Commission on Student Affairs  
April 20, 2006  
3:30-5:30 p.m.  
Brush Mt. B  
Squires Student Center

Minutes


Absent with Notice: Ron Daniel, Margaret McQuain, Laura Morgan, Brian Whitaker

Absent without Notice: Michael Dunleavy, Brandon Eason, Michael Goode, Gary Kinder, Jerrine Morris, Bhavik Shah, Brian Warren

I. Call to Order

Ms. Jory Ruscio, Chair, called the meeting to order at 3:35 p.m.

II. Adoption of Agenda

Ms. Ruscio called for adoption of the agenda. Ms. Jennifer Jessie made a motion to add a discussion of the BOV undergraduate representative selection process. The motion was seconded and approved. Dr. Ed Spencer made a motion to add an item concerning Student Budget Board funding. The motion was seconded and approved. Mr. Sumeet Bagai made a motion to add a discussion of campus safety issues. The motion was seconded and approved. There was a motion to adopt the agenda as amended. The motion was seconded and approved.

III. Chair Report

Ms. Ruscio reported that the Resolution for Changes to University Policies for Student Life went to University Council for first reading on April 17. The resolution generated much discussion, especially the section pertaining to the Honor Systems sharing information with Judicial Affairs. This section has been referred to the Commission on Undergraduate Studies and Policies and the
Commission on Graduate Studies and Policies. The entire resolution could possible be tabled until next year.

IV. Old Business

• Elections

Ms. Ruscio announced that the floor was still open for chair and vice chair. The nominations for vice chair will remain open until the chair election is complete. There has been one nomination for chair: Mr. Jamie Kalista. Mr. Kalista declined the nomination. Ms. Ruscio asked for further nominations for chair. Mr. Sumeet Bagai was nominated and accepted. Ms. Jaquisha Kearson was nominated and declined. Mr. Greg Sagstetter was nominated and declined. Mr. Aaren Salido was nominated and declined. Mr. Matt Streeter was nominated and declined. There was a motion to close nominations. The motion was seconded and approved. Mr. Sumeet Bagai was the only nominee and was therefore elected chair by acclamation.

Ms. Ruscio asked for further nominations for vice chair. Mr. Matt Streeter was nominated and accepted. Mr. Scott Cheatham was nominated and accepted. There was a motion to close nominations. The motion was seconded and approved. Mr. Streeter and Mr. Cheatham were asked to speak briefly about their qualifications for the position. A brief discussion period followed, and the commission was asked to vote by written ballot. Mr. Scott Cheatham was elected vice chair.

Ms. Ruscio announced that a CSA representative is needed on the Academic Support Committee. Mr. Sumeet Bagai was nominated and accepted. Mr. James Tyger was nominated and declined. There was a motion to close nominations. The motion was seconded and approved. Mr. Sumeet Bagai was the only nominee and was therefore elected by acclamation as representative to the Academic Support Committee.

Ms. Ruscio announced that a CSA representative is also needed on the Commission on Equal Opportunity and Diversity (CEOD). Mr. Greg Sagstetter was nominated and accepted. Mr. Matt Streeter was nominated and declined. Mr. Aaren Salido was nominated and accepted. Ms. Monika Gibson was nominated and declined. There was a motion to close nominations. The motion was seconded and approved. Mr. Sagstetter and Mr. Salido were asked to speak briefly about their qualifications. A brief discussion period followed, and the commission was asked to vote by written ballot. Mr. Aaren Salido was elected as the representative to CEOD.

• Update to Course Withdrawal Survey

Mr. Sumeet Bagai provided a brief update on the Course Withdrawal Survey. They had 505 responses to the survey. Mr. Bagai will send the results to the commission via e-mail and this topic will be visited again in the fall.
• SBB Annual Funding Appeals

Mr. Steve Burrell explained the appeals process. Groups may appeal the funding recommendations for the following three criteria only: 1) established policies and procedures were not followed; 2) the organization was denied the opportunity to present significant evidence at the time of hearing; 3) the funding decision was arbitrary and capricious. The fact that the Board did not fund an item at the requested level does not constitute grounds for appeal.

