

CONNECTICUT JUDICIAL BRANCH

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL COMPETENCY

June 27, 2017
2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
225 Spring Street, Room 204
Wethersfield

MINUTES

Attendees

Troy Brown, Samuel Bruder, Karen Chorney, Linda J. Cimino, Juanita Halepas, Esther Harris, Zarin Kapur, Ines Nieves, Daisy Ortiz, Philip Strambler, Ewa Wojewodzki, and Shawna Woodard

Welcome and Approval of Minutes

Karen Chorney, acting in Justice Robinson's absence, commenced the meeting at 2:05 p.m. and welcomed the Committee members.

The Committee members unanimously approved the meeting minutes from May 23, 2017.

Quick Updates

Spring Lunch and Learn: Juanita Halepas reported there are 20 employees enrolled in the offering in addition to a number of State's Attorneys and Public Defenders who plan to attend "My Multicultural Self" on Friday, June 30 in New Haven.

Annual Report: Shawna Woodard reported she is drafting the Committee's annual report and thanked individuals for supplying the information she requested for the report.

Diversity Week: Zarin Kapur reported the Subcommittee has not received an answer from their preferred keynote speaker, Trevor Noah. Justice Robinson will send Mr. Noah a final letter requesting an answer. In the meantime, the Subcommittee has started to consider other keynote speakers in the event Mr. Noah is unavailable. The Subcommittee will meet again tomorrow morning.

ACCC Video: Karen Chorney reported the Subcommittee has an outline of the topics to be addressed in the video. Several members of the Subcommittee are drafting scripts for each topic. At the end of the grant period, in March of 2018, we expect to have two final products: a 25 minute educational video and a 5 minute marketing and outreach video. A Memorandum of Agreement that was previously reviewed by Legal Services Director Martin Libbin was signed by Middlesex Community College and is awaiting signature from Executive Director Joseph D. D'Alesio.

Membership

This agenda item was tabled until Justice Robinson could be present.

Other Items

In lieu of discussing Membership, the Committee discussed several topics of interest:

Karen Chorney had a SharePoint site set up with a discussion board for Committee members to share articles, websites, etc. and informally chat about topics of interest. The discussion board is expected to promote conversation amongst the Committee while minimizing the number of e-mails one may receive. The Committee requested that we update the privileges of the SharePoint site so that only ACCC members may read/write. Karen will look into this with ITD.

On June 21st, several members of the Committee participated in a training sponsored by CSSD titled "Exploring Racial Bias and Racism." A discussion ensued about the participants' evaluation of the course and the instructor.

Juanita Halepas distributed information about an event occurring on February 1, 2018 at Fairfield University: Seeking Justice in America, An Evening with Dr. Angela Davis.

Troy Brown requested that the Committee conduct follow up focus groups with the employees who participated in the 2011-2012 ACCC Focus Groups. Several members of the Committee felt it was important to determine if the ACCC has met their expectations with the education and training it has presented or sponsored since then. This may also be a good opportunity to conduct a Level 3 or Level 4 evaluation of FCR 100. The Committee agreed to conduct focus groups or survey the 2011/2012 focus group participants who are still employed by the Branch in the Fall or Winter (after Diversity Week) to determine whether or not they have taken any Branch-presented or Branch-sponsored cultural competency training since the focus groups were conducted.

Shawna Woodard read a paragraph from the Chief Justice's State of the Judiciary 2017 (see below), and asked that the Committee think of ways to promote employee participation in FCR 100. Some initial ideas included: 1) an e-mail from the Office of the Chief Court Administrator to Supervisors; 2) ACCC members presenting to groups at their regularly scheduled meetings, such as Chief Clerks, Chief Probation Officers, etc.; and 3) bring the training specifically to the attention of any new Executive Directors or Directors. It was advised not to make the course mandatory, which is a common pitfall concerning diversity and cultural competency training. Any recommendations on how to increase participation in FCR 100 should be included in this next annual report to the Chief Justice.

"As important, along with the gains we have made to increase diversity within the Branch, we have developed a robust, ongoing cultural competency training program for judges and staff. The purpose of the training is to increase communication, understanding and respect among diverse groups and to address critical issues of inclusion facing our society. Being culturally competent is essential in the court system because it directly impacts the interaction among judges, staff and members of the public, and makes it far less likely that erroneous conclusions will be drawn based on implicit bias. This is critically important in our courthouses, which represent a microcosm of our society." (Excerpt from Chief Justice Rogers' State of the Judiciary 2017 report)

Adjourned

The meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m.