

COMMISSION ON STUDENT AFFAIRS

March 17, 2011

Present: Sandy Bass, Sue Buyrn, Tyler Campbell, Rick Ferraro, Deepu George, Monika Gibson, Caroline Gimenez, Bo Hart, Lauren Heming, Eric Hodges, Monica Hunter, Rawlin Jefferson, Frances Kwong, Nathan Lavinka, Mary Ann Lewis, Anna LoMascolo, Shane McCarty, Michelle McLeese, Jonathan Moore, Matt parker, David Ramras, Bryan West for Joseph Seaton, Katelin Shugart-Schmidt, Designee for Kim Carlson, Ed Spencer, Leighton Vila, Emily Wilkinson, Designee for Greer Kelly

Absent: Parisa Ahmadi, Sara Brickman, Tom Brown, Michael Cardman, Frank Hernandez, Brad Klein, Robert Sebek, Frank Shushok, Guy Sims, Shyrah Thomas, Joe Tran, Alex Walker,

Guests: Matthew Banfield, Scott Bennett, Brad Copenhaver

I. Call to Order

Nathan Lavinka, Chair, called the meeting to order at 3:36 p.m.

II. Adoption of Agenda

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

III. Welcome and Chair Update (s)

- Mr. Lavinka reported that there will be a CSA gathering for students, administrators, faculty, and staff on April 14, 3:30 p.m., location to be determined, to come together before the year's end. This will be more of an informal setting to get next year's CSA members ready for next year. He asked that for the organizations that will have elected their officers next year, they bring their successor to this event. Mr. Lavinka also noted that there will be only two more regular CSA meetings for the year, April 7 and April 21.

IV. Guest Speakers/Presenters

- A. Dr. Edward Spencer, Vice President for Student Affairs, *Commandant of Cadets Interviews and Introduction of BOV Finalists*

Dr. Spencer asked Shane McCarty to introduce the three finalists for the position of Undergraduate Representative to the Board of Visitors and asked that they share a little about themselves with the Commission. The candidates are:

Brad Copenhaver, a junior, CALS and CLAHS, Agriculture Economics & Political Science

Scott Bennett, a junior, Agriculture and Life Sciences, Agricultural Economics
Matthew Banfield, Liberal Arts and Human Sciences, Theatre Arts & Cinema

Deepu George announced the three Graduate finalists:

Michelle McLeese, Liberal Arts & Human Sciences-Sociology
Mathis Kennington, Liberal Arts & Human Sciences, Human Development
Akiko Nakamura, College of Science, Chemistry

The candidates will be interviewed during the March Board of Visitors meeting and the successful candidates will be announced at the full Board meeting on March 28.

Dr. Spencer announced that the search for the Commandant of Cadets will be bringing in three finalists beginning next week. As part of their interview schedule there is a session for Cadet Leaders and CSA student members and he asked that those who are able to attend to please do so. The sessions will be on March 21, 23, and April 7, in the Brodie Hall Guard Room, 11:00 a.m. – noon. Please let Ms. Rogers know if you will be in attendance at any of these sessions.

- B. Dr. Edward Spencer, Vice President for Student Affairs, *Remuneration for Student Leaders*
- Dr. Spencer reported that he received a note from a colleague at Clemson University regarding remuneration for student leaders and a poll that she had done asking whether or not the student body president receives a stipend. The net result showed that VT is in a field by itself. SGA presidents are paid from \$2,000 up to \$19,200, including use of a state car and other various perks (i.e., dining, parking, etc.) Dr. Spencer is concerned that the message we are giving is that we do not value our SGA president as much as other schools and that the issue could be broader, whether or not we should pay other student leaders as well and if so, how much. Should we pay other presidents, other student leaders, etc., and if so, how much? Dr. Spencer suggested to the Commission that we need a committee to look at this issue, starting its work this semester and making its recommendations in the fall. He noted that if we were to go in this direction, CSA could give directions to the Student Budget Board as to how this should be done.

During discussion, the following was noted:

- Graduate Students already have a structure in place, but it comes with a lot of responsibility. The Executive Officers on the Board each receive a small stipend each semester: President -\$1,000 and \$550 for the rest of the Board (a one time payment). The Program Chairs receive a stipend of \$200. These stipends come out of the Graduate School budget. Ms. Gibson also suggested that the Graduate and Undergraduate Chief Justices should also be considered.
- Mr. McCarty noted that the issue beyond it is if we are going to say VT is about service, we should not be bringing money into the mix. He also noted that if you bring

money into the mix, your level of altruism and satisfaction declines dramatically. It is important to him to look at how much he's been able to serve. If there is a way to do it beyond a stipend, maybe a \$5,000 scholarship, or \$500 towards a conference or books, that would be an investment in one's education and service.

- A larger issue is that remuneration is a way of showing that we value the position, but the moments and the interactions with administrators and dialogue with other people is what makes some students feel valued. Maybe we need to address how student leaders feel valued as to how they much they contribute to the University.

