

Commission on Student Affairs
February 18, 2010
3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Brush Mountain Room
Squires Student Center

Present: Kimberly Brown, Tom Brown, Bo Hart for Brandon Carroll, Kristin Carr, Liana Farb, Rick Ferraro, Laura Freeman, Rebecca French, Monika Gibson, Meg Gough, Frank Hernandez, Monica Hunter, Monique Johnson, Aimee Kanode, Brad Klein, Nathan Lavinka, Amanda Eberhardt for Marco Leung, Mary Ann Lewis, Anna LoMascolo, Shane McCarty, Michelle McLeese, Thomas Medina, Matt Penny, Donna Ratcliffe, Robert Sebak, Frank Shushok, Guy Sims, Ed Spencer, Leighton Vila, Ben Wade, Lauren Thompson

Absent: Kimberly Carlson, Ashley Davis, Brian Golden, Shivana Handa, Kristina Hartman, Sharmin Shamsalsadati, John Steger, Nigel Wray

Guests: Liana Bayne, Philipp Kotlaba, James Carty, Susan Angle, Robert L. Taylor, Kris Bush, Tonia Moxley

I. Call to Order

Ms. McLeese, Chair, called the meeting to order at 3:31 p.m.

II. Adoption of Agenda

Motion was made to adopt the agenda as amended. The motion was seconded and approved.

III. Welcome and Chair Update(s)

- CEOD meeting – Discussion about the University Strategic Plan and ideas to get a working draft to be presented at the March Board of Visitors meeting.
- University Council: The resolutions on the Weapons Policy and Interim Suspension Policy passed at the February 15 meeting and the Council heard the 1st reading of the resolution for CSA Membership for the Jewish Student Union
- Brandon Carroll did a presentation on SGA goals and projects.

IV. Guest Speakers

A. Dr. Mary Ann Lewis, Director of First Year Experience – First Year Experience Program

Dr. Lewis gave an update on the First Year Experience Program. She gave an overview of the SACS accreditation process that the University must go through to achieve its regional accreditation and noted that the site visit will occur on March 16, 17, and 18. At that time the University will have to demonstrate that we are in compliance to about 80 standards. This process is a broad sweep, looking at the entire infrastructure and offerings at the University.

Once of the components of this process is the Quality Enhancement Program (QEP) and the focus will be on first-year students. Dr. Lewis is responsible for putting together all the ideas in a plan, which is called "Pathways to Success," and submit it to the accreditation agency in hopes of getting it approved. The hope for the plan is that over a five-year period we are touching the lives of our first year students with common emphasis on three main areas: Problem Solving Learning Skills, Inquiry Learning Skills, and Integration Learning skills. She distributed to the members a brochure entitled "Pathways to Success" and noted that this information can also be accessed on-line at www.fye.vt.edu.

B. Melissa Yates, Chair, Undergraduate Studies and Policies Committee in SGA Senate, Torgersen Legislation-24 hour study facility

Ms. Yates reported that the Undergraduate Studies and Policies Committee in SGA has written legislation to have Torgersen Hall open 24/7. She presented a PowerPoint presentation noting the reasons that this would be beneficial to the University:

- VT is a nationally ranked academic institution – ranked 29th (2010 U.S. News)
- 30% of student body lives on campus
- The student body needs/wants a 24/7 on-campus study facility (#1 concern of students voiced to/within SGA)

Why Torgersen?

- Lots of classrooms, 150- and 300-seat auditorium, atrium with tables, chairs, and computer hookups, computer labs, etc.
- Relatively safe
- Good proximity to residence halls
- Spacious
- Good study environment
- Students have already chosen Torgersen as an after hours facility based on current usage of the building after midnight

Concerns & Obstacles

- Security
- Cost associated with security (\$30,000 - \$50,000)

Ms. Yates then did the first reading of the Resolution Supporting the Designation of Torgersen Hall as a 24-hour Study Facility. She noted that this legislation was passed last year in both the SGA House and Senate. In response to several questions and suggestions:

- Areas to be open: all three floors, lecture hall on 2nd floor and one on third floor and then students would have complete access on the first floor (classrooms, labs, atrium, etc.)
- A suggestion was to use the GLC as a model because it has been very successful for the last five years and to consider the use of Hokie Passport access control.
- A suggestion to use extended hours (open until 3am) rather than 24-hours Or 24/5 hours (Su – Fri) since usage usually is probably low on Friday and Saturdays.

