

May 21, 2004
University Committee on LGBT Issues
Minutes

Present: Chris Burnside, David Benson, Judy Williams, Dorothy Filmore, Velma Jackson-Williams, Tracey Van Eman, Marianne Miller

Dyana Mason, Equality Virginia

Equality Virginia has 2500 members most of them representing the Gay & Lesbian community. We will certainly need the support of non-Gay allies to make a difference and overturn HB 751. Virginia already has a Defense of Marriage law passed in 1997. HB 751 goes further. Implications are that all contracts that seem to try and replicate marriage type of benefits may be null & void, such as advance medical directives, custody, wills, mortgages, etc.

We don't know how broadly or narrowly this will be interpreted by the courts. EV is working with ACLU and others to try & combat this law. There will be a demonstration on June 30th. Various action groups are in place to try to identify gay-friendly hospitals & legal associations. We can make a difference by writing letters to the editor or by visiting or sending letters and/or emails to your delegates.

Also it is important to send letters to EV or the ACLU describing what types of agreements/contracts you have that might be affected by this law. EV and ACLU are trying to identify potential plaintiffs. We are working to OVERTURN THIS BILL. Possible legal points: The constitution guarantees that we have equal protection, the government can't come between personal contacts between 2 people, and gender bias.

It is important that we hold the elected officials accountable for their votes. If a person knows a gay person, they're much more likely to support our issues.

EEO Training Update

Velma spoke: EEO isn't in customer services like HR and we need another model for our training. Want to increase people's perception of the issues. What does it mean to be in the LGBT community? What are the myths and how do we break those myths down? "If we could get any message across we wanted to" – Make that a part of the training. Suggested model seems to focus too much on the negative views people have. Don't want to rehash the negative. Want to make it positive. Want to use every moment to impart knowledge and the positive. Definitely want the education piece.

Equity & Diversity

Velma reported that Nancy Langston's answer that we are an official sub-committee of Equity & Diversity is probably going to be changed & clarified. The Equity & Diversity

Committee is under the EEO Office. The co-chairs are Nancy Langston & Velma. We are the only special interest group that is currently attached to the committee. There are plenty of other special interest groups that could be attached as well. It's not fair to the other groups for our group to be the only one. Our committee should remain separate but have representation.

Chris explained that last year, after being denied formal committee status on campus, Chris & Sarah wrote Dr. Trani expressing their disappointment. He responded by suggesting that we seek sub-committee status on the Equity and Diversity Committee and to model ourselves after the BEA. That's actually where the idea & direction came from. Chris welcomed Velma's information, but said that he also thought since we had been communicating with Nancy Langston that she should continue in that role as well.

Leadership

Chris presented the issue that Chris & Sarah have been the co-chairs of the committee for at least 3 years and that although there have been some benefits from that continuity, that it would probably be healthy for some sort of change. Feelers for out-and-out replacements yielded nothing. Suggestion was made that for next year that the committee be lead by an executive committee of 3 or 4. Chris & Sarah could continue sharing responsibilities with 2 others. David Benson agreed to be on the committee, if he remains in VA and Dorothy Filmore agreed to consider it. Marianne Miller said she would also consider it, if Dorothy was unable to accept.

Next Meetings

The committee thought it would be a good idea to have a meeting in June. The meeting will be Friday June 18th at noon. The first meeting of the Fall Semester will be Friday August 20th. Meetings for the Fall semester will continue to be the 3rd Friday of each month.

Website

Chris reported that Micah McCreary agreed to host our website on his Vice Provost for Diversity home page. Velma said she thought it would be a good idea to also link to the EEO website.

Fall Reception

It was decided that the Fall Welcoming Reception for VCU LGBT faculty, staff and students will be Tuesday September 14th at 5:00 pm. It was suggested that if we reserve a room early enough, that we should be able to get the Student Commons. Everyone agreed to once again share the responsibilities of organizing the Reception.