

MINUTES

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

February 23, 2017

The meeting was called to order by Commission chair Mr. Matt Chan at 3:30 p.m.

In attendance

Susan Anderson, Travis Bauer, Julia Billingsley, Ben Calvo Rivera, Matt Chan, Maddie Walters for Pat Finn, Amy Hermundstad, Alex Hyler, Delk Koolman, Jaclyn Marmol, Mairead Novak, Jeremy Hall for James Orr, Ron Mecham, Andrew Peck, Evan Robohm, Chris Saunders, Liang Shi, Angela Simmons, Lauren Surface, Cameron Varano, Meghna Verna, Hannah Whiteman

Absent with notification

Alicia Cohen, Tara Reel

Attending guests

Olivia Moulds, Tracy Newton, Anna Pope, Babak Senfi, Tricia Smith, Diane Zahm

Absent

Aliana Harrison, Byron Hughes, Meriam Nure

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 February 9, 2017 meeting of CSA. The motion was seconded and approved.

Presentation

Commission member Ms. Susan Anderson and guest Ms. Olivia Moulds, faculty advisor and educational chair of the United Feminist Movement at Virginia Tech, respectively, gave a presentation regarding the annual "Take Back the Night" Rally and March. The rally at Virginia Tech has been held since 1990, and this year it is to take place on March 30th 7pm on the Henderson Lawn, with rain location at the Graduate Life Center Auditorium. Ms. Moulds explained that the purpose of the rally is to protest and to raise awareness regarding gender-based violence, and to encourage everyone to take an active role against it.

Committee Reports

Chris Saunders, CSA vice chair and representative to the Hokie Handbook Review Committee, reported that the Committee will meet on February 24th to continue discussing updates to the Hokie Handbook, including the Student Code of Conduct.

Constituency Updates

Ms. Julia Billingsley gave an update on Student Government Association (SGA) activities. There is an ongoing discussion at the SGA Legislative Council regarding a funding request by the Virginia Tech chapter of Relay for Life. The funding request is made independent of the Student Budget Board, and is for a total of \$10,000.

Ms. Alex Hyler gave an update on Graduate Student Assembly (GSA) activities. The GSA town hall meeting on 2/15 regarding the ongoing concerns regarding the federal executive order on immigration was well attended, with panelist including staff liaisons from the National Capital Region and elsewhere in Washington D.C. GSA Officers are planning to travel to the national capital in March to lobby for graduate students' concerns including but not limited to immigration. The GSA General Assembly will meet tonight with the United Feminist Movement also presenting regarding the Take Back the Night Rally and March. Ms. Hyler also reported that the GSA has formed a task force to address concerns regarding international student VISA status. Finally, Ms. Hyler reported that the Annual GSA Research Symposium and Exposition will again be held during the Graduate Education Week, and that more information will come later.

Mr. Delk Kookman and Ms. Tara Reel gave updates on the activities of the Board of Visitors (BoV) student representatives. The application for 2017-18 BoV student representatives has closed, and finalists are being selected. The top three candidates for the undergraduate representative and graduate representative will be invited to an interview session at CSA. Ms. Reel also reported that the external consultants tasked with the ongoing University Master Plan will return in March, and they are working with university administrators to plan a student forum regarding the Master Plan on March 13th, 7:30pm-9pm, and a town hall for the general public on March 14th 6:30pm-8pm. Locations are to be announced. Ms. Reel also mentioned that they are coordinating a student luncheon with President Sands and Provost Rikakis, and that more information will be released soon.

University Council and Commission Updates

Mr. Chan reported that there are no activities at the University Council as the last meeting was canceled.

Mr. Saunders reported that there are no activities at the Commission on Equal Opportunities and Diversity as there were no meetings that were held since the last report.

Mr. Andrew Peck gave a report from the Academic Support Committee. The Committee is adopting recommendations to change the University Calendar. Noting that the University is likely to have Labor Day as a day off in the foreseeable future, the Committee recommend that the requirement for both spring and fall semester to be the same length to be dropped, with new criteria stipulating that there are 71 days in the fall semester and 72 days in the spring. To accommodate the upcoming integration of the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine and its academic calendar, the summer sessions will not be combined in to a full summer term, with the current summer 1 and summer 2 sessions as well as other “parts of term” arrangements available as options for faculty and administrator to choose from to suit their needs. These recommendations will be considered for approval by the Commission on Undergraduate Studies and Policies. Graduate members of the CSA voiced concern regarding the new summer term arrangement and its possible impact on the fees structure during the summer. Ms. Hyler mentioned that she will bring the issue back to the GSA, the Graduate School, and the Commission on Graduate Studies and Polices.

