A Periodic Update from the Action Plan Committee

APC - CHECKPOINTS

APC Deliberates

The Action Plan Committee on Monday, January 26th met at the Gambrell Room for a productive meeting where we reflected on the diversity of issues confronting our institution. Unfortunately we were unable to meet on January 3rd as originally planned due to illness and unforeseen circumstances.

As we began to deliberate on short and long term goals that will serve as an instrument in cultivating trust and re-establishing confidences within our community, we acknowledged that racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and all kinds of related intolerance is a systemic issue that needs a systemic approach. We recognize that they persist in the new century and that their persistence is rooted in fear: fear of what is different, fear of the other, fear of the loss of personal security. And while we recognize that human fear is in itself ineradicable, we maintain that its consequences are not ineradicable.

We affirmed the reality that genuine communication will be a key ingredient in our process. As such we will be pursuing this monumental task centered on the following declaration of purpose: “We will strive to assist and encourage opportunities for growth in communicating the complexities of journeying together in an environment that is constantly changing.” Please refer to page 3 for a two-tier approach we will be pursuing during the Spring ’09 semester.

The role and function of the Action Plan Committee

In order to foster deeper learning, cultivate greater understanding within a diverse Seminary community, and embrace the realities of our context, President Torrance has created an Action Plan Committee (APC). This committee is composed of a diverse cross-section of faculty, students, and administrators.

The APC is charged with the following tasks:
- Implementing short-term strategies for constructive dialogue regarding a recent student publication;
- Exploring and recommending processes that will allow us to move forward beyond this event;
- Working with the Office of Multicultural Relations in conjunction with initiatives that are already in process;
- Assisting the community to work toward an institutional environment that goes beyond managing diversity to one that values and capitalizes on diversity in all areas.

The members of the Action Plan Committee are:
Victor Aloyo, Jr., Jan Ammon, Blair Bertran, Joseph Collazo, Cherri Green, Charlene Han, Deborah Hunsinger, Patricia Korsak, Sang Lee, Brian McCollum, Kate Skrebulenas, Brenda Williams, Richard Young.

We are appreciative of all the e-mails communicating concerns and issues raised as a result of the Foreskin publication. We are also grateful for the many worthwhile ideas provided.

For more information or to send comments, email ActionPlanCommittee@ptsem.edu
Comments and suggestions that will assist the Action Plan Committee in its deliberations are most welcomed! Please forward at ActionPlanCommittee@ptsem.edu.

Upcoming Events

Celebrating The World: On Wednesday, February 4th during lunch in Mackay’s Main Lounge representative from China, Canada and Myanmar will share the challenges confronted by the church and their passion in preparing themselves accordingly.

The Women’s Center Faculty Connection: Professor Abigail Rian Evans, Thursday, February 5th during lunch in Mackay’s Private Dining Room "Join us for a great discussion with Professor Evans, Chair of the Department of Practical Theology, as she discusses her work as a pastor, as a chaplain, and as a professor. Professor Evans is retiring after this year, so this may be the last opportunity you have to benefit from her wide experience and caring presence! The Women’s Center Faculty Connection is a series where students have the opportunity to spend more intimate time with women faculty. Bring your lunch, and we will have a good time."

Roundtable Conversations

Beginning Tuesday, February 3, 2009 at 12:00 p.m. at the Mackay Center’s dining hall, the Action Plan Committee is inviting the student body to a series of conversations. The intent of these conversations is to hear your experiences and sentiments of in regards to complex issues raised by current and historical situations here on campus. The foundation of these conversations are based on the affirmation that we all constitute one human family. We, regardless of our age, race, sex, culture, language, theological, ideological and political world views, are all in this journey of life together. As we travel in this journey of life and faith, every person is important and we have been privileged of being part of God’s story. This allows us to acknowledge our unity in the midst of our individual and corporate diversity. Instead of allowing diversity of race and culture to become a limiting factor in human exchange and development, we must refocus our understanding, discern in such diversity the potential for mutual enrichment, and realize that it is the interchange between great traditions that we can treat each other as gifts instead of threats.

Every Tuesday beginning on February 3rd at 12:00 p.m. we will reserve a certain area in the dining hall where we can continue to dialogue and learn from one another.

