

Commission on Student Affairs

Minutes

April 16, 2020

3:30 pm – 5:00 pm

Via Zoom

Present: Victoria Dashevsky, Alexis Hruby, April Myers, Ariana Labat, Blake Barnhill, Corinne Wells, Ennis McCrery, Frank Shushok, Grant Bommer, Greg Klatt, Hani Awni, Heather Wagoner, Irene Baron, Jes Davis, Kabyl Oxikbayev, Lauren Surface, Maruf Hoque, Spencer Hamilton, Susan Anderson, Tara Frank, Terri Pecora

Absent: Adil Sageer, Ayham Nouisser, Colie Touzel, Collin Shelton, Ginai Seabron, Jessica Nguyen, Jonathon Poff, Karen DePauw, Kayla Winbush, Lily Xie, Madelynn Todd, Nathaniel Soss, Rachel Holloway, Ryan Foley, Sammy Bales

Victoria Dashevsky called the meeting to order at 3:34pm. A quorum was present.

1. Introductions (Victoria Dashevsky)

2. Adoption of Agenda (Victoria Dashevsky)

A motion was made, and seconded, to adopt the agenda. The motion carried.

3. University Council and Commission Updates

a. University Council (Commissioner)

Has not met, no update. -

b. Commission on Equal Opportunity and Diversity (Commissioner)

Has not met, no update.

c. Academic Support Committee (Commissioner)

No representatives on this committee, therefore no update.

4. Old Business

a. SBB unused funds to student emergency fund (Heather Wagoner)

It was indicated that it is not possible to move SBB funds to the Student Emergency Fund for two reasons:

- The first, is something that President Sands mentioned at the Town Hall meeting, that the executive decision to do a partial refund of the comp fee has yet to be decided. If this decision is made to move forward, then SECL/SBB would be affected.
- The Budget Office said there is a state law that prohibits individuals (students) to benefit from state funds, and SBB funds are considered state funds.

Since moving SBB funds to the State Emergency Fund is not possible a suggestion was made to have the University Chartered Student Organizations represented within CSA come together to have a social media campaign. A social media campaign could make sure that others were aware of State Emergency Fund (family

members, alums, that have the capacity to give) that they know this is an option that would directly affect and benefit students.

A question was raised that since individuals cannot benefit from state funds can a group be supported? (1) Grad students are still on campus and some are classified as essential employees. (2) Research is continuing, and the Mask Development Group at VT are in the midst of producing medical masks. They are not seeking a profit, rather making the masks available to everyone and he feels this is something that SBB funds could be used for. (ie: basic supplies used to make the masks and postage to cover mailing) The additional funds would enable the production of approximately 250-300 more masks. Unfortunately, the Board is not currently hearing new requests and doesn't feel that could happen this semester. He went on to say in regards to money going directly to students, there is a clear policy that states SBB funds cannot go to personal or financial gain. Although, the board may be willing to work with the Graduate Student Assembly or the group working to make the masks, it is ultimately an SSB decision. After more clarification it was suggested that this may be more like a student organization activity and, if that is the case, there is a need to show clear impact to students in order to request funds from the SBB Student Activity Fee.

A question was raised that since the University has not yet decided about refunding any of the comp fees to students, and since this student body oversees some of that funding - will the CSA committee, or the chairs of the committee, be brought into that conversation, as they are figuring out what this looks like for potential refunds. Dr. Shushok shared he did not think that had been anticipated that be part of the process, but he can certainly bring that to others attention.

Victoria went onto say that having more involvement would be great, but even if it is something like an email that is sent to her so that she can then push forward to share with CSA to keep everyone in the loop.

5. New Business

a. Hokie Handbook (Ennis McCrery)

Victoria shared that she had uploaded all of the Hokie Handbook information the CSA share drive in a separate folder called: Hokie Handbook, and emailed all CSA members the info as well.

