



Bugle Yearbook



College Media Solutions
Advertising

COLLEGIATETIMES
Student Newspaper



Literary and Art Magazine



Student Publications
Photography Staff



Channel 33
Student Television



www.wuvt.vt.edu
Independent Radio

February 11, 2010

Commission on Student Affairs
c/o Division of Student Affairs
112 Burruss (0250)
Blacksburg, VA 24061

Members of CSA:

Regarding the February 8, 2010 letter from Michelle McLeese, Chair of the Commission on Student Affairs (CSA), to Educational Media Company at Virginia Tech, Inc. (EMCVT) regarding online comments posted by members of the Virginia Tech community and others at collegiatetimes.com, EMCVT respectfully submits the following responses:

1) We have advised the *Collegiate Times* staff to discontinue discussions with CSA members, individually and collectively, on the topic of online comments. We sincerely welcomed the several concerned and impassioned University staff members and students who engaged *Collegiate Times* editors in a meaningful dialogue about the pros and cons of anonymity in online comments over two academic years and two editors-in-chief. A significant conversation with readers such as that, as well as the accompanying decision-making process for student editors, plays a valuable role in student media pedagogy. Both editors-in-chief, after considering many different points of view, decided to maintain anonymous commenting, just as a wealth of newspapers across the country have done. In addition to listening to different points of view, the editors also surveyed practices at professional and college news media, learned more about media law and debated the relationships among free speech, anonymity and democracy. It was an outstanding learning experience, one that advisers to student journalists appreciate.

But this is no longer a dialogue; it is coercion. This is made plain by the February 8 letter, a copy of which is enclosed.

As attempted punishment for content decisions made by the editors of the student newspaper, CSA has threatened to harm the financial and institutional support resources for the diverse co-curricular student media activities that hundreds of students choose to join each year.

All further communication on this topic will be conducted in writing with EMCVT.

2) It would be helpful for CSA members to have a basic understanding of EMCVT's Relationship Agreement with the University to provide student media activity services in lieu of the Department of Student Activities doing so. This is especially true since the Relationship Agreement is a legally binding document between EMCVT, and the University, of which CSA is a part.

Until the University formed EMCVT in 1997, the student media groups were advised by UUSA staff and governed under the umbrella of the Student Media Board of Virginia Tech. The *Collegiate Times* is only one of seven registered student organizations (RSOs) advised under the umbrella of the Student Media Board's successor, EMCVT. The others are the *Bugle Yearbook*, College Media Solutions, *Silhouette* literary and art magazine, Student Publications Photo Staff, VTTV Channel 33 and WUVT 90.7 FM. Among other things, the Relationship Agreement states the University's historical relationship and rationale for affiliation with the student media organizations, establishes their RSO status, defines their editorial independence and provides the same support for student media activities, advising and administration as existed on average during the years 1993-94 through 1996-97.

To discontinue the Relationship Agreement with EMCVT would be to take apart the institutional structure of all of these student media organizations. It would be like shutting down Cranwell

International Center and removing resources from the Council of International Student Organizations as well as all of its member organizations because of a disagreement with the Indian Student Association.

Certainly, under these circumstances, it would garner significant national attention for Virginia Tech to dismantle all of student media at the University in an attempt to control content at the student newspaper.

3) Your letter referenced EMCVT's Relationship Agreement with the University by saying that "this contract is currently up for renewal." That is wrong. The Agreement (paragraph 3) requires 24-month notice to rescind or to begin renegotiations of it, and EMCVT has neither given nor received such notice.

4) The *Collegiate Times* receives zero dollars in funding under the Relationship Agreement. The *Collegiate Times* instead has subsidized operations, advising staff, administrative support and capital equipment for the student organizations whose revenue does not fully support their operations. Should CSA's proposed actions be implemented, EMCVT, while pursuing aggressive legal action to defend the free speech rights of students, would also be forced to consider each organization's ability to survive on its own. It is likely that such actions would harm or distinctly limit the co-curricular activities available at WUVT, *Silhouette*, VTTV and the *Bugle*, but not at the *Collegiate Times*.

5) The Relationship Agreement (Paragraph 6) states "Except through its seats on the governing board of EMCVT or to the extent permitted by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, Virginia Tech will not seek to assert editorial control over EMCVT publications."

