

## COMMISSION ON STUDENT AFFAIRS

November 11, 2010

**Present:** Parisa Ahmade (Designee for Lubna Chowdhury), Sandy Bass, Sara Brickman, Tom Brown, Michael Cardman, Sharari Dey (for Anna LoMascolo), Dustin Dorph, Rick Ferraro, Deepu George, Monika Gibson, Caroline Gimenez, Meg Gough, Bo Hart, Lauren Heming (Designee for Stacy Pennell), Frank Hernandez, Eric Hodges, Monica Hunter, Rawlin Jefferson (Designee for Pamella Palmer), Jessi Kane, Greek Kelly, Brad Klein, Nathan Lavinka, Mary Ann Lewis, Shane McCarty, Michelle McLeese, Jonathan Moore, Nate Navasca, (Designee for Richmond Hwang), Kelley McKew (for Matt parker), Jason Moskowitz (for David Ramras), Frank Shushok, Guy Sims, Ed Spencer, Leighton Vila

**Absent:** Charles Petty, Joseph Seaton, Robert Sebek, Shyrah Thomas, Joe Tran

**Guests:** Wanda Hankins Dean, Peter Velz

### **I. Call to Order**

Nathan Lavinka, Chair, called the meeting to order at 3:30 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 welcomed the group to the meeting and gave the following updates:

- Dr. Sims reported that CEOD is still talking about the Diversity Summit. The conversation is to tie into the diversity strategic plan, so at the end of the year we can give an update to the community on where we are on diversity issues.
- Policy 1025 – Harassment Clause: A subcommittee is reviewing Policy 1025
- Holiday Letter – a subcommittee has reviewed the letter and a draft has been prepared and on its way to the appropriate administrators
- Mr. Lavinka reported that Katie Gehrt, in the Student Affairs Communications and Marketing office, will be adding the CSA blog to the VT News Student Edition.

### **IV. Guest Speakers/Presenters**

- A. Shane McCarty, Undergraduate Representative to the Board of Visitors, and Deepu George, Graduate Representative to the Board of Visitors, *Actively Caring*

Mr. George and Mr. McCarty gave a power point presentation on the Diversity Experience – Bringing Diversity Plan into an experiential level. They talked about the

Academic Triangle, which includes administration, faculty, and students and how to bring these sides together to move forward as a team to create a sense of belonging, a sense of community, and actively caring. In order for the academic triangle to succeed, there are four core areas: Actively Caring for Inclusive Excellence, Inter-Group Dialogue Sessions, Hikipedia: an information gateway for the VT community, and intentional connections.

Mr. George and Mr. McCarty indicated that they are not focusing on formalizing the processes within commissions/committees, but want to strategically align with what is going on in the community so far. In response to a question that was raised, they indicated that it is hoped that those who come after them will continue to carry through with this process.

They are both willing to come talk to other groups and organizations about how to infuse the academic triangle into their lives on a daily basis.

B. Michelle McLeese, Graduate Student Assembly President, *History of Collegiate Times/CSA*

Ms. McLeese gave a history of the CSA/CT relationship and what transpired last year, resulting in a group forum that was held which addressed concerns about the on-line comments system and some concerns about the opinion column. With the current commenting system if you have a comment to post, it goes live right way. If it is flagged or deemed inflammatory/needs to be moderated, it is buried under a link that says this comment is buried by its moderator (the comment, however, can still be viewed by clicking on the link). Before this was into place, the system was such that if a comment was inappropriate, it was completely deleted.

CSA members asked for a message be sent to EMCVT/CT and, following discussion, there was a proposed motion to ask Dr. Sims' Office to cease renewal of the contract with EMCVT. Ms. McLeese then wrote a letter on behalf of CSA to Sarah Mitchell and Kelly Wolfe outlining the discussion/history and why this was problematic and until further notice, a recommendation would be made to reconsider the negotiation of that contract. Also suggested was a proposed ban on advertising in the CT by student organizations. The decision was made to do the letter first and make the latter recommendation at another point of time. EMCVT responded saying that they were going to shut down communication with CSA immediately, indicated that this was a threat against 1<sup>st</sup> amendment rights, and violation of the contract, which was clarified during a meeting with University Counsel. In April another letter was written to the editor-in-chief requesting a reopening of dialogue and mediation and this request was denied. There are now still individual conversations on-going and a sub-committee has been formed on the Commission to look at this once again.

Mr. Lavinka asked that in the interest of time, discussion on this topic be tabled until next meeting. Mr. Velz, CT Editor, stated that if anyone has any concerns and would like to talk about them, he is open to that on an individual basis.

One more concern before discussion ended was that \$70,000 is provided to EMCVT and a wing of Squires for office space, so there is a concern about how this can be an independent relationship if students are subsidizing the cost through the student activity fee.

V. **Old Business** – There was no old business for discussion.

VI. **New Business**

A. Ms. Wanda Dean, University Registrar, *Fall Break*

Mr. Hart opened by noting that the Student Government Association has been receiving e-mail as to why Virginia Tech's fall break is only one day. Bo noted that student government had been receiving e-mails as to why it is just one day, usually on a football weekend, why can't it be a two-day break, and why do we not get Labor Day off. Ms. Wanda Dean, University Registrar was present to respond.

Ms. Dean gave a brief synopsis on how the calendar comes to be: committee sets criteria as established from previous calendars, drafts are distributed, and constituents vote on the calendar (faculty, student rep, Student Affairs, Deans, etc.). She noted that many schools have a two-day fall break, but they do not have a five-day Thanksgiving day break. The University has to get the number of instructional days in, which at Virginia Tech is 72 class days, followed by a reading day and five examination days.

She noted that faculty are concerned that if you cancel a Monday, the impact is very significant because there are more classes on Monday than Friday. A Monday fall break is very disruptive because labs are set up to run Monday – Friday. Most likely, if fall break is enlarged, it will affect the Thanksgiving break.

A suggestion was made to hold fall break on a weekend where there are few events. When it is only one day, some students cannot go home if they live far away. There is no interest in changing Thanksgiving break, but have fall break on a weekend when students can go home.

Dr. Spencer commented that the reason for the lengthy Thanksgiving break is that it was a vestige of the quarter system. He noted that it would be interesting to have a calendar to say "TBD" for fall break, to be filled in later, once special events were determined. There would have to be some rationale for an alternative.

Grad students noted a concern that if a fall break results in taking a day or more from Thanksgiving, they would not be supportive of a change.

VII. **Announcements**

- Mr. Cardman announced that the CSA Scholar Page will be going live as of tomorrow, November 12, where the meeting agenda, unapproved and approved minutes, etc. will be posted.
- International Education Week kicks off tomorrow, November 12, and next week, November 16, they will have a guest speaker, Firoozeh Dumas, who will be at the Graduate Life Center, 7:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.
- Graduate Life Delegate Meeting, Thursday, November 18, Graduate Life Center.
- In recognition of the Graduate Life Center 5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, pictures and captions are posted throughout the Graduate Life Center.

- Virginia Tech is hosting a viewing party for the VT/Kansas State basketball game on Tuesday, November 16, at 4:00 p.m., in the Commonwealth Ballroom.
- Dr. Sims asked Rawlin Jefferson to comment on the concerns with the ticket office. Mr. Jefferson reported that the situation has been resolved and he encouraged others that if they have a problem to get their voice heard because it makes a difference.

**VIII. Adjournment** – There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:55 p.m.

Rhonda M. Rogers  
Recording Secretary