

Policy Committee
600 Washington Street, Boston, MA 02111
October 1, 2020
11:00 AM -12:30 PM
Minutes

Attended: Naomi Goldberg, Inez Canada, Dawn Clark, James Carnazza, Sarah Wiles, Sheryl Cruz, and Kevin Goodwin. This meeting was held virtually via Zoom.

Recommendation related to college readiness

Attendees discussed the documents that have been gathered, created, and revised thus far in preparation for putting together a recommended curriculum. The documents include:

- College Readiness Checklist
- Financial Aid and Scholarship Resources
- Education Rights FAQ
- MRC letter explaining financial policies and deadlines

Both Sheryl and James recommended including additional resources to the Financial Aid Scholarship document. Specifically, these were resources for DCF involved individuals, MRC Student Benefit Counselors, etc. Inez will revise this document.

James shared a document titled, "Getting Accommodations to Succeed at College," developed by the Institute for Community Inclusion. It provides a very clear explanation of reasonable accommodations for students. After reviewing the document attendees agreed that it would be appropriate to include this document with the package. There was also suggestion that it would be timely and helpful to include information/resources for students engaging in remote learning. Inez agreed to research/gather relevant information and forward it to the committee.

Attendees discussed how to best ensure that the final product reflects serious consideration of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Attendees discussed and considered whether the resources presented in the materials were substantially comprehensive to meet the needs of black consumers, whether any important resources had been omitted and should be added, or if there is anything about the presentation of the material needed to change. Ultimately, it was agreed that within the introductory letter describing the contents of the package of information and its intent, there should be a statement included about the commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion for all students going to college. Inez referenced DEI language that both the SRC and MRC use that could be used in this context.

Naomi agreed to write a draft of the introductory memo and forward it to the group prior to the meeting. There will be an additional memo that introduces the package of information to MRC.

Recommendation relative to procurement

Attendees engaged in an initial discussion about how to best work on this recommendation generally while ensuring that diversity, equity, inclusion are considered in every aspect of the evaluation of the issue and the action steps taken.

The committee needs to resume the research it previously began in order to better understand the procurement process and the barriers for consumers. Naomi must follow up on acquiring the lists of vendors from MRC as indicated in the workplan. Naomi must also follow up on finding a staff member from the administrative office to attend a committee meeting.

The committee is aware through connections with the Statewide Bilingual Group that there are issues with vendors not being able to properly address the needs of consumers whose first language is not English. Attendees discussed potential other ways to identify existing gaps for communities of color and for consumers in general. Does the committee create a survey to attempt to gather this information? Will reviewing existing MRC survey data from consumers and counselors provide the committee with this information? Will the MRC staff working on the Roadmap have information to assist?

The Policy Committee will also request that MRC provide the SRC with copies of fair hearing decisions as this is required by federal regulations. There appears to be an existing way to share redacted decisions at the Social Law Library as they provide this service for other agencies. Naomi will follow up on this question. It should be known that the SRC also has a role in helping ensure that MRC has a sufficient number of fair hearing officers to use for their fair hearings. This is not something with which the SRC has recently been involved and perhaps the inquiry into the fair hearing decisions will prompt MRC to request that the SRC be more active in its role in this area.

The next meeting of the Policy Committee will be Thursday, November 5th.