

MINUTES

Virginia Tech University Council: Commission on Student Affairs (CSA) Minutes

October 27, 2016

The meeting was called to order by Commission chair Mr. Matt Chan at 3:34 p.m.

In attendance

Allison Aviles Garcia, Susan Anderson, Travis Bauer, Matt Chan, Alicia Cohen, Gabe Cohen, Chelsea Corkins, Niki Khandelwhal for Pat Fin, Manjot Kaur, Maddie Mitcham, Brett Netto, Joycelynn Acheampong for Meriam Nure, Sarah Orren for James Orr, Andrew Peck, Nevetha Ramesh, Tara Reel, Evan Robohm, Chris Saunders, Angela Simmons, Lauren Surface, Cameron Varano

Absent with notification

Aliana Harrison, Alexa Parsley

Attending guests

Muneeb Hameed, Tracey Newton, Ellen Plummer, Zohaib Qureshi, Darren Small, Gina Tamburro, Diane Zahm

Absent

Byron Hughes, Ron Mecham, Liang Shi, Brett Speakman

Approval of Agenda and Past Minutes

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the agenda. The motion carried. A motion was also made to approve the minutes for the October 13, 2016 meeting of CSA. The motion was seconded and approved.

Presentation

Dr. Diane Zahm, Associate Professor and Chair of the Faculty Senate Committee on Faculty Ethics, and Dr. Ellen Plummer, Associate Vice Provost for Academic Administration, gave a presentation regarding the proposed formation of the University Ombuds Office. Recognizing there are existing resources and offices for the purpose of resolving dispute and difficulties between members of the university community, the proposed Ombuds Office does not seek to replace these functionalities, but rather would serve as a neutral, confidential, informal, and independent environment where Ombuds staff listen, offer information about policies and procedures, help people examine options for resolving concerns, and accept suggestions for orderly and responsible systems change, all within the parameters of the laws and policies governing the University. Dr. Zham and Dr. Plummer noted that all large higher education institutions in the Commonwealth as well as all of Virginia Tech's State Council for Higher Education of Virginia (SCHEV) peer institutions have an Ombuds office. The advantage of having such an office is that there will be a one-stop-for-all location for community members who may be unclear where the existing office or resource that can help them is located in the University. In this capacity, the proposed Ombuds office will serve as a "concierge" for those who need assistance. The proposed Ombuds office will maintain its independence, reporting only to the President, and will not keep any permanent record or data other than broad anonymous information that may help the University improve itself. Dr. Zahm and Dr. Plummer answered questions from Commission members, and clarified that the existing Graduate School Ombudsperson Office will not be impacted, and that the approval of the proposed Ombuds Office will go through all ten Commissions before going to the University Council, and finally to the Board of Visitors. Dr. Zahm and Dr. Plummer shared with CSA the draft charter of the Ombuds Office, which is collectively being vetted by representatives from the faculty, staff, student leaders, and administrators from various relevant units at the University.

Committee Reports

There were no committee reports.

Constituency Updates

Ms. Chelsea Corkins gave an update on Graduate Student Assembly (GSA) activities. A GSA General Assembly meeting is to be held on 10/27, where members will discuss topics including graduate student identity and interactions with their advisors. Ms. Corkins also reported recent programs and events held by

the GSA, including a breakfast event with the Dean of the Graduate School, and a beer and wine tasting social event.

Ms. Tara Reel and Mr. Gabe Cohen gave updates on the activities they are engaging in as student representatives to the Board of Visitors. Mr. Cohen reiterated his initiative to create an online information portal to be incorporated with Canvas, the learning management system the University currently employs. Mr. Cohen reported that he has met with leadership within the Division of Student Affairs as well as the Technology-enhanced Learning and Online Strategies Office with good progress. Ms. Reel reported that she has received an update from the University Planning Office that the previously scheduled visit from Sasaki Associates in November regarding the Campus Master Plan will no longer take place as the University is realigning the Master Plan to results stemming out of the recent Destination Areas milestone. Ms. Reel also reported that the campus-wide #VTUnfinished series of events are still ongoing, and that there is one last regular event on 11/9, before the keynote event on 11/16, in which the student-focused portion of the event will be held from 2pm to 4pm at Owens Hall. Mr. Cohen and Ms. Reel reminded Commission members that the next Board of Visitors meeting will be held on 11/6-11/7, and encouraged Commission members to contact them for feedback and input to bring up at the Board meeting.