Process

- Each week two members of APC will facilitate these conversations
- The information received will be utilized to further our recommendations to the appropriate entities of the Seminary and develop ongoing opportunities for growth

In order to prepare accordingly what are some principles that we can experience in breaking down the walls and building bridges of cross-cultural ministry? The following suggestions will guide our time together:

- We must take the initiative and dialogue. We must listen. Carefully, thoughtfully, without interruption, without hidden agendas, without preconceptions.

- Next we need to think. And talk. With each other. As openly as possible, prepared for misunderstanding and anger, but also for healing, comprehension, reconciliation—friendship. We must push open the question of what is "normal," and what is considered "normative." Paying attention to the particularities of our lives—-what it means to live in the midst of all our differences—helps open us up to new ways of seeing reality. The aim is not for sameness. Rather difference is approached as a gift, an opportunity to value creation. The differences between us—of race, culture, gender, age, class, nationality, physical and mental abilities—as well as those particularities we hold in common, matter deeply because they make us who we are.

- Most important, we need to pray. "If any of you lack wisdom," James wrote, "he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him" (James 1:5). It is just as impossible to know every culture as it is to know every language. And even cultures you feel comfortable with will often surprise you. Admitting our limitations in relating in a multicultural society is the most important cross-cultural skill of all. It opens doors for cultural friends to teach us, and so prevents their feeling patronized. It is important to remember that we relate to others for God’s glory (Romans 16:6), not for meeting our expectations. It is at this point that God uses us the most effectively, and we partake in much needed cultural breakthroughs as a Church.
A Strategy for Reflection & Connections during the Spring ’09 Semester

APC is pursuing a two-tier approach in raising the bar of debate and reflection as we engage each other on diversity and its many branches. These ventures have a series of affirmations we wish to explore with you. The strategies are in the process of being developed.

TIER 1  Supporting Existing Events
Affirmation: People who live together in communal harmony seek the fullness of life for all.
Strategy: APC strongly encourages the attendance and participation of the Seminary community to existing events that highlight our diversity.
A. For instance, this month we will be celebrating Black History month. The Association of Black Seminarians will be hosting a series of events throughout the month. The first of these will come this Thursday, February 5th, 7:00 p.m. in Miller Chapel. These, among many other cross-cultural events serve to inform the community of insights we all need to learn.
B. For more information on upcoming events sponsored by student organizations and seminary departments please refer to the weekly Wineskin and you may also visit https://our.ptsem.edu/ics/Campus_Life/Multicultural_Relations/Campus_Highlights.jsp.
C. Explore resources on cross-cultural connections, diversity, etc., in the upcoming “Diversity Focus” e-newsletter developed through the Office of Multicultural Relations. Also our www.ptsem.edu website is incredibly rich with information pertaining to a variety of regional and global endeavors.

TIER 2  Journeying Together
Affirmation: We start out by realizing that we all are on a long road together. At the very least, it will be a journey. Even if we believe that our journey here on the grounds of this Seminary is short, the reality is that our connections to society, the church, and indeed each other can never be bifurcated from our ability to live life in all of its fullness. We affirm unity of purpose in the promotion of the common good. What could be more sacred than attending to the question of what God wants us to be and do as individuals, as a community, and as the church?

Our destination is to realize that;
• our actions do affect the lives of others;
• Unity of purpose takes into account values held in common;
• Unity of purpose also allows for differences in belief that should be respected, so long as these differences do not devalue the experiences of others.

Strategy: APC will pursue a three-pronged approach towards the implementation of this tier.
A. Roundtable Conversations with students & APC (refer to page 2)
B. Intentional Connections with Faculty & Administration
We wish to develop a similar structure for conversations with and among faculty and administration.
C. Total Community Paradigm
We wish to organize two major Seminary-wide events confronting our abilities to be better stewards in cross-cultural connections.

Long-Term Possibilities for our Journey Together

APC has also been charged to explore recommendations that will “Assist the community to work towards an institutional environment that goes beyond managing diversity to one that values and capitalizes on diversity in all areas.” We will be continuing our deliberations in exploring these possibilities and drawing upon the findings of our Self-Study process. Also, we will draw information from the various initiatives that are being developed through the Office of Multicultural Relations. In this periodic newsletter we will continue to inform the community as to our findings and recommendations.

The next scheduled meeting of the Action Plan Committee
Friday, February 6, 2009 at 2:30 p.m.