

MINUTES

Commission on Student Affairs Meeting

November 12, 2015

3:30 PM – 5:00 PM

Squires Student Center – Brush Mountain Room

Attendees

Joycelynn Acheampong, Susan Anderson, Margaret Applyby, Matthew Chan, Alicia Cohen, Jared Coplon, Mikey Erb, Niki Khandelual (for Pat Finn), Jackie Fisher, Panisa Jiumdumneankij, Martina Svyantek (for Jimmy McClellan), Lauren Cahill (for Nicole Nguyen), Ben Calvo Rivera (for Nathalia Ossio Reque), Dr. Patty Perillo, Tara Reel, Mohammed Seyam, Lauren Surface, Morgan Sykes, Jake Tully

Guests

Joe Edens, Susan Pedigo

Call to Order

At 3:33pm, Chair Jackie Fisher called the meeting to order.

Approval of Agenda

Jake Tully made a motion to approve the agenda; Matt Chan seconded, the agenda was approved.

SGA Legislative

Jake Tully, Chief Justice of SGA, gave a presentation regarding the switch of the SGA legislative branch to a unicameral body. Mr. Tully explained that SGA is tasked with the improvement of undergraduate student life, and that the legislative branch controls funds and the voice for drafting resolutions. This new composition allows students to run on individual platforms to have a greater representation of all undergraduates. It is important to emphasize that all positions will now be elected and SGA wants to ensure a wide variety of participation and representation. Candidates must attend one information session on Jan. 26th, 27th, and 28th.

VT InterCom

Tricia Smith, Director for Intercultural Engagement Center, came in to give a presentation about VT InterCom, a program devoted to helping teach community members about awareness building and dialogue concerning social change. The

program consists of multiple prongs, starting with training community members to be facilitators, followed by allowing groups to “hire” these facilitators for a variety of groups and settings in order to increase dialogue. There will also be sessions hosted by InterCom facilitators, allowing for anyone in the community who is interested in participating in order to become well-informed global citizens.

Morgan Sykes asked if InterCom will be working with Ask Big Questions facilitators because their goals seem to be similar.

Tricia Smith explained that there are many similar dialogue groups, but the long-term goal around this program is to be a more on-going process, while ABQ is more of a one-time discussion that is also very helpful.

Tara Reel, who completed the course, asked how long after training will the facilitators become active.

Ms. Smith explained that after training the facilitators can choose their type of involvement through a wide range of options. There are many pathways for facilitators to choose from and these can be interchangeable throughout their experience on campus.

Ms. Reel re-emphasized how beneficial this training was for her professionally and personally.

Matt Chan asked who will mostly participate, undergrads or grads?

Ms. Smith replied that for the module class, it was all upperclassmen undergraduates and graduate students. This disparity was likely due to which departments this pilot program was promoted. There were less undergraduates than graduate students, but that was a factor of timing, as much of the training took place over the summer.

Mr. Chan followed by asking what groups of students participate, such as mostly STEM or liberal arts.

Ms. Smith explained that there were a few groups that were more liberal arts focused, but overall the participants were a relatively diverse group.

Mohammed encouraged this program to also be offered to student leaders because this training can really assist with leadership roles at the university.

Old Business

A. National Pan-Hellenic Council Constitution Changes: 2nd Reading

Devin Vandyke and Tavianna Williams, President of IFC and AphiA, presented the National Pan-Hellenic Council Constitutional Changes.

Devin showed the correction to some typos (grammatical errors) in the original resolution presented during first reading. They made clarification about deposit funding for membership. The SGA representative position was taken out because of the structure change of SGA into a unicameral legislative body. Morgan Sykes made a motion to vote to approve and Matt Chan seconded. The resolution was passed unanimously.

New Business

A. Student Budget Board Appeal

In a letter to the Chair of the Commission, Big Event explained that it believed that Budget Board made a decision that was not in line with previous decisions of the board. After a deliberation of the appeal amongst the CSA appeals committee members, Steven Vanderloo and Rahul Kilkami, Executive members of the Big Event, were invited to present their appeal to the Student Budget Board. They began by explaining what the Big Event does and who it serves, then explained that they are asking for this funding for utility bill inserts because the inserts serve as a unique marketing tool to ask homeowners to sign up, reaching a larger population than they could on their own. The Big Event team shared statistics of increased participation due to utility bill advertisements, showing that 11% of residents first heard about Big Event through these inserts, 49% of returners signed up because of the inserts, and that 60% of participants signed up because of utility. Previously they asked for \$1000, but after a new quote they are able to get utility bill advertisements for \$700.

Margaret Appleby commented on the giveaways mentioned in the appeal letter and asked if they considered cutting trivial expenses such as t-shirts and giveaways.

Mr. Kilkami explained that the t-shirts and giveaways are not funded by budget board money, but rather by fundraisers put on by the Big Event team.

Dr. Perillo commented that Big Event and Relay for Life are the two biggest events on campus. She met with the Vice President of Advancement, Mr. Phlegar, to ask for corporate sponsors and to try to obtain additional funding for these matters so this will not be a recurring issue.

Mr. Vanderloo commented that Big Event has been trying to find its own sponsors as well.