It is unfortunate and surprising that the members of CSA apparently have not been advised that a resolution "to request Dr. Sims' office not renew said financial contract with EMCVT until the Commission has resolved its discontent with the CT and its online commenting system effective immediately" is a clear violation of the University's binding legal agreement not to assert control over editorial content, as is the pending resolution also referenced in the February 8 letter to advise Budget Board to disallow any student organization funding for *Collegiate Times* advertising.

The Association of College Unions International (ACUI) College Union Standards and Guidelines state:

"College Union (CU) staff members must be knowledgeable about and responsive to laws and regulations that relate to their respective responsibilities and that may pose legal obligations, limitations, or ramifications for the institution as a whole. As appropriate, staff members must inform users of programs and services, as well as officials, of legal obligations and limitations including constitutional, statutory, regulatory, and case law; mandatory laws and orders emanating from federal, state/provincial, and local governments; and the institution's policies."

Regrettably, that appears to us not to have happened in this situation. From the minutes of CSA's February 4 meeting: "Dr. Spencer noted that this can be taken all the way to the University Governance system to withdraw their support of the media association."

Both courses of action proposed by CSA are also very clear violations of established First Amendment case law. They consist of a governmental body such as CSA or Budget Board attempting to restrict funding, legal advertising or other resources as punishment for student media content with which it disagrees.

If the professional members of CSA have not brought this relevant legal information to your attention, it would be advisable to consult University Counsel about CSA's recent and planned resolutions regarding content published by the *Collegiate Times*. Kay Heidbreder sat on the University's Media Incorporation Task Force in 1996-97 and is familiar with the issues and the Relationship Agreement. We would also suggest the Student Press Law Center (splc.org) as a resource to bring CSA members up to speed on the legal ramifications of censorship by a governmental entity. Here is an excerpt from the SPLC's Web site:

"Student editors have the right to make all decisions related to the editorial and advertising content of student media. Courts have been consistent in ruling that at the public colleges and universities, school officials, including student government officers, may not exercise the power of a private publisher over student publications simply because they provide financial support. The fact that public universities are considered an arm of the state distinguishes them from a private publisher. Bazaar v. Fortune, 476 F.2d 570, aff'd en banc with modification, 489 F.2d 225(5th Cir. 1973)(per curiam, cert. denied, 416 U.S. 995(1974).

"As a result of these cases, it is now clear that:

"School officials cannot:

"(1) Censor or confiscate a publication, withdraw or reduce its funding, withhold student activities fees, prohibit lawful advertising, fire an editor or adviser, "stack" a student media board, discipline staff members or take any other action

that is motivated by an attempt to control, manipulate or punish past or future content. Joyner v. Whiting; Schiff v. Williams, 477 F.2d 456(4th Cir. 1973); Leuth v. St. Clair County Comm. College, 732 F.Supp. 1410(E.D.Mich.1990); Kincaid v. Gibson, 236 F.3d 342 (6th Cir. 2001)(en banc)."

6) The *Collegiate Times* is a news organization and a means by which citizens may conduct a public dialogue on issues of importance to students and other constituents. We must clarify for CSA that the *Collegiate Times* has no role to play in the University's attempts, no matter how well-intentioned, to enforce speech codes that may be contained within the Principles of Community. In fact, upon reviewing CSA's letter, the Executive Director of the Student Press Law Center noted that speech codes have been struck down on campuses across the country, most recently at Temple University. He said, "the university is exposing the Principles to risk of legal challenge if it pursues this course of action, and one wonders whether anonymous comments on news stories are really so important as to take that risk."

"It is axiomatic that the government may not regulate speech based on its substantive content or the message it conveys. . . . Discrimination against speech because of its message is presumed to be unconstitutional. . . . When the government targets not subject matter, but particular views taken by speakers on a subject, the violation of the First Amendment is all the more blatant." . Rosenberger v. Rector and Visitors of University of Virginia, 515 U.S. 819 (1995)

The letter threatening to punish EMCVT for apparently failing to take the "right" stance with respect to Principles of Community – which are not a part of the Relationship Agreement – is perhaps the clearest case of threatened viewpoint discrimination imaginable.

7) EMCVT demands that CSA rescind the "verbal resolution" referenced in the February 8 letter and cease all attempts to assert control over the editorial content decisions of the student editors of the *Collegiate Times*. Should CSA continue to pursue this violation of students' First Amendment rights, EMCVT will commence appropriate legal action against CSA and its individual members.

Further communication on the topic of online comments at the *Collegiate Times* or EMCVT's Relationship Agreement with the University may be addressed to EMCVT at 362 Squires Student Center (0546), Blacksburg, VA 24061.

