Equality VCU Minutes

Attendees
- Faith Wilkerson
- George Kelly
- Donna Coghill
- Sara Loritsch
- Alexandra Hoffman
- Pat Stauffer
- R. Dale Smith
- Kelly Chroninger
- Brie Dubinsky

DEBRIEFING ON DR. GRIFFIN’S VISIT TO VCU:
Pat Stauffer discussed the recent visit with Dr. Pat Griffin. Pat asked the committee how we might best reach out to the Athletic Support Staff Group to schedule additional time with Dr. Griffin or similar workshops. Pat suggested that in future workshops it might be restructured such that they plan on separating the group that works with female and the group that works with male athletes. They are working on brainstorming ways to remediate or more effectively revisit the experience, and as Equality VCU is a critical piece in promoting inclusiveness it would be beneficial to put together a collaborative action plan with them so they’d know what was expected of them in the future. Donna said she went to the afternoon group session and really enjoyed it and felt it went well. She agreed with Pat's suggestion that it might be best to separate participants out by gender to allow for best delivery of the message.

Donna said it felt like a pilot instance and she was hopeful that this could gain momentum. Donna asked how we get the students more involved, as she and Pat identified this as an area where we could be doing more to promote students specifically (as it was more targeted at coaches). Faith will contact the co-chairs and then they'll check in with Pat to move forward with an action plan.

BURNSIDE WATSTEIN
Dale discussed the recent Burnside Watstein Ceremony, and in thinking about the event everyone felt it had gone very well. Dale said that he has only received positive feedback from people—the ceremony was moving and well-organized. The Burnside Watstein Workgroup is going to review feedback received and follow-up with the Co-Chairs and Equality VCU soon. Donna let the group know that Sarah Watstein and Chris Burnside want to come next year, but a Monday would be better and as we plan for next year’s event, they will need as much notice as possible. Dr. Mitchell and Donna discussed strategies for increasing attendance and The Division for Inclusive Excellence will be taking more promotional responsibility in the future.

LAVENDER GRADUATION
George said that the date and time (April 24th, 4:30 PM) has been confirmed. Planning will begin soon, and he’ll be updating the group as details are available.

LGBTQ ALUMNI ASSOCIATION
If anyone from Equality VCU wants to join the LGBTQ Alumni Association, the call is open! To qualify as alum, you will need to have taken 28 credits and will need to be or become a dues-paying member of the Alumni Association. Donna noted that the group will need 10 active, dues paying members to form the LGBTQ Association. They currently have four committed members, and they are seeking additional interest.
The goal of LGBTQ Alumni is to better support Lavender Graduation and they'll be a very student-centered group. For those interested in learning more, the next Meeting of the LGBTQ Alumni Association is December 8th at 5:00 in the Alumni House. To learn more about the LGBTQ Alumni Association, contact Diane Stout-Brown dstout@vcu.edu.

CAMPUS CLIMATE INDEX
Brie and Dale discussed the group’s current efforts—the group is in the process of entering responses into the open Index, and those responses will likely be submitted in late 2014 or early 2015. Although VCU’s Index score may be similar to our current score (partly due to the inclusion of new questions), there are efforts in process that may increase our score as soon as next year.

LGBTQ SAFETY ADVISORY GROUP
Alex Wagaman’s LGBTQ Safety Advisory Group was presented (please see attached document), and Faith was supportive and noted that she would discuss this with the Co-Chairs and follow-up with Alex. Faith also noted that Chief Venuti is interested in attending and participating in events in support of Equality VCU.

OTHER BUSINESS
Alexandra told the group that last week the Health Sciences Diversity had their panel, Being Trans: A Patient’s Perspective Dispelling the “Average Patient” Myth with Dr. Tarynn Witten. She noted that they are hoping to increase student attendance at future events. Alexandra will be partnering with Camilla in coordinating similar/future efforts and trying to partner and support events across campus.

Sara Loritsch mentioned that there will be a webinar this Thursday (11/20) from 1:00 – 2:00 PM in the Career Center: “To Come Out or Not to Come Out?” which is centered around the discussion of when to come out in your professional career. She and Alexandra said that the Out for Work Conference went well and they hope to be able to continue to send students to attend the event in the future. Alexandra told the group that Health Sciences Diversity sponsored two students to go. Dale told us that a student from the English Department also attended. Sara noted that it was really powerful.

Donna mentioned the Resource Group. She said she had about twenty responses and they're working on making it available online. They are looking into the possibility of making the list public, a link to the Google spreadsheet or a blog post, as that will allow Donna to continue updating it in real time. Donna will keep the list of people willing to speak to the media internal to the group, but noted that there were a lot of valuable people available.

Kelly mentioned that she and the Co-Chairs are discussing the possibility of initiating a WordPress for Equality VCU where we can publish the minutes and other important announcements. Kelly is also going to work towards updating our roster. Donna and Kelly also discussed the possibility of archiving and backdating archived membership rosters and minutes so that the group can revisit older material.

Donna noted that the LGBT-List Serv (LGBT-L@LISTS.VCU.EDU) could possibly transition to Google Groups in the future. Google Groups will make it easier for folks to add and remove themselves from the lists. More to come as Donna explores this possibility.

Dale mentioned that Admissions has given him and Dorothy the go-ahead for prospective students to indicate LGBTQ Activities, Causes or Interests from a drop-down box of other choices. Once a prospective student checks this box, that student receives an automatic letter, which Dale and Dorothy drafted. They are
meeting with representatives from Admissions this week to finalize the announcement and materials. They are also working on getting images in VCU’s promotional materials to include more LGBTQ friendly imagery (e.g. an OUT RVA sticker on someone’s laptop, for example).

**LGBTQ CAMPUS SAFETY ADVISORY GROUP: Alex Wagaman, mawagaman@vcu.edu**

Chief Venuti of the VCU Police Department has been a strong supporter of the LGBTQ community on campus. This year, as the Campus Climate Index Work Group worked to update our index questions, we met with Chief Venuti to discuss ways to increase efforts around LGBTQ safety on campus. Out of this conversation, several action items were identified, including:

- Collaboration with other campus units including Student Affairs to make our bias incident reporting system more accessible and visible.
- Efforts to institutionalize training for police officers and campus security authorities around LGB experiences/concerns and anti-LGB violence AND transgender experiences/concerns and anti-transgender violence via (a) training development, and (b) establishing trainers within the police department who could partner with trainers from other units for regular, consistent delivery.
- Engage in intentional activities to support dialogue and relationships between the VCU police and LGBTQ students, staff, faculty and organizations.

To this end, Chief Venuti mentioned that it would be beneficial to have a group that serves as an LGBTQ advisory to him. At the least, they would be a group with whom he could meet twice a year. They could also advise on the action items listed above, provide feedback on materials and documents developed by the police, and answer questions that arise as change efforts are initiated.

Based on this request from Chief Venuti, and the significant progress that could be made around the Campus Climate Index items through these efforts, we would like to ask that Equality VCU establish a sub-group or committee of folks who either self-select or are recruited to serve on an advisory group. We have identified a few key campus stakeholders who we believe should be represented on this advisory group, but we are open to Equality VCU’s suggestions about how best to proceed in establishing this body.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.