

Friday, October 15, 2005

The meeting convened at 2:00 PM in room 320 Chapman Hall.

Present were: Stephen Chew (co-chair), Mark Elliott, Clara Gerhardt, Paul Holloway (co-chair), Cindy Kirk, Mary McCullough, Moya Nordlund, Doug Smith, Jean Thomason, and Andy Webster.

Most of the meeting was taken up with a conversation with Frank Parsons, director of Greek Life at Samford. The Committee had invited Frank to explain the recent controversy over the "Gangsters' Paradise" new members' party that the Chi Omega sorority had held, and which appeared in the local media. Frank spoke at length regarding the events leading up to the party and its offensiveness to certain members of the Samford community and the broader community. Frank indicated that the party had indeed had a decidedly ghetto theme that was insensitive.

In further conversation with the Committee, Frank indicated that a subsequent party the Zeta's entitled "Zeta goes ghetto" was canceled after the Chi Omega incident. He also indicated that two fraternities in the University had regularly in the past held parties entitled "White Trash" and "Pimps and 'hos [= whores]," and that these themes were also now judged to be insensitive.

In order to correct these problems, Frank assured the Committee that all the Greek organizations at Samford would participate in sensitivity training with an off-campus professional. He also said that the process of approving party themes was being revisited, so that the precise theme of the party would be submitted for approval. He was asked whether the problem of the Confederate Battle Flag used by several fraternities would be addressed, and he said that it would. Frank agreed to report on these items at the next Diversity Committee in November. After about an hour's conversation, the committee thanked Frank for his attendance, and he left.

Several items of old business were then briefly taken up. Jean Thomason briefly reported for the subcommittee on minority scholarships. She recommended that the committee be ready next year to ask all faculty to support the current minority scholarship being established at Samford. Mark Elliott reported for his subcommittee on minority recruitment. Mark said that his subcommittee had visited a number of school web pages and would make a fuller report at the November meeting. Steve Chew similarly said that the subcommittee on a faculty diversity statement would report at the November meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:15.