Sincerely,



Kelly Wolff, General Manager

enclosures: CSA's February 8 letter; CSA meeting minutes of February 4, 2010, November 5 & 19, 2009

cc: Kay Heidbreder, University Counsel
Larry Hincker, University Relations
Ed Spencer, DSA
Guy Sims, UUSA
Monica Hunter, UUSA
Gary Long, Faculty Senate
Tom Tucker, Staff Senate
Bob Denton, Department of Communication
Cary Nelson, American Association of University Professors
Greg Lukianoff, Foundation for Individual Rights in Education
Robert M. O'Neil, Thomas Jefferson Center for the Protection of Free Expression
Joan Bertin, National Coalition Against Censorship
Donald Luse, Association of College Unions International
Sara Mitchell, *Collegiate Times*
David Grant, 2008-09 *Collegiate Times* editor-in-chief
Lynn Nystrom, College of Engineering
Rob Perry, President, Board of Directors, Educational Media Company at Virginia Tech, Inc.
Board of Directors, Educational Media Company at Virginia Tech, Inc.

Wat Hopkins, Department of Communication
Frank LoMonte, Student Press Law Center
Tonia Moxley, *Roanoke Times*
Karin Kapsidelis, *Richmond Times Dispatch Chronicle of Higher Education*
Ginger Stanley, Virginia Press Association
Gene Policinski, First Amendment Center
Kent Willis, ACLU of Virginia



Educational Media Company at Virginia Tech, Inc.
General Manager, Kelly Wolff
362 Squires Student Center
Blacksburg, VA 24061

February 8, 2010

Dear Ms. Wolff:

I am writing regarding a decision just enacted upon by the Commission on Student Affairs at its February 4, 2010 meeting.

Last semester, Fall 2009, the Commission became aware of discontent among students, faculty, staff, administrators and others regarding the online commenting system through the Collegiate Times (CT). The consensus of the Commission has been that the commenting system is irresponsible and inappropriate because it lacks accountability resulting in, among other things, countering the Principles of Community. Therefore, members of the Commission, along with a few administrators and faculty at Virginia Tech, participated in dialogue with key members of the CT staff including Editor-in-Chief, Sara Mitchell, Managing Editor of Editorials, Peter Velz, Opinions Editor, Debra Houchins, and Public Editor, Justin Graves. It is not possible for me to describe at length or in detail all the concerns of the Commission and those involved, although there is certainly room for continued dialogue regarding this issue. All parties had some constructive comments and dialogue and there seemed to be promise of collaboration to help move in the direction of fixing a problem recognized by many on both sides.

However, this issue continues to be a problem according to the Commission on Student Affairs because the sentiment is that nothing further than discussion or talking about these problems has been accomplished. Meanwhile, individuals and groups are continuing to be victimized verbally by individuals enabled by the commenting system.

The Commission has now decided to take action through the governance system. Although it is true EMCVT is not directly affiliated with the University for legal reasons, it still retains some benefits from the cooperation of the University. One such benefit is some financial assistance received annually from VT; this contract is currently up for renewal. The Commission has enacted a verbal resolution to request Dr. Sims' office not renew said financial contract with EMCVT until the Commission has resolved its discontent with the CT and its online commenting system effective immediately. In addition, the Commission discussed (and will decide at its February 18, 2010 meeting), the option of passing a verbal resolution that would immediately enact a policy with the Budget Boards at Virginia Tech to disqualify any funding requested to pay for advertising through the CT by student organizations. As a result, the Commission respectfully requests a meeting to attempt to reach mutual solutions or agreements to these concerns.

I thank you in advance for your time and attention. Should you have any questions or concerns please do not hesitate to contact me directly.

Sincerely,

Michelle McLeese
Chair, Commission on Student Affairs

CC Sara Mitchell, Editor-in-Chief of Collegiate Times
CC Ed Spencer, VP for Student Affairs
CC Guy Sims, Assistant VP for Student Affairs
CC Monica Hunter, Interim Director of Student Activities

Invent the Future

Commission on Student Affairs
February 4, 2010
3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Brush Mountain Room
Squires Student Center