There will be a second reading of this resolution at the next meeting. Ms. McLeese asked members to alert their constituents about this to get their input.

V. Old Business

- A. Aimee Kanode, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Alliance – Resolution for Constitution Revisions/Updates, 2nd Reading.

Ms. Kanode presented the second reading for the LGBTA Resolution for Constitution Revisions/Updates. Following the reading, a motion was made and seconded to pass the resolution. The motion passed.

- B. CT On-line Commenting System Issue, Updates, Future Action(s)

Ms. McLeese reviewed the events and dialogue from the last meeting regarding this issue and the actions that were taken following that meeting whereby Ms. McLeese wrote a letter to the Gen. Mgr. of EMCVT regarding possible pulling of funding from the CT. The letter was responded to by the Gen. Manager who discoursed on legal issues. There is no legal action that can be taken on the part of the University. There is a contract in existence between EMCTV and the University and the University has stated that it would not be pulling funding. Technically, individual student organizations are not under any contractual obligation to fund the CT or any other publication. Individual organizations can pull funding as they wish to. Dr. Spencer explained that we talked about the contract being up for renewal and we were miscued by an inquiry from the Purchasing Office about renewal. This is an on-going agreement and does not expire—it takes a 2-year notice to cancel.

Because this issue still appears to be something of high concern among the Commission, there was discussion about doing a response letter about where to go from here. A sub-committee, Co-chaired by Leighton Vila and Thomas Medina, was established at the last meeting to work on this issue. Mr. Vila reported that they met once and talked about the future direction of the sub-committee and they will meet again next Tuesday. Mr. Vila reviewed some of the comments that have been made and expressed his concern about this issue noting that the newspaper is to serve students, staff, and faculty and, given the history of Virginia Tech, this does not need to be an avenue for violence. He noted that this is not an issue of censorship, it is an issue of safety, given our history. If anyone has questions or concerns for the committee, they can be e-mailed to Mr. Vila.

Further discussion included clarifying exactly what CSA wants, should dialog with the CT be reopened, etc. Ms. McLeese reported that she has drafted another letter, but want to get approval of the Commission before sending it. She also noted that Mr. Dale Robinson, in Mediation and Conflict Resolution, has offered his services should the Commission solicit them. Dr. Spencer urged the Commission to accept the offer from Dale Robinson to be a mediator and hope that the CT & EMCVT will accept the offer as well. A motion was made and seconded that the Commission accept the offer from Mr. Robinson to be a mediator. With a unanimous vote, the motion was passed. Ms. McLeese will be contacting Mr. Robinson following this decision, it was decided that a response letter from McLeese will not be appropriate at this time.

VI. New Business

- A. Virginia Reilly, Director of University ADA Services, Support statement for Policy 4075.

Ms. Susan Angle attended in Ms. Reilly's absence to present the Policy for University Accommodations of Persons with Disabilities #4075, requesting a statement of support from the Commission. The original policy did not include verbiage on students and secondly, the names and roles of offices has changed since the original documents was written. CEOD has already passed the revisions for this policy and they are asking for CSA support prior to going before University Council. Motion was made to support the 4075, seconded and the motion was carried.

VII. Announcements

- March is Women's Month – the Women's Center website will be updated by Monday.
- Fred Hayes – Pilot on Apollo 13, will be at VT next weekend
- Winterfest – next weekend
- LGBTA – Speed Friending – Feb. 18, 2010
- GSA having Executive Board. Elections at Feb. 25 meeting
- Dr. Spencer announced that we three candidates for the Graduate Representative to the BOV and 10 candidates for the Undergraduate Representative to the BOV.

VIII. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rhonda M. Rogers
Recording Secretary