The appeals committee met the week of April 17, with Mr. Robert Sebek serving as faculty chair. Mr. Sebek indicated that appeals were submitted by the Black Organizations Council, Asian American Student Union, and the Black Student Alliance. All appeals were reviewed by the committee and denied. Dr. Hikes asked for details about the appeals and why they were denied. Mr. Sebek explained that the BOC’s appeal was because they didn’t receive funding for the Donning of the Kente ceremony. The committee noted that no recognition ceremonies were funded this year due to limited funding. The AASU and BSA appeals were based on the amount of time they were given to present their budgets—they felt the February deadline didn’t give them sufficient time to determine how much funding was needed for events that are held in the spring. The committee determined that these two appeals did not meet the established criteria and that the groups could have used previous spending data to determine how much funding would be needed for their spring events. Dr. Hikes asked how these organizations will continue with their specific programs since funding was denied. Mr. Sebek said the committee suggested to these groups that they apply for contingency funds in the fall. Mr. Burrell explained that all requests for annual funding, small grants, or contingency funding are based on the merit of the requests and the availability of funds. He said that under the current SBB policies, the SBB didn’t feel justified in recommending money for events such as recognitions, awards banquets, and specialized events because they don’t appeal to the entire campus community. However, they are planning to discuss this issue with student leaders in the Summer Leadership Employment Program (SLEP) and administrators to determine whether this policy should be changed. Dr. Hikes made a comment in relation to how these programs relate to the entire university community—she feels recognition programs do contribute to campus life and campus climate and would encourage underrepresented students to have programs that would promote diversity on campus. She feels we should study the SBB policies and help address issues related to all underrepresented students. Dr. Karen Sanders also expressed her dissatisfaction with these three underrepresented groups being denied the funding they needed as well as their appeals being denied.

Mr. Burrell made some points of clarification: 1) The appeals committee was asked to review the appeals that were submitted and to make a decision on those appeals based on the three criteria. If the appeals don’t meet the criteria, they can’t be heard as appeals. The appeals committee is not reviewing the decision of the SBB; they are reviewing the appeal itself. 2) The SLEP program is open to all students on the commission and he encouraged everyone to apply for the program so they could participate in the SBB discussions over the summer. 3) There are still student seats open on the
SBB, and he encouraged students to apply so they could be involved in the funding process.

The commission continued the discussion of the SBB funding process, and many members expressed concern over the current policies.

- **Student Budget Board Funding**

  As a follow-up to the discussion of current SBB policies, Dr. Ed Spencer made a motion that we appoint a study group to work over the summer to look at the whole SBB funding process from top to bottom—how it’s done, the appeals process, criteria, the process of other schools. The group will be asked to report back to CSA in the fall. During the discussion period, the commission determined that the study group should include CSA members (especially those from underrepresented groups), BOV student representatives, SLEP members, and SBB members—depending on who is here and available for the summer. The motion was seconded and approved.

  Dr. Spencer pointed out that over the years the university has realized that some groups which received funding from the SBB should be funded from other sources rather than compete with student organizations and programs for funding. Two examples are the Residence Hall Federation, which is now funded from the residence hall and housing funds, and the VT Rescue Squad, which is now funded by the student health services fund. Dr. Spencer feels the Student Legal Services is in the same situation now. Because Student Legal Services was competing with student organizations and programs for SBB funding, their budget received a cut of $16,648 for next year. This cut threatens the future of Student Legal Services. He believes the study group needs to decide this summer of Student Legal Services and perhaps University Honor System should remain under SBB funding in future years. These are basic services of the university that, if not funded through the SBB process, would have to be funded from another source. Because Student Legal Services is currently facing a funding crisis for the fall, Dr. Spencer made a motion to restore $16,648 out of contingency funds for this year only to return Student Legal Services back to the same allocation they had for the current year.