Present: Kimberly Brown, Tom Brown, Brandon Carroll, Kimberly Carlson, Matthew Hughes for Kristin Carr, Liana Farb, Laura Freeman, Jonathan Duggins for Rebecca French, Meg Gough, Monika Gibson, Kristina Hartman, Frank Hernandez, Monica Hunter, Monique Johnson, Aimee Kanode, Nathan Lavinka, Marco Leung, Anna LoMascolo, Shane McCarty, Michelle McLeese, Thomas Medina, Robert Sebak, Sharmin Shamsalsadati, Frank Shushok, Guy Sims, Ed Spencer, Lauren Thompson, Ben Wade

Absent: Ashley Davis, Rick Ferraro, Brian Golden, Shivana Handa, Brad Klein, Mary Ann Lewis, Matt Penny, Donna Ratcliffe, John Steger, Leighton Vila, Nigel Wray

Guests: Ellie Spitzer, Sara Brickman

- **Call to Order**

Ms. McLeese, Chair, called the meeting to order at 3:32 p.m.

- **Adoption of Agenda**

Motion was made to adopt the agenda as amended to delete the first presentation. The motion was seconded and approved.

- **Welcome and Chair Update(s)**

Ms. McLeese welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the semester and reminded them that if they have agenda items for future meetings, to contact her.

She gave a brief review of the Diversity Summit, along with Dr. Sims, that was held on January 29 which focused on Asian ethnicity, background, culture, stereotypes, etc. She also reported that University Council heard the first reading of the Ammunition Ban and the Interim Suspension resolutions that passed through CSA last semester. She invited CSA members to attend the next University Council meeting as non-voting members on February 15 is they wish to represent their constituents regarding these two resolutions.

After reviewing the responsibilities of the CSA Vice Chair position, Ms. McLeese called for nominations and the election of a new Vice Chair of CSA to replace Camille Waldron. Mr. Shane McCarty was nominated and accepted the nomination. Dr. Spencer moved that the nominations be closed, the motion was carried, and Mr. McCartney was elected by acclamation as the Vice Chair of CSA.

- **Guest Speakers**

- **Dr. Mary Ann Lewis, Director of First Year Experience** – First Year Experience Program – This presentation will be made at the next CSA meeting.

- **Marco Leung, VP Class of 2012 and SGA Student Outreach Co-Director, Ellie Spitzer, SGA Student Outreach Co-Director - SGA Extreme Campus Makeover.**

Ms. Leung and Ms. Spitzer explained that the task is to find out how students feel about different issues to gather the campus as students perceive it. On October 19 – 21, they did a survey at four different locations: Shultz, Pamplin on the Drillfield, & the Library. Participation was about 5,000 students per day and this was the first time it was extended to the Corps. The topics were sustainability, transportation, community, equity and inclusion, and basketball.

Ms. McLeese had forwarded the data prior to today's meeting. Dr. Spencer suggested that they do an executive summary of what the results are from this survey to summarize their conclusions. It was also suggested that they might want to use some electronic means to do the survey, i.e., the "clicker" technology noting that if funding would be a problem, they could look into using the Parent Fund and this would be an interesting way to partner with Dr. Sims' area to put in a proposal for funding for a more valid type of survey. Dr. Brown encouraged them to share this information with others. Ms. McLeese commended them on the preparation, work, and time that was put into this survey process.

- **Old Business**

- **Laura Freeman, Resolution on Graduate Meal Plans – Changes**

Ms. Freeman noted that the reason for the resolution is that graduate students have different needs when it comes down to meal plans and they should be allowed to purchase a different type of flex/meal plan. Through this process what she learned is that you live on campus, the room and board is bundled in one full package. So the route they were planning to take would not work. They are working with the CRC about a meal plan, looking at having different policies for graduate students noting that graduate students are facing the same policies but come from very different circumstances. It was noted that this is also an issue.

Ms. McLeese encouraged members to be more willing to bring items forth because this is such an educational process and encouraged dialogue with people from different areas who can tell you what works, what doesn't, etc.

Another issue brought up is that New Hall West residents are interested in using the kitchen (students who want to eat more locally and organically, etc.) Dr. Spencer asked Dr. Shushok to arrange a meeting with Rick Johnson, Director of Housing and Dining Services, and a couple of people interested to talk about these issues.

- **Sara Brickman, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Alliance – Resolution for Constitution Revisions/Updates, 1st Reading**

Although there was a first reading at the December CSA meeting, there was no official document, so the official first reading was presented today by Sara Brickman and Aimee Kanode. They distributed to the members the constitution revisions, noting changes that were made. The second reading will be presented at the February 18 meeting and then a vote will be called for.

- **New Business**

- **Nominations/Appointments for Undergraduate BOV Review Committee**

Ms. