Muhlenberg College
President’s Diversity Strategic Planning Committee
Meeting #3: July 11, 2013; 5:45 p.m.
Hoffman House, Dining Room

In Attendance
Cynthia Amaya-Santiago, Kayla Brown, Ken Butler (Recorder), Sue Clemens, Barbara Crossette, Matt Dicken, Troy Dwyer, Melanie Ferrara, Kim Gallon, Corey Goff, Luis Garcia, Karen Green, Kathy Harring, Randy Helm, Chris Hooker-Haring, Callista Isabelle, John Ramsay, Kate Richmond, Robin Riley-Casey, Adrian Shanker, Zachary Tanne, Jeremy Teissere

1. Call to Order Review of Minutes
President Randy Helm called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m. He asked if there were any changes to the minutes of the June 24, 2013, meeting. Mr. Dicken asked if there could be an addition to the minutes, and Dr. Helm responded that any additions should be sent directly to Mr. Butler. It was decided that future sets of minutes will go out more quickly and that the Committee will comment upon them via email or personal contact with the Recorder.

2. President’s Update
President Helm said that there has been much going on in the world since our last meeting, with both good (Supreme Court Decisions on DOMA and Proposition 8) and bad news (Supreme Court decision on Fisher v. Texas; military coup in Egypt). We need to remember that our important conversations here must also be viewed in a larger context. Mr. Shanker praised the President’s decision to fly the rainbow flag at Muhlenberg in celebration of the Supreme Court’s DOMA and Prop 8 decisions, noting that it got over 800 “likes” on the College’s Facebook page.

3. Institutional Research Data Review
Dr. Kathy Harring, Associate Dean for Institutional Assessment, joined the meeting to speak about the attitudinal data that we have, and data that we can gather, based on the surveys in which we participate. Several of the benchmark institutions we are considering conduct the same surveys that we do, and we can therefore compare our results more directly against theirs, if we desire. The College participates in number of national surveys, including HEDS, IPEDS, NSSE, and HERI. Dr. Harring and her research assistant have compiled the data of all the surveys in which we engage and Dr. Harring led the Committee through the attitudinal data collected from the senior classes from the last five years. Committee members asked for clarification and amplification of the numbers throughout the presentation. At separate points, Mr. Dwyer and Dr. Gallon both noted that the questions themselves sometimes could be construed as vague and open to interpretations not intended by the questioner. Dr. Harring agreed. Mr. Shanker asked if attitudinal data was available on types of diversity beyond race and ethnicity and Dr. Harring said such questions are fewer, and were more broadly phrased. Copies of the surveys are available on the Institutional Research website: http://www.muhlenberg.edu/main/aboutus/ir/

The President said that the Committee needs to decide what its next data-gathering steps will be. We can and will get Admitted Student Questionnaire (ASQ) data disaggregated by race and ethnicity. Dr. Helm asked for volunteers to sit on a subcommittee would look at the data we have (and can easily gather), and: determine what sets of data deserve more exploration; determine if we should add custom questions to the Diverse Learning Environment Survey we will be instituting in October; and, if so, design our survey questions. Dr. Richmond asked if we will survey faculty and staff and Dr. Teissere said he hopes the subcommittee will look beyond the surveys in which we already participate to consider other data-gathering methods. Ms. Crossette spoke about the relatively small
numbers of students of color who have participated in these surveys and how the results we have
gathered basically reflect the attitudes of the white campus population. Dr. Harring said that we are
able to disaggregate this data and learn if and how minority students’ responses differ from those of
majority students. Mr. Hooker-Haring said that what we need is a better sense of campus climate.
Dr. Richmond noted that we need to refine the questions we want to ask before we can fully
determine the data we will need. The President agreed, noting that data we already have or can
gather initially should help identify trends and issues that will lead to further questions and research.
Discussion followed.
The President reminded that the job of the Committee is to identify goals for the College, propose
the work that needs to be done, how it should be done, and how it will be assessed. He expressed
cautions that we not mix up the work of planning with the work of implementation. Ms. Ferrara
suggested that these two tasks do not have to be mutually exclusive and Mr. Dicken added that we
may need to shift our strategy from the traditional process in a way that mirrors the changes we wish
to produce and takes into consideration best practices from strategic planning processes specific to
diversity goals at other American higher education institutions. The President asked for clarification
of their views, and acknowledged that each planning process is different, though there are some
components that are essential to any successful planning process. For example, he reminded the
committee members that it is important that our plan identify goals that, as the faculty letter stated,
are specific and measurable. Dean Green said she does not feel that diversity strategic planning can
be carried out in the same way that institutional strategic planning is accomplished. Ms. Riley-
Casey said that, though she agreed with Dean Green, she feels the President can offer much valuable
insight and assistance, given his career in planning and his unique role as the leader of this
institute; therefore, we should seek to devise a strategic plan that incorporates and values both
traditional and alternative methods. Mr. Hooker-Haring said it will be important to gather ‘soft data’
through focus groups and roundtables. Ms. Brown said that she thinks it is time that we, as a
community, speak frankly about issues of diversity. Students need to be provided forums in which
majority students can confront issues of race and power with students of color. A longer discussion
followed.
The Committee agreed to postpone discussion of the draft revisions to the Diversity Statement and
Mission Statement until the next meeting. President Helm asked committee members interested in
serving on the data subcommittee to let him know by the end of the week so that this group can get
started on its work.
The Committee agreed that biweekly meetings throughout the fall semester should be scheduled as
soon as possible, and agreed to submit their class schedules and other time commitments to Ms. Erin
Fenstermacher as soon as possible to be included in the scheduling process.
The President ended the discussion by reiterating his thanks for open dialogue in these meetings,
even when we disagree.
The meeting ended at 7:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ken Butler
Recorder