develop a one-year plan that addresses the various diversity and community relations concerns that surfaced during the recent crises. The focus includes, but is not limited to the following areas: 1) verbal harassment and written threats directed at students from the GLBT and Asian Pacific communities; 2) physical assaults against students from the GLBT community; (3) harassment of deaf-blind and close-vision students; 4) strengthening the partnerships with the neighborhood.

The Committee suggests the development of a Diversity Statement. Committee members are in the process of developing a draft statement that will be shared with Lindsay Dunn. The draft statement will then be sent to the campus community asking for feedback. Suggested language for the statement includes the following: *That the Gallaudet University Community will recognize, appreciate, and respect the fact that we are all different, and some ways the same, and that we can disagree respectfully and amiably. Attitudes of disrespect, hostility, minimalization, violence, and neglect should not be tolerated; and should be effectively addressed when they do occur. Appropriate interactions should be recognized and spotlighted to encourage others to adopt similar codes of conduct.*

LONG-TERM PLAN

Policy

- The Office for Diversity & Community Relations (ODCR) staff will meet with Denise LaRue, William Marshall and Carl Pramuk to review current policies and make recommendations for establishing a revised clear and uniform policy on physical harassment and violence against any member of the University community (student, administration, faculty and staff).

Suggested Events

- *State of the University* address by the President (beginning of each semester): introduce key members of the University administration and make a clear statement regarding the University's (zero tolerance) policy on any form of abusive and harassing behaviors. It should provide a clear statement addressing what is expected from everyone and serve as a reminder that we are all responsible for ensuring that each and every member of our community feels safe, welcome and part of our academic community. This address will be available to the campus via email and a permanent copy located on the Office of the President's website. ODCR's website will also contain a link to access this State of the University address.

- ODCR cosponsor with OCM and Muslim Students Association, a panel on Religious Diversity, and a discussion on the Israel/Palestine question (State Department? Embassies?).
- ODCR cosponsor with CGE and Asian Students Association, a panel discussion on current issues on the Asian experience in American universities (consortium) and a panel discussion on US/China relations (State Department? Chinese Embassy?).

Suggested Trainings

- Undertake series of institution-wide sensitivity training specifically focused on homophobia and violence against GLBT, religious intolerance, bigotry and harassment against Asian students, and deaf-blind students.
 - NCBI Series – provide a 2-day sensitivity training session per semester.
 - Provide an interactive training session on tolerance conducted by the Southern Poverty Law Center (Fall).
 - Provide a training session on bigotry – ADL: “A World of Difference”.
 - Provide interactive theater session with discussions on effects of bigotry. (Here & Now, Face to Face).
 - Identify a homophobia-focused sensitivity training program to provide a full day session each semester. (P-FLAG, Warren Blumenfeld)

Department of Safety and Security – Suggestions

- Require diversity focused training sessions for DOSS to improve interactions with students, customer relations, and community policing. At least 2 sessions should be provided for each semester and co-sponsored by Administration and Finance.
 - Dealing with diverse student population
 - Community policing – changing perceptives of security to one of members of our community who we can trust and depend on to protect us.
 - Student panel on experiences with DOSS and their recommendations for improvement.
 - Issues of Civility
- Communication: 1) Improve Sign Language Fluency; 2) Provide students with adequate information regarding the individual’s case, status reports, follow up procedures, and rights; and 3) Distribute to the campus community a manual detailing policies, procedures, individual’s rights when involved in an investigation being conducted by DOSS.

New Programs

- Establish an Ombudsman Program. Hire a full-time person who serves as an advocate for students, faculty, and staff regarding issues that transcend EEO/AA issues. This person would have the power to follow up and follow through on the issues shared with them by students, faculty, and staff.
- Establish a team of faculty and staff volunteers who are comfortable working with various diversity-related issues. The team would be comprised of individuals representing the diverse groups from the campus community. These people would be required to attend in-depth trainings. The concept is similar to the SafeZone Program

BUT this would be stronger and require more involvement from the faculty and staff volunteers.

- Establish a Gallaudet Chapter of P-Flag
- Establish a Gallaudet Chapter of NCBI

Strengthening the Partnerships with the Neighborhood

- ODCR will collaborate with the Community Services Program and appropriate University departments to ensure that our interns are placed in local schools and that community services includes provision of cross cultural training to members of our community through the local schools and churches. This will include sign language and deaf culture. Purpose is to improve understanding between our campus community and our neighbors.
- ODCR will host a meeting that will include ANC 5 and 6 commissioners specifically from the Ivy City/Trinidad and the Near Northeast Neighborhood, HomeFree USA, H Street Development Corp, local clergy and members of the university community that will help us develop a more efficient and uniform community service program to help revitalize our neighborhood and ensure that communication among us is efficient and open. This will enhance safety of our students who live in the neighborhood.
- Eighth and Florida Avenue (a Gallaudet/community relations newsletter) to be distributed on campus as well as off campus and to include tidbits on deaf culture, as well as street savvy tips. Should also include information on the local community security patrols (Orange Hats) and pertinent information useful to both deaf and hearing members of our communities. Issue also will be web based and housed in the ODCR Website and Public Relations website.

Office of Diversity and Community Relations Website

- Ensure that it includes forum to engage community in cyber-dialogue on diversity and issues related to all forms of discrimination.
- Ensure that it has links to pertinent sites that cover race, ethnicity, gender discrimination, homophobia, and religious intolerance etc.
- Ensure that it has an email address specifically to respond to harassment.

Additional Suggestions

- ODCR should identify what other colleges and universities are doing in the area of diversity and adapt selected method to fit Gallaudet's needs.
- ODCR should explore ways of creating a stronger diversity community through character-building.