Commission on Student Affairs
Minutes
April 7, 1994
219 Squires Student Center

PRESENT: Dr. Jim McKenna, Dr. Tom Goodale, Mr. Ronnie Stephenson, Mr. Keith Coutray, Ms. Amy Coates, Ms. Ioanna Spyrokopoulou, Ms. Erin Smith, Ms. Lisa Auleta, Ms. Gerri Johns (for Ms. Dimples Irby), Mr. Fred Homan (for Ms. Rachel Rowley), Col. Milton Bartley, Mr. Chris Parker, Ms. Shannon Milliken, Mr. Brian O’Neil, Ms. Maureen Bezold (for Mr. Carl Mitchell), Mr. Tim Schell, Ms. Jennifer Tank, Dr. Cornel Morton, Dr. Edward Spencer, and Ms. Judy Davis.

ABSENT: Dr. John Eaton, Mr. Vaughn Shannon, Dr. Richard Sorensen, Mr. Robert Graham, and Dr. Jeanne Howard.

GUESTS: Mr. Bill Campion, Mr. Jon Parelli, Mr. Seth Ginther, Dr. Elizabeth Holford, Dr. Pat Hyer, Ms. Laura Lew, and Ms. Alicia Cohen.

CALL TO ORDER
Dr. Jim McKenna, chairperson of the Commission, called the meeting to order at 4:04 p.m.

INTRODUCTIONS
Dr. McKenna began the meeting by having all guests and new members of the Commission introduce themselves.

ANNOUNCEMENTS
1. Ms. Ioanna Spyrokopoulou, recently elected Council of International Student Organizations' president, reminded the Commission that International Week begins this week, and she highlighted events that will be occurring during the week.

2. Mr. Bill Campion, chairperson of the Student Budget Board (Board), reminded the Commission of the two vacancies on the Board for next year, with applications for these positions due on April 8.

3. Mr. Tim Schell announced that the Graduate Research Symposium, sponsored by the Graduate Student Assembly, will occur on April 22 on the first floor of Squires Student Center. The keynote speaker is Dr. Eleanor Gibson.

4. Dr. Goodale announced that a few of the Commission members recently received awards. Dr. McKenna will receive the Wine teaching award at Founder's Day. Col. Milton Bartley received the Cincinnatus award presented by the Corps of Cadets. Ms. Amy Coates will receive the Woman of the Year award at Founder's Day. Congratulations to our award winners!

APPROVAL OF AGENDA
Dr. McKenna asked that item #3 under New Business (Presentation on Hokie Gym and Student Recreation Fee) be deleted. The agenda
was approved as modified.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of February 17 and March 17, 1994 were approved as submitted.

PRESENTATION ON THE REVISIONS TO SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY - Drs. Pat Hyer and Elizabeth Holford.

Dr. Hyer began the discussion by noting that the University's sexual harassment policy had not been revised since 1990, and with evolving federal case law on the subject, it was time to reexamine the current policy. Furthermore, before Dr. McComas's death, he asked the Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action (EO/AA) Committee to review current policy on the matter.

A few of the most important problems that arose from this review dealt with when an investigation into sexual harassment should begin. Current policy states that an investigation should begin when a signed complaint is offered. Federal case law indicates that an investigation should begin when one has knowledge of sexual harassment or a potential case of sexual harassment. Federal case law also indicates that administrators or supervisors could be held liable if action is not taken on sexual harassment.

Dr. Hyer, then, preceded to review the revised University sexual harassment policy (see attached resolution). She highlighted a section of the document that says, "...consenting amorous relationships that occur in the context of educational or employment supervision and evaluation present serious ethical concerns and are a violation of University policy." Dr. Hyer noted that graduate students are considered faculty when they are teaching and that undergraduate students are also considered supervisors when managing other students.

Dr. Hyer also highlighted section 3.0 of the revised policy, which is new and lays out the responsibilities of administrators and supervisors regarding sexual harassment. Mr. Fred Homan asked who would handle a sexual harassment situation between students in non-supervisory roles, and Dr. Hyer responded that the Dean of Students Office would. Ms. Jenn Tank recommended that if the revisions become policy, the implications for graduate teaching assistants (gta) be made clear during gta training in August.

