AS&E Equal Educational Opportunity Committee
Annual Report for 2004-2005
August 23, 2005

During 2004-2005 EEOC met six times as a full committee and the co-chairs represented the Committee in numerous other discussions. Four issues consumed most of the Committee’s time.

1. AS&E Bylaw Language for EEOC

During Fall 2004 the AS&E Executive Committee circulated a questionnaire to all AS&E bylaw committees. One of the questions asked if the bylaw charge of the committee needed revision. This prompted the Committee to discuss its bylaw language.

According to the current bylaws, EEOC is defined as “A Committee on Equal Educational Opportunity, consisting of five or more members. This committee shall concern itself with those programs intended to provide equal educational opportunity to students from all segments of society.” Committee members agreed that this bylaw language is inadequate. It says nothing about the membership roles of faculty, students, staff, and administrators. And it does not capture the range of issues the Committee routinely addresses. A strict interpretation of the existing language would have the perverse effect of limiting the Committee’s attention to student programs that are specifically intended to provide equal opportunity.

The Committee recommends new bylaw language that is broad enough the capture the role of EEOC in promoting equal opportunity throughout AS&E. We offer the following suggestion to the Executive Committee.

“EEOC shall promote efforts to attract, support and retain students, faculty, administrators, and staff from all segments of society. It will be concerned with the creation of a positive working, learning, and living environment for the campus community. Its activities may include reviewing and reporting on progress in these areas as well as proposing new programs.”

EEOC membership must be specified in a way that is consistent with practices for AS&E committees, but should include explicitly include faculty members, students, staff members who work on diversity issues, and the appropriate deans from A&S and Engineering. EEOC also asks that the Executive Committee consider these issues that it shares with other committees: finding ways to establish better communications between the committee and the deans, the voting status of non-faculty members, and specifying guidelines for the selection and participation of student members.

2. Adding ‘Gender Identity and Expression’ to Tufts Non-Discrimination Policy

Tufts was part of the first wave of universities to include sexual orientation in their non-discrimination policies, and it did so years before the state of Massachusetts made discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation illegal. Today many universities are amending their policies to prohibit discrimination based on gender identity and expression. Institutions such as UC-Berkeley, Brown, Cornell, MIT, Pennsylvania, Middlebury, and Rutgers have already done so. Major corporations are also beginning to adopt this policy change. (Raytheon, the large defense contractor, recently used a very public announcement of their policy change to gain positive publicity.)
After the TCU Senate passed a September 2004 recommendation that this change be made at Tufts, EEOC held several discussions of the issues. We heard about cases of gender identity/expression discrimination and harassment that have occurred at Tufts. We observed that the perpetrators of these incidents cannot be held accountable under Tufts current policy. Our conclusion was that Tufts has an ethical obligation to protect students, faculty, and staff from bias based on gender identity and expression. We also believe that this inclusion in non-discrimination policies will become standard and that failing to make the change will send the wrong signal to anyone considering matriculating or accepting a job at Tufts. EEOC recommends that President Bacow modify our non-discrimination policy to include “gender identity and expression.”

3. Services for Students, Faculty, and Staff with Disabilities

Several EEOC discussions were devoted to the needs of students, faculty, and staff with disabilities. The demand for support services continues to increase and offices such as the Academic Resource Center have a hard time keeping up. The Committee continues to hear of cases in which communication breakdowns lead to unnecessary problems. The Office of Equal Opportunity has been taking a leadership role in designing and coordinating policy, but that is no substitute for more support staff. We also have longstanding campus access problems that come from our old physical plant and location on the hill. It is vital that improving accessibility be part of our new campus Master Plan and the ongoing planning process.

4. Diversity in the AS&E Administration

Last year’s Annual Report commended the administration for making impressive progress in appointing women to high-level administrative positions within AS&E, but noted a lack of progress in appointing individuals of color to high-level AS&E administrative posts. This is not a problem that can be solved in a single year and EEOC asks that the administration continue make efforts to attract more candidates of color for our administrative openings. The outreach efforts for the A&S dean search provide a model that might be used for other administrative searches.

Issues for 2005-2006

A number of issues were discussed but need more attention in the future. The following are a few that EEOC will be pursuing in 2005-2006.

- The disparity between the graduation rates of whites and underrepresented minorities at Tufts. This is not a new issue, but was highlighted by the Education Trust report that received much publicity in early 2005. AS&E needs better campus-wide planning to ensure the success of all students and a coordinator for the several campus initiatives that already exist.

- Moving beyond the Kaleidoscope Report on Faculty Retention. Most EEOC members felt the Kaleidoscope Report didn’t provide much new information and was out of date. There was little enthusiasm for rehashing the Report, but considerable enthusiasm for identifying strategies for dealing with some of the well-known issues.
• Reviewing the mentoring programs for new tenure-track faculty. EEOC commends the deans of A&S and Engineering for initiating new mentoring programs. Now that both programs are in place, the Committee would like to learn more about the operation of the programs and the feedback that has been received from the participants. We are particularly interested in how the programs have tried to create good mentor-mentee matches, the degree of departmental support, and how program success can be measured.

• Generating faculty interest in better teaching and advising. Initiatives such as the All-University Conferences on Teaching Excellence, the AS&E Workshops on Teaching Diverse Student Populations, and the Diversity and Cognition Colloquium Series offer excellent opportunities for faculty members to improve their teaching and advising. But the low rate of faculty participation is disappointing. We need to find better ways of stimulating interest.

Finally, the Committee congratulates Steve Marrone and Janet Zeller on their receipt of the AS&E Faculty/Staff Multicultural Service Award for 2004-2005.

We welcome feedback from all members of the Tufts community and suggestions for next year’s agenda.

Submitted by,

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