**COM Department Faculty Meeting**

October 5, 2020

Meeting Minutes

Attendees (in person): Dr. Brian Ott, Dr. Isabelle Bauman, Dr. Carrisa Hoelscher, Dr. Erin Wehrman, Ms. Nora Cox, Dr. Stephen Spates, Dr. Jake Simmons, Ms. Deana Butcher, Ms. Taleyna Morris, Dr. Sam Dyer, Dr. Randy Dillon, Dr. Gordana Lazić, Ms. Jerri Lynn Kyle, Suzanne Moskalski took minutes

Attendees (via Zoom): Dr. Char Berquist, Dr. John Bourhis, Dr. Chris Collins, Dr. Eric Morris, Ms. Allison Coltharp, Ms. Heather Blades, Dr. LeAnn Brazeal, Mr. Jay Howard, Observer – MO State

Absent: Dr. Liz Dudash-Buskirk, Ms. Heather Walters

Meeting called to order: 12:17 p.m.

Information Items

1. **None**.

Discussion Items

1. **Diversity, Inclusion, Equity, and Antiracism Efforts**.

* Dr. Ott welcomed everyone to the meeting. He indicated that we would take up the Department’s diversity, inclusion, equity, and antiracism efforts at three distinct but overlapping levels: structural, curricular and advising, and public messaging.

*Structural Level*

* Dr. Ott announced he plans to participate in a training session titled, “Diversity 201 for Supervisors.” The date of that training is currently being rescheduled, as it conflicted with Fall Break.
* Dr. Ott shared he has charged the Department’s four Unit Directors (Basic Course, Center for Dispute Resolution, Debate, and Graduate Studies) with articulating a three-year vision plan that includes explicit steps to promote diversity and inclusion and to enact equity and antiracism.
  + Dr. Ott thinks this charge should be extended to the Department’s Personnel and Scholarship committees as well.
* Dr. Ott invited the faculty to identify other actions the Department could undertake to foster meaningful change.
  + Dr. Hoelscher noted that the idea of hosting a bias training in the Department has been mentioned in the past and that she supports it.
  + Dr. Spates indicated his support for efforts to address these issues across various leadership positions, adding that such efforts set a positive tone and would hopefully trickle down.
  + Dr. Berquist indicated they do diversity circles in the (secondary) schools and she is amazed at how powerful it is. She has been shocked at the kind of experiences students have had. She suggested that perhaps a similar sort of thing could be implemented at the Department level.
    - Dr. Ott asked her to elaborate on what the “circles” entail.
    - Dr. Berquist clarified that they occur in middle schools for 6-8 weeks, focus on students of color, and are safe spaces where students can talk about their experiences.
  + Dr. Lazić expressed surprise at the lack of diversity in her classes and believes the Department needs to expand its recruiting efforts with a plan to attract a more diverse student body.
  + Dr. Ott asked if anyone had an “in” into the high schools for recruiting.
  + Dr. Hoelscher asked about Admissions and possibly Dual Credit as a point of entry.
* Dr. Ott summarized three possible action items: a Department diversity training, Department-sponsored diversity circles, and getting into high schools to actively recruit more diverse students.
* He is willing to make connections with schools for us to recruit. He requested that faculty who are interested in traveling to schools with him to recruit let him know by email.

*Curricular and Advising Level*

* Dr. Ott announced an upcoming advising training titled, “Incorporating Antiracism in Advising Practices,” on October 16, 2020. He strongly urged faculty to participate in this training and indicated his desire that faculty retain their Master Advising status (even after the Department transitions to centralized advising).
* Dr. Ott indicated it is crucial the Department’s curriculum reflect our commitment to diversity, inclusion, equity, and antiracism. He noted that this responsibility should not and cannot be borne by a few select courses; it should be evident across all our classes and majors. He asked if there were ideas on how we might accomplish that.
  + Dr. Spates said he would like to see COM 115 take up these issues; he further noted the importance of COM 260, as well as adding a variety of sources and readings for all courses and posting them online.
  + Ms. Butcher said that she thinks a visual representation of sources and authors is important.
* Dr. Ott posed a question to the whole group: is this something the faculty would like to see the Department do in a formal way? Should we hold a curriculum workshop to help everyone actually dothis?
* Dr. Bauman and Dr. Hoelscher said they thought it would be helpful.
* Dr. Taleyna Morris shared some concerns about the course curriculum already being condensed due to COVID and being online or hybrid, and she wondered how she would add something new to her classes.
  + Dr. Ott replied that it doesn’t have to be an addition; that it could be a revision of something that already exists such as changing an assignment to link it more explicitly to antiracism.
* Dr. Ott doesn’t want the faculty merely to agree that the Department needs to do these things; he wants everyone to commit to doing them.
* Dr. Dillon said that he has found some overlap in how our classes address these issues and that perhaps we should coordinate our efforts more directly. Faculty need to talk with each other about the materials they are using so they are not all using the same text in different classes.
* Dr. Ott is willing to consider purchasing curricular materials for students related to these issues if faculty believe it is beneficial for the students to have them but cost prohibitive.
* Dr. Ott suggested that the previously mentioned idea of circles might also be a good way of making sure that we are hearing from students about how they would like to see these issues addressed.

*Public Messaging*

* Dr. Ott shared that he recently learned that Admissions has materials they circulate to students interested in coming to MSU and being a COM major. He was concerned that the materials: (1) did not adequately represent the breadth of our discipline; and (2) that the images demonstrated a startling lack of diversity. He is working to address both concerns.
* Dr. Ott communicated his appreciation for the feedback he received on the Antiracism Statement he drafted and circulated. *Based on that feedback, he believes it is important the Department demonstrate its commitment to antiracism through concrete actions before publicly issuing such a statement*. Thoughts?
  + Dr. Spates said this is the first time this has been addressed directly since he’s been here. We have wrestled with “don’t talk about it” and if we are having this difficulty at “our” level, it’s hard to address it in classes. Dr. Spates wants to be a part of the resolution and move this forward, as difficult as it may be.
  + Dr. Hoelscher thinks we’ve become complacent by “saying” we are antiracist but not always acting on it.
  + Dr. Wehrman said in a workshop, they had to make a list of things they could change that could be acted on.
  + Dr. Hoelscher thinks it would be good to “show” the syllabi changes, not just make the changes.
  + Dr. Ott invited additional comments or suggestions.
  + Dr. Taleyna Morris said that sometimes we forget that we are not on “the same page” with the students.
  + Dr. Ott said it would be very productive for faculty to share their conversations with each other about class revelations.
  + Dr. Lazić reminded everyone that there are many workshops and trainings across campus, and they can dovetail with a Department training.
  + Dr. Simmons said he’s seen both good and bad diversity trainings. One of the best trainings was from Dr. Spates, and he reminded everyone that we have very good resources in the department.
  + Dr. Simmons thinks we need two public statements: (1) a preliminary one that communicates we are working on these issues and specifies what we are doing, and (2) a follow-up one that identifies what we have already done and conveys our future commitments.

Dr. Ott wrapped up the meeting; he will distribute the minutes with next steps. He conveyed his appreciation for the thoughtful ways people engaged these issues.

He also congratulated everyone on a good semester thus far, urging everyone to continue to be kind to students and good to yourselves.

Meeting adjourned: 1:15 p.m.