Public Safety Advisory Committee (PSAC) – Meeting Minutes
January 8, 2021
12:30-1:30pm
Held via zoom

Attendees:

Members: Byrne (faculty), Chukwukere (student), Davis-Frost (institutional), Haenlin-Mott (institutional), Hodges (student), Mackowski, (faculty), Margulies (faculty), Ononye (institutional), Rogers (student)

Guest: August

Chair: DeStefano
Staff: Honan, Matta

START: 12:30pm

I. Introductions:
Chair DeStefano introduced Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, Avery August as the guest speaker.

II. Approval of Minutes

Members of the committee unanimously voted to approve minutes from the December 21, 2020 meeting.

III. Continuation on History of Policing Discussion

Vice President Avery August provided a brief presentation on systemic racism, its history, and how it plays out in areas such as policing, housing, employment, and healthcare. VP August gave examples of unintended (maybe intended) consequences of federal legislations, such as the Federal Highway Act allowing mainly whites to move to the suburbs. VP August also discussed implicit and explicit biases and how data shows that attitudes can change. He reminded us that 84% of American history were times of American slavery and segregation so only 16% of our history has been dealing with the racism issues.

The committee expressed appreciation for VP August’s presentation and continued conversation, led by our students, providing examples of their recent experiences with both police and racism. Other committee members expressed outrage for the experiences our students have faced.
The committee acknowledged that police need to take part in the solution by improving its bias training. Skepticism was expressed in expecting a natural progress to improve race relations. The committee agrees that proactive actions/recommendations will be necessary.

The committee suggested that we expect too much from the police. One recommendation is to reduce the “blue” footprint on campus to shrink the opportunities for friction. Non-police activities could be outsourced to other units or restructured within the police.

Everyone agrees that we need a broader education program so more people are aware of their biases.

A request to consider adding a faculty of color to the committee will be explored.

IV. Conclusion/Next steps

The chair ended the meeting acknowledging the desire to maintain the focus group plan and will move away from the bulletin board feedback process. She also discussed the difficulty of getting focus groups moving forward. Peggy Matta is working with the Survey Research Institute to obtain quotes to outsource the process.

The chair also mentioned that Chief August Washington from Vanderbilt University will be our guest speaker at our next meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 1:30 PM
Notes by: Joanne DeStefano