



Office of the President

Geneseo

TO: President's Commission on Diversity and Community
Professor Kathleen Mapes and Ms. Tracy Paradis

FROM: Christopher C. Dahl, President

DATE: October 24, 2012

SUBJECT: Charge to the Commission on Diversity and Community

I am pleased to thank the continuing members of the Commission for their dedicated service, and to welcome new members who have agreed to join in the Commission's work for the coming year. I am very grateful to Professor Mapes and Ms. Paradis, who ably co-chaired the Commission in 2011-2012.

By this memo, I formally accept the 2011-2012 report of the Commission. I have consulted with the co-chairs on the recommendations in the report, and concur with many of the recommendations or their general intent.

As we begin our work for 2012-2013, I offer the following charge to the Commission. As in the past, I offer you the opportunity to decide how you will accomplish this work. I recommend that you continue the good work of the Commission in the following areas.

Direction of the Commission: The Commission continues to reach out to the wider campus community and to develop action-oriented goals, in concert with the College's mission statement and diversity statement. I commend the Commission's recommendations for a more visible and integrated profile on campus, which include:

- Input into General Education revisions currently under discussion
- Involvement in other discussion and plans related to curriculum reform and innovation
- Integrate with other committees and programs that address issues related to diversity
- Co-sponsor and support programs developed by other units on campus to address diversity and community related issues
- Invite non-Commission members to work with subcommittees on specific issues
- Foster more collaboration across departments and offices to take advantage of currently under-utilized expertise on diversity and community
- Offering the Commission as a resource to students and student groups

Student and Campus Engagement: The co-chairs of the Student and Campus Engagement subcommittee and organizers of Real World Geneseo, Fatima Johnson and Susan Norman, are to be commended for their dedication to the program, which represents a model integration of

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academic and student affairs programming. I'm pleased to see that Real World Geneseo (RWG) has received an award for excellence from the SUNY chief student affairs officers, and has received a second \$10,000 grant from SUNY's Office of Equity and Diversity. It is noteworthy that the fifth cohort of students to benefit from the program, in Spring 2013, will include Monroe Community College (MCC) students as well as Geneseo students. Further, Geneseo and MCC faculty and staff members will partner throughout the program. This will extend the concept of Real World Geneseo in ways that were not initially anticipated, with the possibility for important benefits.

The Real World Geneseo seminar is the first course to be approved by College Senate for the Extreme Learning (EXLRN) designation. Our shared goal is for Real World Geneseo to become a regular part of the curriculum. The Office of the Provost has submitted a grant proposal to Bringing Theory to Practice to generate funds for both departments and individuals to allow them to support RWG. The proposal was unfortunately not funded in this round but the Provost's Office will re-submit in the next cycle. When the infrastructure is in place to support departments and individuals that contribute to RWG, it will become easier to identify and train additional facilitators for the retreat component of Real World Geneseo (RWG) in addition to recruiting seminar teachers and service learning directors. In the meantime, I charge the Commission to continue to enlarge the facilitator pool to the extent possible. This will relieve the co-chairs of the subcommittee from fulfilling the role of facilitator for every retreat, and will integrate more College community members into the program. I further charge the RWG assessment committee to continue its data collection and analysis, and to prepare a report of findings for me.

For many reasons, including but not limited to, the recruitment of additional faculty and staff participants, it is very important to publicize Real World Geneseo and its value to the wider campus community. I charge the Commission to work with the Bringing Theory to Practice committee, the College Senate, and the Office of College Communications to develop strategies to increase the familiarity of our campus community with the Real World Geneseo program.

I will consult with the Provost and the Vice President for Student and Campus Life about identifying a staff member or intern to handle the logistics of each RWG retreat, which would allow the facilitators to concentrate on planning each retreat to effectively accomplish its goals and meet the needs of the participating students.

I charge those Commission and subcommittee members who are not heavily involved with Real World Geneseo to work on raising awareness about the PATH Awards and strengthening the perception of the awards as a distinct honor.

Professional Development: I commend the subcommittee for beginning an inventory of faculty expertise in areas of diversity and compiling a list of requested workshops. I am pleased to learn that four of the workshops requested will be offered in the Fall 2012 semester. It appears that Geneseo faculty and staff with particular areas of expertise will be used to teach these workshops; this is consistent with the Commission's overall direction to take advantage of expertise in diversity and community found on campus.

I also commend the plan to visit academic department meetings to gather more information about professional development needs related to diversity. This plan coincides with the overall direction of the Commission to become more visible and serve as a resource to the campus.

I commend the subcommittee for learning about the academically-related needs of international students. We have an obligation to all of our students to make learning inviting, and to avoid placing unnecessary obstacles in their paths. I charge the Commission with sharing information and programming ideas with Becky Lewis, Assistant Provost for International Programs, who supervises the Office of International Student Services, to ensure a coordinated approach and to ensure that professional development and student needs are addressed.

I commend the goal to encourage Geneseo faculty members to submit grant proposals to the Consortium on High Achievement and Success (CHAS). As the first public college admitted to the consortium, it is important that we take advantage of the resources available through CHAS.

Assessment and Diversity Plan: I appreciate the Commission's work on the Diversity Plan concurrently with the Strategic Planning Group (SPG). I charge the Commission to incorporate the action items, which have been proposed by a variety of sources, into the Diversity Plan. I further charge the Assessment subcommittee with completing an assessment structure for the Diversity Plan. SPG will have the role of assigning responsibility for sections of the Diversity Plan, with incorporated action items, to the appropriate institutional parties. I ask that these steps be completed by March 15, 2013.

Upon completion of this work, I charge the entire commission, along with the SPG and other community members, with publicizing the Diversity Plan as it is formally rolled out to the campus community.

Conclusion

I look forward to working with you in the coming year to continue to build an inclusive and welcoming educational community at Geneseo—a commitment that is at the heart of our mission and essential to our role as a public liberal arts college. Thank you again for your service to the College.