University Council and Commission Updates

Mr. Chan gave an update on activities from the University Council. The Council has met on 10/13, and three resolutions were voted upon on their second reading. Two of these were introduced by the Commission on Graduate Studies and Policies proposing the creation of new graduate degree programs: The Master of Arts in Nonprofit and Nongovernmental Organization Management, and the Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Security Governance. The remaining resolution was introduced by the Commission on Undergraduate Studies and Polices, in which the Department of Science and Technology proposed to rename itself to the Department of Science, Technology, and Society. All three resolutions were approved unanimously. The Commission on Faculty Affairs introduced a resolution for first reading, which proposed a revision on the selection process for University Distinguished Professors and Alumni Distinguished Professors. The proposed revision will allow for more faculty to be recognized. During the meeting, President Sands informally announced that the University recognized the logistic difficulties of Thursday night football games, and as such the Athletic Department has begun to work with the Atlantic Coast Conference, the National Collegiate Athletic Association, and ESPN to explore options for Friday night games instead in the future.

There is no report from the Commission on Equal Opportunities and Diversity as this Commission has not met since the last CSA meeting.

Mr. Andrew Peck gave an update on activities from the Academic Support Committee. The Committee has met and discussion during the meeting surrounded the topic of the requirement of having equal numbers of class days between the fall and spring semesters. Because the University has begun the practice of having no classes on Labor Day since 2015-16, there are difficulties finding a day in the spring semester where no classes would be held as well to balance out Labor Day. The Committee will continue to explore options to address this.

Division of Student Affairs Update

Dr. Angela Simmons gave an update on activities within the Division of Student Affairs. There will be many events organized that will be of interest to students, including the "Aspire!" award breakfast (11/4), Town-Gown meeting in which the campus police department and the Blacksburg police department will be present to debrief the response stemming from the concert event held on 10/25, Vice President for Student Affairs Dr. Patty Perillo will hold a panel on the topic of careers in student affairs (10/28), and the Division's Keystone Experience initiative. Dr. Simmons reminded Commission members that Gobbler Connect is the best way to discover events and programs of interest.

Unfinished Business

There was no unfinished business.

New Business

Mr. Darren Small, Chair of the Student Budget Board (SBB), introduced proposed changes to the SBB Policy and Procedures. The proposed change will allow for newly formed student organizations to apply for SBB funds. Currently, newly formed student organizations must wait until the next academic year until they are eligible to request funding. Commission members expressed concern regarding possibilities of abuse where students form an organization with the primary purpose of obtaining funding from SBB then disbanding later. Mr. Small responded that any new student organization requesting funding will be

scrutinized and held accountable the same way as any other student organizations. The proposed SBB Policy and Procedures change will also align credit/debit handling to current practice at the Controller's Office. The Commission will vote on the approval of these proposed changes at the next meeting.

Mr. Muneeb Hameed, President of the Muslim Student Union (MSU) and Mr. Zohaib Qureshi, Campus Initiative Office of the Muslim Student Association (MSA), presented the Constitution of the Muslim Student Union for approval. Dr. Simmons and Mr. Chan expressed concern with a provision within the proposed MSU Constitution in which the President and Vice President of MSA, a constituent organization within MSU, would automatically also serve as MSU's President and Vice President. Mr. Hameed and Mr. Qureshi responded that this provision is only a temporary measure to aid in the formation of the MSU, and that the rest of the constituent organizations of MSU supported this measure. Mr. Chan and Dr. Simmons recommend adding language in the draft Constitution to reflect the temporary nature and the context of this measure. Mr. Chan asked for Commission members to review the MSU Constitution draft, and for any suggested revision to be sent to him and the MSU leadership. The Commission will vote on the approval of the MSU Constitution next meeting.

Announcements

- Ms. Cameron Varano announced the Roanoke Graduate Student Association is having a fall social the coming weekend.
- Ms. Lauren Surface announced the Graduate Life Center open house will take place 10/28, and will include events such as graduate student art and a photography showcase.

Next Meeting

The next regularly scheduled CSA meeting will be held on November 10, 2016, in the Brush Mountain Room at Squires Student Center.

There being no further business, the motion to adjourn was made at 5:05 p.m. and was passed unanimously.

Recorder: Matt Chan