

Commission on Student Affairs Minutes
September 26, 2019
3:30 PM
Brush Mountain Room – All, Squires Student Center

Present: Patty Perillo, Lauren Surface, Tara Frank, Susan Anderson, Lily Xie, Kayla Winbush, Madelynn Todd, Ryan King, Gregory Klatt, Grant Bommer, Ryan Foley, Kabyl Oxikbayev, Hani Awni, Maruf Hoque, Clayton Ashe, Ricardo Rangel Gonzalez, Rhoda Azeze, Rebecca Forest, Black Barnhill, Zilmara Monteanos

Absent: Rachel Holloway, Jessica Davis, Terri Pecora, Alexis Hruby, Jackson Ribler, Ayham Nouisser, Collin Shelton, Adil Sageer

Guests: N/A

John Livingston called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m. A quorum was present.

1. Adoption of Agenda

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

2. New Business

Principles of Shared Governance

An open forum was called to discuss these. Hani noted that the document does not acknowledge that governance is work and needs to be considered with regard to other obligations. Blake noted that efficiency and timeliness were not mentioned as principles. John shared that it is important that governance aspires to be accessible and understandable. Hani reiterated that we need to elevate recognition for service, especially among tenure-seeking faculty. Multiple commissioners discussed how service is not rewarded as much, that support is dependent upon a faculty's department and specific job, and that in Student Affairs, there is an expectation to serve that does not exist in other places. Susan shared that all should be engaged, referring to university governance as a civic duty.

On the topic of communication, many felt the principle was vague and lacked anything actionable. Ryan K. shared that the over-enrollment issue is an example where at the Board of Visitors meetings, administrators admitted to it being a mistake, but public-facing statements did not say that, likely due to University Relations interference. He shared that issuing statements could be a solution, because top-down communications sometimes create a game of "telephone," with the original message being lost. He noted that transparency within and without is key. Madelynn shared that in many examples, the current student population is the last to find out, and special communications need to be made for them.

Kabyl discussed inclusivity, and highlighted the importance that governance is accessible to different disenfranchised populations, like international students. John shared that in some areas of governance, inclusion was built in. For example, CSA is intentional in which UCSOs have a seat, excluding programming boards and including all identity-based UCSOs. Blake stated that constituency groups aren't understood, referring to SGA's role within governance.

Hani brought up that the principles do not establish University Council as a concrete decision-making authority outside of administrators' powers, something unlike other universities. He presented this as an opportunity to clarify roles.

3. Announcements

Student Affairs

Patty shared that Orientation Leader position applications are now open. She also discussed the focus of the recent Student Affairs Town Hall, including capital planning and three task forces: Fraternity & Sorority Life, mental health, and Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD). The first two will be shared with CSA members, and the SSD task force report is currently with the Executive Vice Provost. It should be made public soon.

Student Government Association

Adil shared that General Assembly positions are almost all filled, including commission and committee appointments. Blake raised that SGA is considering resolutions to use sanitation wipes in the Math Emporium. Susan asked if this issue was brought up to faculty who run the Math Emporium, which Blake was unsure of as he is not one of the resolution's authors, but would raise that question to them. Blake also stated that SGA is working with the Muslim Student Union and Jewish Student Union to advocate for more prayer spaces on campus, considering the current ones do not meet student needs.

Graduate Student Assembly

Hani shared that GSA is having discussions regarding graduate student stipends and fees. They are also looking at areas of improvement regarding the food insecurity study done by Ralph Hall. Patty asked GSA to work with the Dean of Students, because she commissioned the survey. Hani also shared that cross-campus collaborations were occurring.

Undergraduate Representative to the Board of Visitors

Madelynn updated on the religious absences resolution, which has been sent to the Dean of Students for review. She also highlighted Jackson Ribler's work to get this resolution where it is. She shared that she is also working with JSU and MSU on kosher and halal food options in dining halls. She is also working on campus safety, and will soon be taking a campus safety walk with university safety officials.

Graduate Representative to the Board of Visitors

Ryan K. discussed the Provost's task force for childcare, which he pressured to be sent to graduate students. He requested all graduate students respond to the task force's survey. Ryan K. also requested students go to Faculty Senate if they are having policy issues with faculty.

Open Forum

Ryan K. brought up that it was an issue that the university closed but classes were not cancelled, which puts entertainment before education. Kayla and Victoria had issue with the university closure happening on short notice and without much communication. Rebecca added that this makes Blacksburg Transit even less reliable. Madelynn agreed and shared that no ADA considerations were made, with cars in ADA parking spaces being towed. She also shared that BT Access is not fulfilling the needs of disabled students.

Rebecca shared that Fraternity and Sorority Life is hosting a Women's Leadership Brunch on Saturday, November 2nd in the Graduate Life Center Multipurpose Room from 11:30AM-3:30 PM, and is open to all. More information will be shared to the CSA listserv.

Ricardo announced that Hispanic Heritage Month was beginning.

A student shared that over-enrollment has impacted the Corps of Cadets negatively, and recommended that seniors be allowed to live off-campus due to the limited number of beds on Upper Quad. Patty said that she has authority over this issue, but deferred to General Fulhart, the Commandant, in the summer when he was clear the Corps could handle it. She will convene a meeting with the Director of Housing & Residence Life and the Commandant of the Corps. Madelynn questioned the mental health impact on cadets. Victoria voiced concerns that 6 students were living in each lounge, and there were no study lounges for cadets, which is important for first-year cadets that cannot leave the residence halls at certain hours. This matter will also be discussed with Justin Clipson, the student leader of the Corps of Cadets.

4. Adjournment

There being no further business, a motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 4:45 p.m. The motion carried.

These minutes were prepared by John Livingston.