

CULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND EDUCATIONAL ASSEMBLIES

Academic Year 2016-2017

THE COMMITTEE'S MAKEUP—(Wording in the Bylaws)

It shall be the function of this committee to plan, organize and develop programs for the university educational assemblies, and to be responsible for the presentation each year of the Artists Series programs and other programs for the University. This committee shall consist of the Cultural Activities Program Coordinator, who shall serve as an ex officio, non-voting member; four (4) faculty members elected at large (one from each college); six (6) faculty members elected at large from any college; four (4) students (one representing each college, appointed by the respective deans); and non-voting, advisory members from the office of the Provost, the office of University Relations and Operations, and the chair of the General Education Committee.

Comment: The six faculty members elected at large from any college appears to be an excessive number given that one faculty member from each college is elected at large. What happens in the individual college meetings when elections are done, usually one is elected from each college.

THE COMMITTEE'S PURPOSE—

The committee should make a serious effort to provide engaging and educational events for a diverse audience that attracts the immediate campus community, various communities in the state, those in states who may have an ongoing connection to the university, and those in surrounding states who have a desire to attend specific events. The committee should keep in mind the many needs of the communities the University is serving as indicated in the University mission statement. We want to provide events that will enhance the racially integrated and multigenerational educational and economic development needs of the state and region.

Engaging programs for the many communities we serve can be a drawing card to attract potential students to enroll and graduate from our academic programs. Our programs should have an outreach component to schools of various age levels, populations, and locations. This committee seeks events that will enrich lives, educate the masses, and create a positive impression of the university.

FINDING QUALITY EVENTS—

From the perspective of one who has served as a member and then as the Chair of this committee, it is the Cultural Activities & Educational Assemblies Coordinator, Richard Wolfe, who knows how to walk the streets, make the phone calls, search the websites, talk to various event planning agencies, and mingle with the people, to get a sense of issues and events to bring to our campus. One has to be personable and persistent to deal with the public, to reach out to communities and to get communities interested in coming to our campus to attend events. Fliers and press releases about events go unseen so often by the public. There have been many times when a personal visit or phone call to a particular group revealed that no one is aware of an upcoming event. We posted events on Moodle.

Currently our proposal inquiry does not generate enough interests that will result in engaging proposals that will turn into a successful event. The campus community does not appear to be interested in investing the time needed to writing a proposal, and overseeing a group or speaker that will culminate in a successful event. Budget limitations create an enormous roadblock in planning an event that will

bring the crowds out. A reception for an intriguing art exhibit in the Della Brown Taylor Hardman Art Gallery might attract 20 or 30 viewers. People seem uninterested in hearing the artist talk about his/her work and how it has evolved. Too many of our events are poorly attended.

I have had the opportunity to organize and coordinate a major event titled "In the Beginning Was the Source Rock". Russell Gold, Senior Energy Reporter for the *Wall Street Journal* gave the keynote address. Estimated attendance in the Student Union was 200+. Seating involved two rooms. Although this event occurred September 29, 2015, it warrants some discussion about best practices for creating a successful event, one that will involve a diverse group of people willing to invest their time and attention to the subject matter.

- First, I planned the event months in advance;
- Used the internet to examine the latest writers/presenters on fracking (a very controversial issue). What was being said about them? Unfortunately, one who had an article printed in the *New York Times*, and who had sent me a copy of the article had some red flags. Some knowledgeable critics had stated that his numerical information was inaccurate. It is important that we bring respectable performers/presenters to our campus. Everything about Russell Gold's book, *The Boom*, was upbeat or at least respectable.
- Be familiar with the materials of the presenter. I read *The Boom* and was able to offer genuine critical remarks about the book in memos and face-to-face talks about the book.
- I involved participants from each of the four colleges, and asked the faculty to devote some time addressing fracking issues in their discussions. Encourage students to attend, etc.

SUPPORT of the ADMINISTRATION

When planning an event, the committee events need the administration's endorsement; this became very apparent during the events for Black History month. While some on campus are passionate about observing Black History month given that we are an HBCU institution, others are detached and have no commitment to celebrating this history to inform students of our school's background.

On February 6, 2017, I witnessed something remarkable about our audience for *The Green Book.*, a play in one act by Calvin Alexander Ramsey; directed by Stuart Frazier. Victor Hugo Green, during the Jim Crow era, developed a travel guide to help direct the African American traveler to the limited accommodations that were available. Once the play was completed, it was the question-and-answer period that was spectacular. People of different generations, sat in their seats for some time, unable to leave. There were an estimated 200 or more in attendance.

In terms of Michael Dyson's February 16, 2017 presentation entitled *Tears We Cannot Stop*, the attendance was estimated at 400+. Students had a strong presence on the program. I received favorable memos and comments from faculty, staff, administrators, and community people, and students about their enjoyment of the speaker. Certainly, Dyson's extemporaneous style, his ability to include lyrics from country music artists, blues and rap artists in his message ignited the audience. United we stand; divided we fall!

Carol Taylor Johnson, Chair,

Happy to serve our institution