  The floor was opened for discussion. Mr. Burrell was asked how this would affect the SBB funding. He indicated they would try to take the funds from this year’s budget to reduce the impact on next year’s contingency allocations. Ms. Monika Gibson said the Graduate School recognized several years ago that the Graduate Honor System’s funding could not rest solely with the SBB because it is an essential service for the university. The Graduate School’s operation budget has provided nearly all funding for the Graduate Honor System for several years, and she feels a similar consideration should be made for the Undergraduate Honor System because it is also providing an essential service. Mr. Greg Sagstetter said he feels funding for the Undergraduate Honor System should be provided by the Provost’s Office rather than SBB because their services are an essential part of students’ education. The Undergraduate Honor System is also in a severe funding crisis at this point. Dr. Spencer made a clarification that under the first motion,
the study group would make recommendations of this nature as part of their study. The discussion was closed, and Dr. Spencer’s motion to restore $16,648 to Student Legal Services was seconded and approved.

V. New Business

- **Changes to Multicultural Center and Multicultural Programs and Services**

Dr. Zenobia Hikes announced that the Multicultural Center (MCC) will be renovated this summer and operational space for Multicultural Programs and Services (MPS) will be located in the same expanded area. She distributed a handout on the project overview and goals, as well as a layout of the areas. The project will start at the end of April and they hope to have it completed by the beginning of fall semester.

- **Student Safety Issues**

Mr. Scott Cheatham reported that he and at least two other people who sit on the commission have experienced safety issues, such as vandalism, in the last year. He asked if anyone else on the commission had similar issues and several indicated they have. Mr. Cheatham encouraged everyone to report these incidents to the Virginia Tech or Blacksburg police immediately.

- **BOV Selection Committee**

Ms. Jennifer Jessie and Ms. Nicki Cantrell indicated that the selection process for the undergraduate representative to the Board of Visitors was to be revisited at the end of the academic year, once the selection process for next year’s representative was complete. Last August, the Board of Visitors approved the current selection process for one year, and asked for a report on how the process worked. Ms. Cantrell, who advised the selection committee this year, made a recommendation that the original process be reinstated, which will increase CSA involvement as it was in the past. When asked why she made this recommendation, Ms. Cantrell indicated there is no good process in place with the new procedures, and going back to the original process puts us back to known procedures that have worked well in the past. Following a discussion of the merits of leaving the process as is or returning to the old process, Ms. Jessie made a motion to form a committee to review the undergraduate representative selection process over the summer and make a report to the Board of Visitors in August. There was an amendment to the motion: the committee will be comprised of the Director of Student Activities, the two outgoing BOV representatives, and the two incoming BOV representatives. The amended motion was seconded and approved. Mr. Manjooran requested that the committee report their findings to CS at the first meeting of the fall.
VI. Announcements

Dr. Zenobia Hikes reported that she would be having an end of year open forum on April 26 at 4:30 p.m. in 1670 Litton Reaves for students to come and talk about their Virginia Tech experience.

Mr. Sumeet Bagai reminded everyone that the Relay for Life would be held on April 21 and 22 at the Johnson-Miller Track on campus. They have crossed the $120,000 mark for donations.

Mr. Jamie Kalista encouraged students to vote in the local elections for Town Council and Mayor in May. GSA and SGA sponsored a candidate forum on April 27 at 7:30-9:00 p.m. in the Graduate Life Center Multipurpose Room.

Ms. Jaquisha Kearson announced the Corps of Cadets would hold their change of command ceremony at 10:00 a.m. on April 29 on the drillfield.

Mr. Steve Burrell reminded everyone that SLEP applications were available in the Student Activities Office in 319 Squires. The application deadline was April 28. He also announced that the three budget boards have several openings for next year and encouraged student organizations to help fill these openings.

Mr. James Tyger announced that SGA Executive Committee applications were due at 5:00 p.m. on April 21. He encouraged people to apply for these positions.

Ms. Susie Kim announced that M. Evelinia Galang would deliver the keynote address for Asian Pacific American Heritage Month on April 25, 7:00 p.m. in the GLC Auditorium. The speech is titled "Screaming Monkeys: Critiques of Asian America Images."

Ms. Ruscio thanked everyone for serving on the commission this year.

VII. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 5:33 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna Sanzenbach
Recording Secretary