Director of Student Conduct, Ennis McCrery walked everyone through the updates and revisions to the Code of Conduct, which she stated had been a yearlong process in the making. Over the past months they learned a lot of students were not aware of the Code of Conduct, or even the Hokie Handbook. Ennis went onto share a brief overview to help frame the conversation.

Student Code of Conduct outlines expectations for nonacademic behaviors, which is separate from the Honor Systems and the Honor Codes of the undergraduate and graduate Honor Systems. It also lays out processes for adjudicating allegations of policy violations or misconduct. It does apply to undergraduate, graduate, and professional students. It is overseen by the Office of Student Conduct where the focus is on learning and development. They believe best way to learn is through experiences, and sometimes mistakes. Community safety is also a top priority and focus as well.

Currently the Student Code of Conduct is currently housed within the Hokie Handbook. The Hokie Handbook (which is a 60-page document) also includes information pertaining to: Housing and Residence Life policies, dining policies, complaint processes, support resources, and a lot of other university policies.

Ennis shared the reasoning and vision behind the recommended changes and pinpointed a couple of standout examples: (1) the four-page index to the many sections, to (2) an underlined declaration that states it is the

students responsibility to take the time to review all 60-pages to assist in their success at Virginia Tech. The other things they looked at was clarity and accessibility. These changes will help to make sure that as our student body geography expands, that the code of conduct in particular is approachable, and feels as if it applies to everyone.

The last reason shared for the yearlong revisions is that they wanted to clarify policies and processes; and they wanted to add the opportunity for students to request to have their records expunged. The new version is now more educational, as well as more understandable.

A question was raised in the conversation taking place in the Zoom chat regarding the Cadets vs. students snowball fight, and asked for clarification if that would fall under the throwing objects policy. Ennis shared that had never been referred, and probably not - that the spirit of that policy is..."are you hurting somebody?" What they always say in conduct is "it depends", but probably not.

A question was raised as to if there has been a discussion from a graduate student's side of things for those that are dealing with dating violence and relationships. That the students are constrained to that space, and there aren't any neutral spaces. Was there graduate student input on this side of the discussion as well? Or is this something that next year we can try to make sure GSA can help with? Ennis shared that this sounded Gender Based Violence policies, and those policies were not touched at all. That would be in collaboration with partners in Title 9, Equity and Accessibility. She feels discussions will probably be addressed at some point in the future. There is new information forthcoming from the Federal Government about Title 9 and those discussions have been put on hold until they know more. However, she confirmed discussions with the graduate students can definitely happen.

A question was raised as to what happens if, after legal counsel review this, there are substantial changes. Ennis indicated that they do not anticipate any major change at all, as they are primarily helpful with the proper language.

If there is a failure to observe a rule or regulation, such as having alcohol in a residence hall, a student would be subject to a Code of Conduct violation since those living in a residence hall are required to uphold certain polices.

Communicating these changes will be important. Ennis shared they would love some advice and input on this. While looking for ways to push this information out, they will also be working in collaboration with the Undergraduate Honors System. If you have ideas, please contact Ennis: emccrery@vt.edu.

A suggestion was made to add a quick, easy, and informative info graphic would be shared on general Virginia Tech social media. It would at least make students aware there is a student code of conduct. The info graphic should also include information pertaining to students having the ability to file claims, as a lot of students do not know this is a route they can take if there is an altercation with another student.

Victoria shared that she would make a Qualtrics or Google Form so that CSA can have an E-vote on the Hokie Handbook that will be sent out to all members via email. It was indicated that due to the nature of the situation, the first reading will be at this meeting and will be sent out for electronic vote.

Victoria asked for thumbs up responses from members if they wanted to proceed with an E-vote. It was unanimous. If you have any changes you would like to see made, please send them to Victoria and she will get them to Ennis. Or you can email her directly: emccrery@vt.edu.

b. CSA Updates (Victoria Dashevsky)

There was previous discussion that the last meeting of the year would include new CSA members. At this time, no date has been decided. Once new members are in place, please email or text Victoria so she can begin to frame the last meeting around the new body. The last meeting will consist of introductions, and voting in the new chair. Each person interested in running for chair will be given three minutes to address the members.

