

STAFF SENATE Minutes
117A Randolph Hall
November 15, 2012
12:00 noon – 1:00 P.M.

Attending: Bonnie Alberts, Judy Alford, Susan Archer, Dan Cook, Lori Greiner, Velva Groover, Dennis Herron, Denise Jones, Maxine Lyons, Karen Nicholson, Angie Robinson, Allison Rubio, Wyatt Sasser, Robert Sebek, Llyn Sharp, Louelle Sharp, Amy Tanner, Sue Teel, Leslie Thornton-O'Brien, Nick Vaught, Ken Wieringo, Beverly Williams.

Guests or Individuals Not on Roster: Val Henderson, Steven Myers, Brandy McCoy, Katelyn Heller

Excused: Alex Parrish

Remote Attendance: Northern Virginia Center in the National Capital Region did not connect.

Opening: President Sue Teel called the meeting to order, and the Agenda was adopted without change and the Minutes were approved.

Program: Dr. William Lewis, Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion

-wants everyone to have a voice

-questions

- **Do you have an understanding of the university diversity efforts**
 - We know there are opportunities, but we don't truly have an understanding of it
 - University has set up the programs to work towards a goal, but don't know the actual goal or the strategies to work towards those goals (How do you get past race to hear diversity?)
 - Diversity denotes architect plans, do we want to be apparent at diversity or do we want to include so many individuals that we don't have to be obvious about it.
 - We want to be an inclusive environment to where we don't have to even say the word diversity (Dr. Lewis)
 - What is another way to look at diversity other than race?
 - Dr. Lewis: 1954 Brown vs. board of education – segregation is illegal in schools
 - As we became more diverse, more diversity came into the work place
 - As more ppl came into the workforce, there were issues of ppl not working well together
 - How do we manage diversity in order to get the most out of ppl?
 - In higher education we moved from managing diversity to inclusive excellence
 - Inclusive excellence means we can be inclusive and we can strive to excellence in the same frame
 - Even staff senate is largely white, but where does the diversity come in? We are each different
 - Diversity is based on individual to individual connection
 - We can take race out of it and it's about our shared connection between individuals
 - Diversity is more than just race, it's more than the physical characteristics
 - Perspective is what we bring into the work place
- **Dr. Lewis asked for comments/thoughts on what was shared**
 - You are a product of your environment
 - In order to go forward, you have to be able to change yourself and your culture
 - Must have an open dialogue with an open mind
 - It becomes more natural because you have become more inclusive
 - Blessed at VT because we have a strong sense of community but we already see our mass as one. That togetherness speaks to where we already are.
 - We have a voice and we are unique at VT. There are colleges, etc. across the commonwealth asking how we got a senator on the BoV.
 - Because we are one, where do we go from here?
 - Dr. Lewis: Principles of community: we acknowledge our history of exclusion and that is one of the first steps, now we affirm the dignity of the individual, we affirm to work for the common humanity to embrace and understand all diversity. We reject all forms of oppression (?) and we pledge to go forward in Ut Prosim, that I may serve.

- We need to continue individually understand and recommit ourselves to our principles and as an organization we need to recommit ourselves (Strong Together effort)
 - Strong together is an effort that helps us reaffirm our principles of community
 - When we work as an individual we have moderate strength but when we work together we have a much larger strength
 - Brings good words into great actions
 - Take a picture in front of the strong together banner and we can make it into a poster
 - As we look at opportunities the diversity development institute is another opportunity to engage in diversity in the 21st century
 - As we look at diversity strategic plan, we will vet the plan, and in the spring, he'd like to come back and share the plan with its strategies.
 - Leslie question: While diversity is a great initiative and we have lots of individuals coming from other countries, how do we protect the American education system? How do we protect the growth of America and still embrace diversity?
 - We have a lot of nontraditional students coming to VT now
 - The more that students feel included, when they graduate, they will have their children, etc. come to VT, they will tell others about VT and they will give of their time and resources for VT, it shows a cycle.
- Senator asked how the university handled the recent situation of a student running for homecoming queen that used stereotypical Native American costumes and actions.
- Students understanding diversity goes across many offices on campus.
 - They were using Native American stereotypical fashion, in poor taste, etc.
 - Incident happened on Columbus day
 - Lots of negative press, calls, and emails regarding this issue
 - Next step was that they had a workshop on positive imagery
 - His office will work closely with Sam Cook
 - Student affairs is drafting a note
 - Guy Simms will send something to Native at VT listserv
 - Didn't want to have this situation mushroom out of control and that's why it wasn't raised to the university as a whole

- Vote taken regarding whether McComas should be held in April or May of 2013. Vote was to try April this year.

Announcements:

Announcement made that the December meeting will be at the Inn at Virginia Tech.

Standing Committee Reports: No Reports

Next Meeting: The next meeting will be Thursday, December 20th at the Inn at Virginia Tech.

Respectfully submitted,
 Leslie Thornton-O'Brien
 Senate Secretary