Affirmative action in action

By Laura Sass
Executive Editor

Affirmative action is important not only in a legal sense, but also as a constant reminder of what an institution needs to do for its people, said Dr. Ellen LaCorte, director of human resources and affirmative action officer for Rider University.

As part of the ongoing awareness programming for February, LaCorte gave a presentation entitled “Black History Month Affirmative Action” on Monday, Feb. 9, in which she explained the role that affirmative action plays at Rider.

“Basically my job as an affirmative action officer is to make sure that university practices are non-discriminatory,” LaCorte said. “It is not only important in hiring, but also in training, benefits and termination.”

One of the responsibilities LaCorte has is to run a workshop in the summer about interview processes to help administrators choose employees based on which one is the most qualified.

“The workshops try to identify biases that they may not even be aware of,” she said. “Our goal is to prepare them to hire the best candidate they can without discriminating.”

LaCorte said that one of her most important tasks is to prepare a plan entitled “Affirmative Action at Rider University.” This plan includes an affiliation purpose, which is signed by the president, a breakdown of minorities and women in every department and a support of action programs, which details programs that enhance diversity on campus, among other sections. This plan is in the Moore Library and can be read by any Rider student, staff or faculty member.

LaCorte said that perhaps the most important part of the plan is the support of action programs. Every August LaCorte sends an e-mail with a list of diversity programs that occurred in the past year to every University worker and asks if there are any she left out. LaCorte said that the section changed from a mere two pages to 10 pages long.

“This is not a reflection of how much we’ve done but how much we didn’t know,” she said. “It’s about education.”

According to a flyer passed out at the talk by the Black Student Union (BSU) there are only a little over seven percent of black undergraduate students seeking degrees and only six black professors.

“How can Rider attract more diverse faculty and staff?” asked Danielle Holmes, a freshman Rider student who attended the program.

LaCorte responded by saying that they have identified the problem areas, which is not the same as solving the problem.

“We’ve tried more innovative ways to recruit, such as direct mail, websites and special interest journals,” she said. “That’s great, but so has every one else. What we need to do is find the minority and female faculty who are attracted to Rider.”

LaCorte said that she does not have a definitive answer about how to do so.

“Frankly, I think word of mouth has always worked best,” she said. “We have to keep doing what we’re doing, have to continue to look at what works and what doesn’t work. Dr. [Mordecha] Rozanski is on the path to making us a household name as the best kept secret on the Eastern coast.”

In response to questions about the lack of minorities on the faculty, LaCorte said that it is not an intentional situation.

“It’s not for lack of trying,” she said. “It’s as frustrating for us as it is for you. We go everywhere to find qualified candidates.”

Senior Samantha Gordon, president of BSU, said that the discussion was enlightening.

“I didn’t even know there was an affirmative action person on campus,” she said. “Whether or not we are happy with the way things are, we have a better understanding of it.”

Humes agreed that the program was very informative.

“I didn’t know there was a plan,” she said. “Just reading it was a great look into the future.”

LaCorte said that the lecture made a strong impression on her as well.

“The only interaction I usually have with students is with freshmen at the beginning of the year,” she said. “I graduated from Rider in the late 60s. We were very involved with what was going on in the world. It was nice to see students who are really interested in what is going on in the world around them.”

Library environment to be improved

By Andrew Silver
Staff Writer

The environment of the library was not a fitting surrounding for students, said Dean of Administration William Chickering.

Chickering, who is planning to extensively renovate Moore Library on the Lawrenceville campus, said that he was pleased about the changes that have occurred during the first two weeks of the semester. The reading room had so few seats that it was an uninviting environment for everyone," he said.

In the reading room there are now new shelves all around the walls to enable easier access to print periodicals, new reference desks and a casual chair.

“It was time after 30 years,” said Chickering.

As part of the adjustments there are plans for ceiling and lighting treatments. The treatments are scheduled begin within a few weeks.

“We have moved forward to improve areas for an inviting environment,” said Chickering.

Chickering added that he has already noticed that more students have enjoyed studying at the library, but more should be on their way. He said that he expects to see many more students soon.

“With color and carpet there is more traffic,” he said.

Besides all of the changes in the reading room, Chickering is in the process of developing changes for the second floor. Comparable to the first floor he said that he plans on providing casual seating in the study area.

“The second floor will be more attractive and comfortable environment,” he said.

Pot luck

A male student member of Hill residence hall notified Security after he detected the smell of marijuana on Saturday, Feb. 7, at 7:28 p.m. Security arrived, examined the foot and did not find any noticeable defects. Local rescue squad services were offered and declined.

Watch the birdie

A male commuter student made eye contact with a security officer in the main kiosk and extended his middle finger in an obscene way as he drove by on Sunday, Feb. 8, at 2:50 a.m. The student was charged with indecent conduct.

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