6. Announcements & Updates

a. Student Affairs (Dr. Frank Shushok)

Frank shared some personal thoughts and feelings pertaining to April 16th. In addition, he shared how much he appreciates the ongoing leadership of everyone in the midst of the crisis throughout campus, to the community, and culture related to the pandemic of COVID-19.

There will be an upcoming Town Hall meeting with President Sands, Dr. Pratt-Clarke, Vice Provost Rachel Holloway, and himself on Thursday, April 23 at 1:15pm. The allotted 45-minute focus will primarily be on student related issues as a result of COVID-19. Questions will be taken throughout the meeting, so please remember tune in if you can.

Order of the Gavel met Wednesday night, and all of the comments and insight was much appreciated, as well as, helpful.

Frank wrapped up asking everyone to take a moment to notice something beautiful; to say something encouraging to someone. He also reminded everyone to remember something that is really special, which is Virginia Tech. A resilient and courageous community where you are surrounded by heroes even though sometimes you do not even know who they are.

b. Student Government Association (Adil Sageer)

Adil was not present so update was given by Blake. SGA is currently going through transition. First meeting of the new General Assembly was held on Tuesday and they are working to get people up to speed as they come into their new roles.

c. Graduate Student Assembly (Hani Awni)

Hani stated he is moving forward with securing funding clarity for the grad students who are not sure how they going to afford the summer. He had a couple of questions related to the Student Emergency Relief Fund, as he wanted to ensure the answers they are providing to students are accurate:

Q: Is the Student Emergency Relief Fund available to international students?

A: Yes, it is available to international students. However, it takes a few extra steps depending on the Visa status.

Q: Still getting questions from students regarding rough magnitude - is the correct answer that it is solely based off of need?

A: Yes, that is absolutely correct. We have particular, very generous donor (or couple) to the Student Emergency Relief Fund whose most important to them is that we help students whose education might be derailed if they can't get through a particular moment, issue, or bill. Sometimes those bills are small, and sometimes they are big. What they want us to do is to help that student get through that barrier. What the Student Emergency Fund doesn't have necessarily is a cap.

The final GSA meeting is next Thursday the 23rd, when elections will be held. This will also be Hani's last meeting as president, but he will remain president throughout the of the semester. GSA does have people in the running for all of their roles.

In closing, Hani said that to provide support he hopes to still be active on campus next year, and will be reporting to whomever is president next year. He looks forward to continuing to work with, and be engaged with CSA in the future.

d. Board of Visitors Representatives (Madelynn Todd & Ryan King)

No one present, no update.

e. Other, etc. (Commissioners)

Greg shared an update regarding virtual commencement that is scheduled for May 15th at 6:30pm. Speakers include Bud Foster, Nikki Giovanni, and Miss America Camille Schrier. He stated that although things will be different, and many students are still grieving wishing everyone could be together in person, that there are still things to look forward to.

Victoria shared a JSU update. They will be holding elections at their next meeting on Wednesday, April 22.

Victoria thanked everyone for their support as she transitioned into her new role taking over and running the meetings, which of course, was complicated even more due to the Corona virus situation.

Frank thanked Victoria for leading CSA really well and for the excellent work and leadership skills she has shown. He also thanked Hani for his service stating that GSA has also been led incredibly well this year. In closing, Frank shared that recently he has heard many people say that CSA is moving in a really great direction. He told everyone they had done a really great job and that was something to be proud of.

Victoria closed by first thanking Frank for his compliments. She also thanked all of the members for being present, being active, and making a difference. Victoria went onto say she has really enjoyed her time with CSA and is excited to be in CSA next year.

7. **Adjournment** (Victoria Dashevsky)

There being no further business, a motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 4:27pm.