Dr. Hyer concluded by reviewing informal and formal resolution processes, penalties if one is found guilty of sexual harassment, and external avenues available for filing sexual harassment and external avenues available for filing sexual harassment charges. She stated that the revised policy will be considered by the Commission on Faculty Affairs on April 15, and if the revised policy is approved there, it would likely be considered by University Council in the fall of 1994.

Mr. Schell stated for the record that though he recognizes prohibitions may be necessary to protect all employees and students of the University, he is concerned about a University policy.
regulating personal relationships. Dr. Holford said that the revised policy is following the federal case law and is as narrowly tailored as possible. She reminded the Commission that amorous relationships that occur outside of evaluation and supervision situations are not prohibited by the revised sexual harassment policy.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

Student Budget Board Ms. Lisa Auleta, vice-chairperson of the Board, asked that Student Budget Board annual funding recommendations for University Student Life Programs and University Chartered Student Organizations for the 1994-95 fiscal year be accepted for first reading. Final action will not occur on these recommendations until appeals to the Board's recommendations are processed (see New Business, #2).

Facilities No report.

Governance No report.

Student Life Mr. Brian O'Neil reported that he was furnished a report produced by the Commission on Faculty affairs (CFA) regarding student evaluations of professors. Mr. O'Neil began investigating the matter due to student desires of viewing the evaluations of professors before enrolling in various classes. The CFA report suggests that the student surveys are not effective in evaluating professors' performances. Mr. O'Neil added, with Dr. McKenna seconding the opinion, that the student evaluations are given too much weight when their inadequacies are made aware.

Dr. McKenna continued by saying that many departments already have peer reviews, but recommended that the Commission members push for more stringent and current peer reviews to help in evaluating professors' teaching performances. Ms. Tank stated that current student evaluation forms are too quantified, with the personal comments of students often the most beneficial for the teacher. Mr. Homan also said that if the evaluations continue to be given so much weight in the promotion and tenure of faculty, the evaluations need to have more statistical validity to be of any worth.

After further discussion, Dr. McKenna instructed the Commission to send its written comments to Brian, so that Brian, if he has adequate viewpoints, may write a position paper that could be endorsed by the Commission and forwarded to CFA.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. Ms. Coates presented, for second reading and approval, changes to the Virginia Tech Union's (VTU) constitution, with the changes highlighted in bold print (see attached). A motion was made and passed to approve the changes to VTU's constitution.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Ms. Saranette Miles presented, for first reading, changes to the Black Student Alliance's constitution, with the changes highlighted in bold print. Ms. Miles briefly reviewed the changes and the reasons
for them.

2. Dr. McKenna announced that the Commission received three appeals of the Student Budget Board annual funding recommendations. The organizations appealing are Virginia Tech Union, the Honor System, and the Extramural Sports Federation (see attached). Mr. Campion explained that there are two steps to the appeal process. In step 1, the Commission chairperson appoints an ad hoc committee to determine if the appeals meet the appeal criteria established in the Board guidelines. In step 2, the ad hoc committee is to report its determinations at the next Commission meeting, and if there are grounds for appeal, the full Commission will hear presentations from both the Board and the appealing organization(s) regarding the specific appeal(s).

Dr. McKenna asked for and received five volunteers (one of which was to be a faculty/staff member) for the ad hoc committee. The committee members are M. Schell, Col. Bartley, Ms. Erin Smith, Dr. Cornel Morton, and Mr. O'Neil. Dr. McKenna instructed the group to select its own chairperson and to have its recommendations ready of the April 21 Commission meeting.

3. Dr. McKenna asked the Commission if it would like to meet one time in the summer. Seeing general agreement to this idea, Dr. McKenna said he would set a summer meeting date, probably during the first summer academic session.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5:24 p.m.

Minutes recorded and submitted by:

John M. Aughenbaugh
Student Affairs Coordinator for Graduate Student Life