

COMMISSION ON EQUAL OPPORTUNITY AND DIVERSITY
MONDAY, DECEMBER 17th, 2012
10:00 am – 12:00 pm
GRADUATE LIFE CENTER ROOM B

Meeting Minutes

PRESENT: Aaron Bond, Dannette Gomez-Beane, Tom Brown, Ross Edmonds, Amy Hogan, Hal Irvin, Marwa Abdel Latif, William Lewis, Mark Managuio, Susan Rosebrough, Laura Rugless, Guy Sims, Yannis Stivachtis, Mary Ellen Verdu, Leighton Vila

ABSENT: Chris Atkins, Sam Cook, Catherine Cotrupi, Nicole DaDamio (with notice), Amer Fayad (with notice), Jermaine Holmes, Lesley Moyo (with notice), Corinne Noirof (with notice), Jacqueline Nottingham, Bill Ortega (with notice), Sue Ott Rowlands, Wornie Reed (with notice), Emily Satterwhite, Sherri Simmons, Cris Thompson, Jody Thompson (with notice), Leighton Vila, Alasia Washington

GUESTS: Marcie Bishop, Sharrika Davis, Wanda Hankins Dean, Perry Martin, Rick Sparks

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 am by Chair Yannis Stivachtis. Motion to adopt the agenda was approved.

II. ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES FOR DECEMBER 3RD, 2012 MEETING

Motion to accept minutes for December 3rd meeting was approved.

III. UPDATES FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

William Lewis discussed with members a situation that came forward to the Office for Diversity and Inclusion from a program on campus regarding a student's request for accommodations related to a scholarship interview that fell on a Saturday. The department reached out to the Vice President's office to determine if they were required to accommodate the student who could not participate in the interview process on a Saturday, because of religious beliefs. Staff of the Vice President's office suggested offering alternative approaches for interviewing the student.

Tom Brown, Dean of Students reported that it was not unusual for an activity to fall on a weekend date and that this program was optional and that there was no legal requirement to accommodate the student request. Similar issues or inquiries are generally forwarded to the Dean of Students Office.

IV. OTHER ANNOUNCEMENT AND UPDATES

Chairperson Yannis Stivachtis announced that beginning on February 4th, 2013, all CEOD meetings for spring semester will be held in Graduate Life Center Room C.

Provost Mark McNamee will visit CEOD at the next meeting on February 4th, 2013.

V. AVP FOR ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT REGARDING RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS – WANDA HANKINS DEAN

Wanda Hankins Dean representing the office of the University Registrar presented a summary of the policies and history related to the Religious and Ethnic holiday's calendar. The university policy allows students to request excused absences for religious and ethnic holidays. Students are encouraged to work with faculty members on requesting accommodations and a calendar of religious and ethnic holidays is offered to on the Registrar's website as a resource to faculty. Wanda stated that the Dean of Students Office has worked with her office to add dates to the faculty resource that are appropriate.

Further discussion centered on the university's recognition of Catholic holidays, with concerns regarding inclusion of several Catholic observances that are not on the calendar. Tom Brown, Dean of Students noted that it would be challenging to include every possible religious observance on the calendar.

VI. DEAN OF STUDENTS OFFICE PRESENTATION AND Q&A – TOM BROWN

Tom Brown, Sharrika Davis, and Rick Sparks presented to CEOD on the purpose of the Dean of Students Office and the support that is provided to students and their families. The vision is to support students and their families from matriculation through graduation by building a foundation of "Hokie spirit" through new student programs participation and by advocating for students, their families and peers. Tom Brown discussed the three broad areas of the office, Student Advocacy, New Student Programs, and Community Relations explaining the purpose and support of each. Sharrika Davis discussed various student advocacy approaches and Rick Sparks discuss various programs designed to orientate students to campus life.

VII. OTHER BUSINESS – DISCUSSION ON SB701

Ross Edmonds provided a handout to members titled SB701 Editorial. Senate Bill 701, sponsored by Senators Don McEachin and Adam Ebbin would change this inequity, codifying the basic human right of all state employees to be free from discrimination in the workplace based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Ross added that Senate Bill 701 will be taken up by the legislature in the spring 2013.

Per discussion from CEOD members at the meeting, Chairperson Yannis Stivachtis asked Perry Martin to send the announcement and attached SB701 editorial to the scholar site for electronic voting by CEOD members. The editorial if endorsed by the commission will be submitted to the local newspaper. Perry posted the announcement to scholar site on December 17th 2012, announcing that votes needed to be received by 12 p.m. on Friday December 21st, 2012. Ross added that similar endorsements are being sought from other various campus groups.

MEETING ADJOURNED

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 11:30 a.m. The next meeting will be held on February 4th, 2013 at 10:00 am, GLC Room C.

Respectfully Submitted,

Marcie Bishop
Recording Secretary, Commission on Equal Opportunity and Diversity