Division of Student Affairs Update

Dr. Angela Simmons gave an update from the Division. The Division has many events and programs planned for the upcoming weeks. The Keystone Fellows application will be due on March 1st, while application for DSA student scholarships for undergraduate students will be due on March 15th. On the same day, application for “Family of the Year” will also be due. Many programs, including a virtual town hall addressing transgender students’ concerns, Body Matters Week, Strengths Workshop, and student organization registration workshops will take place from now throughout March.

Unfinished Business

CSA continued the discussion on Resolution CUS 2016-17A: Resolution to Amend Policy 1010 – Policy on Smoking. Mr. Chan noted that he and other student leaders attended the recent Commission on University Support (CUS) meeting, and that the Smoking Resolution has been approved by CUS and will next be considered by the University Council. Ms. Hannah Whiteman, President of the Resident Halls Federation (RHF), was also present at the CUS meeting. Ms. Whiteman expressed concerns that the survey conducted by CUS regarding the opinion on extending current policies on smoking to e-cigarettes and vaping devices was not rolled out to a broad student population, and when it was recently distributed via CSA there was insufficient time to obtain proper feedback. Students who live on campus expressed concerns that their option to quit smoking by e-cigarette usage is being taken away from them. Mr. Chan introduced guest Ms. Anna Pope, Director of Academic Affairs of the Student Government Association, who note that this policy change is a precursor to the SGA “Smoke-Free Campus” initiative. SGA has conducted a smoke-free campus petition online, and garnered more than 2,300+ signatures in support of a completely smoke-free campus. CSA note that there seems to be some disparity in opinions within the student community, and that it is unclear if the survey conducted by CUS represent student opinions. Dr. Simmons will meet with Ms. Whiteman, Ms. Pope, and other student leaders to discuss next steps outside of CSA.

New Business

Mr. Chan introduced Dr. Diane Zahm, Associate Professor and Chair of the Faculty Senate Committee on Faculty Ethics. Dr. Zahm bring forward the Joint Resolution Supporting the Establishment of a University Ombuds Function at Virginia Tech for CSA’s consideration. Dr. Zahm reminded CSA members that the Ombuds office, should it be established, will be an independent office that acts as a “concierge” of sorts for all university community members that have concerns but are unsure how to go about addressing it. The Ombuds office is anonymous, and is not an advocate on anyone’s behalf. The Ombuds proposal has

obtained full support from the President's Office, and Virginia Tech is one of very few universities that do not have such an office yet. Dr. Zahm noted that the Graduate School has had an Ombudsperson filling this role for graduate student for several years now, and the proposed Ombuds Office will exist alongside with the Graduate School ombudsperson. CSA members expressed general support, and noted some suggested minor corrections on the Joint Resolution itself. The Joint Resolution will be voted on for its approval next CSA meeting during its second reading.

Ms. Anderson returned requesting for an endorsement from CSA for the 28th Annual Take Back the Night Rally and March. Ms. Anderson reminded CSA that the endorsement requires no resources from the Commission, and only serves as a formal support and to be included on the Rally program notes. A motion was made to waive second reading on this request; it was seconded and unanimously approved. A motion was then made to approve the request to endorse the Rally and March; it was seconded and unanimously approved. Ms. Anderson thanked the Commission and encourage CSA members to attend the Rally and March.

Ms. Jaclyn Marmol, Vice President of the Asian American Student Union (AASU), and Mr. Babek Senfi, Treasurer of AASU, presented proposed amendments to the AASU Constitution. Ms. Marmol and Mr. Senfi noted that the main purpose for the amendments was to align terminologies to current practice, reform the AASU Executive Board by merging a few of the positions while redistributing some of the officers' duties, and to add a stipulation that candidates for the President and Vice Presidents of AASU shall be full time undergraduate students. CSA members offer some minor suggested correction for consistency between the AASU Constitution and its Bylaws, and suggested that candidates for AASU President and Vice Presidents be opened to full time graduate students as well. The amendments will be voted on for its approval next CSA meeting during its second reading.

Announcements

CSA members have the following announcements:

- Mr. Peck noted that March 15th to April 15th will be Jewish Culture Month, and the Jewish Student Union is inviting a holocaust survivor as a speaker in a keynote event to be taken place at the Moss Arts Center on April 24th.
- Mr. Ben Calvo Rivera announced that Dream Week will be held by the Tech Dreamers during the last week of March.
- Mr. Evan Robohm announced that Cornelius Jones Jr., noted actor and speaker, will be giving a talk – "Poetry in Life" – regarding the sexuality, gender, and spirituality on February 27th.

Next Meeting

The next regularly scheduled CSA meeting will be held on March 2, 2017, in the Brush Mountain Room at Squires Student Center.

There being no further business, the motion to adjourn was made at 5:03 p.m. and was passed unanimously.

Recorder: Tracy Newton