A motion was made that we refer the issue of payment of SGA President and Leaders to a subcommittee. The motion was seconded and carried. Ms. Hunter will chair the subcommittee and the members are: Michelle McLeese, Katelin Shugart-Schmidt, Bo Hart, Emily Wilkinson, Tyler Campbell, Eric Hodges, and Rawlin Jefferson

V. Old Business

- A. Jonathan Moore, Vice President of Membership for GSA, Michelle McLeese, GSA President, *Resolution for Constitution revisions/amendments, 2nd Reading*

Mr. More presented the second reading and updates to the GSA constitution that were made in order to better reflect what they do, some of the changes that have been made, and that the recommended changes from the last meeting were made. The motion was made to approve and accept the changes, the motion was seconded and carried.

VI. New Business

- A. Michelle McLeese, GSA President, Leighton Villa, Master's Candidate, *History of CSA/CT Issue*

Ms. McLeese noted that the CSA/CT issue is a prevalent issue from last year and at the beginning of this school year. She gave an outline of the presentation that they were going to give to the Commission which included a brief overview, explanation of the commenting system, the sharing of select comments, and then questions and comments from the membership. Items noted were:

- The Collegiate Times is separate from VT, operated by the Educational Media Company at VT (EMCVT)
- They have a code of ethics and they are chartered.
- EMCVT receives money and from Student Activities.
- Overview of commenting systems (anonymous, confidential, and registered)
- CTs commenting system is anonymous – users can input their own name or they can input a fictitious name

- Shared on-line comments that were sexist, crude, etc. Based on some really crude and inappropriate stereotypes/comments, IFC pulled all their funding from the CT.
- Shared the definition of free speech.

The idea was to give the membership visual understanding contextually why this has been such a hot button, that free speech is not saying whatever you say about any group without consequences. After conversations with the Collegiate Times, they were unable to come to a resolution. Ms. McLeese noted that survey questions have been developed to take a pulse of what the student body consensus is about the CT in general.

A key issue is the commenting system is allowing people to say whatever they want without being accountable.

Some changes CT has made:

- You now get a primer to make you think about what you are posting
- Facebook profiles can now be connected
- They cannot stop someone from impersonating some else, but once this is discovered, they will delete the comment.
- If there is a threat made, they will strike it
- There is still no accountability structure in place
- Because of contract and separation from VT, they cannot serve on CSA, however the lines are blurred because they do get inducted into the Order of the Gavel, they get free student office space in Squires, but the University cannot come down on them because they are under a legally binding contract that somewhat protects them. There is nothing we can do outside of protesting, boycotting ads, etc.
- The commenting system is in conflict with their chartered code of ethics.
- There has not been an official opening of negotiation with them. Last point of contact was November
- Newspaper companies and affiliates throughout the world operate under the assumption that constituents drive their marketing and sustainability, and the faculty, staff, and students at VT do not support their commenting methods.
- If you want to make an impact, tell them they are not representing your constituency.
- The survey will be to see what can be done better and do we even need this in the way it's being handled. It doesn't require a breach in contract, perhaps there is another way to push the University to act. They cannot say it's a first amendment issue—we can go at journalism, content, and accuracy.
- Dr. Spencer noted that they have started to publish some of their on-line comments in each edition and wonders if they would publish the more crude ones and if not, why not. About the agreement, the CT has shrunk in size and

is losing income. The difficult part is that the money that they get from the University (student activities fee) is what really makes it possible for us to have the radio, and TV stations, Silhouette Magazine, the Bugle, etc., the difference is that the CT has supported itself with ad money. However, at the same time, it is possible to say to them that we believe in freedom of the press, but we believe that the way they handle this (with anonymous commenting) is contrary to the Principles of Community and will recommend to the University that the contractual arrangement be ended at the end of two years. Keep in mind, if we make that recommendation and the plug is pulled, that could be the death of the other programs of the EMCVT.

- Dr. Ferraro suggested that the focus be on the quality of the publication, is it worth the money that is being spent on it, which makes it an economic decision. Focus on the quality argument.

The subcommittee will bring the survey back to CSA at the April 7 meeting.

VII. Announcements

- Ring Dance Banquet tickets are \$17 and all classes are invited. Tickets to Ring Dance (March 26) are sold out.
- Graduate Education Week is March 21 – 25.
- GSA – 27th Research Symposium, March 23, 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m., in the GLC.
- GSA – Cancer Research Symposium, March 29.
- March is Women’s Month and there will be lots of programs and events
- Big Event will be celebrating 10 years. For those who live in the NRV valley, the deadline for requests for assistance is March 25. April 1 is the last day to sign up as a volunteer.
- We will be taking nominations for chair and vice chair of the Commission at the April 7 meeting.

VIII. Adjournment – 4:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Rhonda Rogers, Secretary