Regine Parks and Max Tarshis, Chair and Vice Chair of Student Budget Board, presented their response to the appeal made by the Big Event Committee. They began by explaining that utility bill inserts were considered to be part of publicity and public awareness, and that there is a \$150 maximum for a one-day event with the exception of Homecoming and Big Event, where Big Event was given a \$1000 maximum for publicity and advertising costs. They explained they are a new board and looking at these policies with new eyes and setting new precedent for all organizations during the fiscal year. Each year they look at the funds available and make budget cut strategies which are placed upon each organization across the board.

Mr. Tully asked what the view of “parameters of previous decisions” means in the appeals legislation.

Ms. Parks replied that they do not change annual funding but can make decisions on usage of contingency funds. They look at cut strategies and attempt to allow their money to reach the broadest parameters of students in Blacksburg.

Matt asked for clarity as to what line item the inserts were to fall under.

Ms. Parks explained this request was not the sole source of gaining participants, and it fell under publicity and advertisements.

Susan Anderson asked if Big Event was a UCSO. After being confirmed she mentioned that it could be moved into another category.

Mr. Tarshis explained that in budget cut strategies that they would not fund mailing, which is the other category that this item could have fallen under.

Ms. Anderson explained that, as a town council member, she has heard very positive feedback regarding these mailings. Big Event serves as a connection between town members and students and explained that, without the inserts, participation may decrease. She encouraged budget board to make this work.

Ms. Parks showed understanding of the importance of Big Event on community relations, explaining that budget board funds no other philanthropic organizations. She pointed out that Big Event already has an exception in funding and, other than the \$1000 allotment, Budget Board is unable to fund advertising and public awareness any further in order to stay fair across organizations.

Mikey Erb asked if they knew the vote outcome of budget board vote for this line item.

Ms. Parks informed the commission that 12 votes opposed the request and 1 vote abstained. She explained that this was a tough request and took a great deal of time and consideration.

Ms. Reel explained that Big Event goes far beyond Virginia Tech and she encouraged Budget Board to not lose vision of the purpose when consumed with policy. She re-emphasized that Dr. Perillo is working on a solution in the future but we may need to compromise for this one specific incident because we do not want to discourage participation and limit growth.

Mr. Tully returned to his previous questions and explained that if a decision is appealed, budget board must break one of the three rules. He asked for further clarification and examples of when something had be appealed on the grounds of precedent.

Ms. Parks replied explaining that insurance is an example because it is now required and because of that requirement it must be supplied by budget board.

Mr. Chan asked for clarification as to whether the funding was denied for annual funding or contingency funding.

Ms. Parks explained it was denied for both annual funding and contingency funding.

Mr. Chan asked Big Event if they had looked elsewhere for funding.

Mr. Vanderloo replied by saying that, traditionally, those extra funds that are found in other places go toward areas that budget board does not cover.

Mr. Chan replied by saying that this problem will not go away and there will just continue to be more student orgs requesting money.

Dr. Perillo explained that she requested for an extra \$100,000 dollars to be allotted to student organizations in the next budget cycle.

Mr. Vanderloo explained that Big Event has asked budget board for the same amount each year, even as they grow exponentially. They have asked for \$20,000 each year but this year they were only given \$11,000.

Regine replied that they must keep things consistent and fair for all student organizations.

Chair Fisher asked the individuals involved in the appeal to leave the room and opened the floor for discussion.

Mr. Tully shared that it seemed as if Budget Board did not break any rules and, although Big Event is important to the community, budget board did nothing wrong and are just following its policy.

Mr. Erb shared the amount of time that was spent on these line items and re-emphasized that 12 out of 13 of the experts discussing this voted to oppose the funding.

Dr. Perillo restated the need to step away from policy and look into what the community needs.

Margaret Appleby shared that Street fair had catastrophic cuts and could be affected just like Big Event. If they receive more money, other folks receive less money.

Mr. Chan said it is not his place to say that Big Event is more or less important than other events. He said CSA needs to look at if budget board did anything wrong.

Ms. Anderson said that CSA should look at the importance of this particular event to the community.

Mr. Tully made a motion to extend the meeting until 5:15, Matt Chan seconded. The motion passed.

Mr. Tully makes a motion to overturn the appeal. Matt Chan seconded. Nine members of the commission voted in favor of overturning the appeal, while three voted to sustain the appeal. There was one abstention. The motion carried and the appeal is overturned. The decision of the Student Budget Board stays in place and the Big Event will not receive additional funding.

Matt asked of graduate student participation in Big Event and encouraged the Big Event team to speak to GSA.

Commission, Committee, and Sub-Committee Updates

Mr. Chan explained that formal explanations for roles in CSA have been written and that the formal manual should be finished by next semester.

Chair Fisher gave updates on the committee on religious holidays and explained that members will look at the interfaith calendar and recognize which holidays are nationally recognized and observed. They are meeting directly after the conclusion of this CSA meeting.

Announcements

Matt Chan gave updates on the Faculty Senate Resolution with the Provost, explaining that there was an overall productive meeting and we will be providing more details in the future.

Adjournment

Mr. Tully made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Mr. Erb, and passed. The meeting adjourned at 5:09 PM.