

Commission on Student Affairs
November 5, 2009
3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Brush Mountain Room
Squires Student Center

Present: Sandy Bass, Sara Brickman, Bruce Hayden for Tom Brown, Brandon Carroll, Kimberly Carlson, Ashley Davis, Akiko Nakamura for Laura Freeman, Rebecca French, Charisse Ghattas, Monika Gibson, Hanna Goff, Kristina Hartman, Frank Hernandez, Monica Hunter, Lydia Michailan for Monique Johnson, Brad Klein, Erin Beksel for Nathan Lavinka, Mary Ann Lewis, Anna LoMascolo, Shane McCarty, Michelle McLeese, Michael Doughty for Matt Penny, Donna Ratcliffe, Karen Eley Sanders, Robert Sebak, Sharmin Shamsalsadati, Guy Sims, Ed Spencer, Leighton Vila, Camille Waldron, Daryl Whitehurst

Absent: Kristin Carr, Rick Ferraro, Brian Golden, Shivana Handa, Frank Shushok, John Steger, Ben Wade, Nigel Wray

Guests:

I. Call to Order

Ms. McLeese, Chair, called the meeting to order at 3:33 p.m.

II. Adoption of Agenda

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

Ms. Mcleese reported that there are two meetings left in the semester, November 19 and December 3. Any items that need to go before University Council need to be brought to the Commission as soon as possible because any items brought to University Council take two readings.

Ms. Waldron announced that because of the Panhellenic Council calendar, she will be going out of office at the end of this semester, which will result in the office of CSA Vice Chair becoming vacant. Anyone interested should talk to her about the nominations process.

III. Guest Speakers

A. Anna LoMascolo, Co-Director of Programming , Women's Center, Susanna Rinehart, Director of Education for Diversity and Inclusion, Ennis McCrery, Graduate Student Ombudsperson, and Manuel Perez -Quinonez, Associate Dean

of the Graduate School – Campus Climate Issues, Blogging, Anonymity, and the Collegiate Times.

Ms LoMascolo reported that Monika Gibson is also a part of the group that will be participating in the discussion. This is a group who have come together from across campus: faculty, graduate, and undergraduate students, who came together to talk about safety, security and issues in regard to violence against women, but also issues that affect the safety and security of the whole university community. This group came together following the tragedy at the GLC—concern that we didn't deal with that incident as a campus community and we didn't name it as a "violence against women" even though that is what it was. Instead, it was framed as a personal tragedy to let us know that we were not in jeopardy. There was no statement made that we do not tolerate violence. Below are some items that the group has been working on:

1. The tone of the alerts that come out
2. The degree to which some of our female students do not feel safe on campus and the effect it has on their studies because they often have to be on campus late at night.

The issue today is anonymous postings in the Collegiate Times and the ways in which this allows for incivility on the internet-- a lot of violence happens online.

There is a connection between on-line anonymous, hostile comments and damage to a welcoming, inclusive, diverse community. This is an issue of concern for the entire University community. This is a concern because this is being represented in the Virginia Tech newspaper.

Technology speaking, this is easy to resolve because there are mechanisms for balances and checks to avoid this type of childish behavior and the CT does not have that at this time. This is not a censorship conversation, but in an academic institution it is a matter of accountability. The CT is reluctant to block this type of behavior because of the effect that it would have on their revenue. This is your newspaper and if the VT community should indicate that they would like to use this technology on-line with an accountability feature. Below are some thoughts on this issue:

- Misrepresentation of campus climate
- If an accountability feature is in place, those posting would think twice before they post
- CT does not allow anonymous postings to be posted in their paper, but they are worried if they allow people's accounts to be known, at some point they could get sued or be held accountable and liable for things that were said there, so they would rather not know.

- Incivility spiral – you read something like that and it makes you feel a certain way which makes you in turn act in an uncivil manner. It makes it permissible to act this way face to face.
- Good for advertising revenue and the fear of losing that revenue-- so ask advertisers to stop advertising and have a conversation to try to convince them that there is another way to get this on-line community.
- In terms of accountability, the editor is responsible for everything his/her publication puts out. They define themselves as the Virginia Tech newspaper-- isn't that a privilege and doesn't this misrepresent the University?. If they do not represent the majority or moral fiber of this University, then they should have no right to say that they are the Virginia Tech newspaper.
- Dr. Spencer noted that this is what happens when we grown up in a "Jerry Springer"/reality TV society. Tragically, what we are seeing and reading is a piece of our campus climate. Fifteen years ago the University divorced itself from the media by forming a separate corporate media corporation, the Educational Media Company at Virginia Tech (EMCVT). This includes the CT, Bugle, VTTV, WUVT, etc., so you should work through the Editor first and also possibly or subsequently with the EMVCT Board. Set up a public forum for debate so both sides can participate. If you want to handle this issue organizationally, this is the path we should take.

Ms. LoMascolo noted that they have been in conversation with Sara Mitchell, the CT Editor, and actually have set up a somewhat informal conversation where they will be inviting CSA and others, to be held on November 18, at 12 noon, in the Graduate Life Center, Room G. This will be a brown bag conversation to talk about the issues. Depending on where this goes, there is an extraordinary opportunity to begin some self-education around these questions about who we are and how we want to be. Ms. LoMascolo asked that the Commission members share this conversation with your groups, spread the word, see what they think, and bring back feedback and input to them at any time.

IV. Old Business

Policy 1025 discussion/feedback updated (Maggie Sloan)

Ms. McLeese gave an update on the status of the policy noting that the Commission needs to make a statement of support or non-support on this policy even though we don't have voting privileges for the final decision, the CEOD did vote to accept the revisions, and so have the Commission on Faculty Affairs and the Faculty Senate. The Commission on Staff Affairs did not vote because they wanted some revisions made.

The motion was made and seconded to vote to support the document for the revision of the Policy 1025 noting that the CEOD is the host commission to pass or not pass the resolution. The motion carried.

Conflict Resolution and Mediation (survey and feedback update)

At the October 1 meeting there was discussion about services being offered to faculty and staff and whether or not students would be interested in having this service as an option. A survey was sent out to the commission to respond with their feedback and thus far there have been 12 responses of support, but we need to get a sense of the rest of the Commission. Ms. McLeese asked members to go back and visit the link and fill out the survey so that the appropriate feedback can be shared with Ms. Sloan and Mr. Robinson.

CSA Membership Committee update (Kristina Hartman & Laura Freeman)

Ms. Hartman reported the Committee met once, had a good discussion, but nothing concrete. They will meet again on November 10 and hopefully have something to bring back to the Commission as a preliminary report.

V. New Business - There was no new business

VI. Announcements

- Asian American Student Union Culture Show - Where in the World is Carmen San Diego, November 7, 7:30 p.m., in the GLC auditorium
- SGA is sponsoring "30 days of Blacksburg" – November 1 – December 6. This is a facebook event in an effort to encourage students to support local venues and see what they offer. You can get a 10% discount at all of the downtown restaurants and stores just for showing your Hokie Passport.
- Maroon Five concert –November 10, 2009. Everyone is encouraged to wear maroon.
- Undergraduate Man and Woman of the Year applications are now available
- Annual funding workshops are happening this week and next week, November 2 – November 13. In order to be eligible to apply for Budget Board Funds, you must attend one of these sessions.
- BOV meetings this weekend—try and attend whatever meetings that you can.
- Beginning Sunday, November 8 – November 11, there will be a clothing sale at the Alumni Center-- up to 75% off.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned 4:57 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rhonda M. Rogers
Recording Secretary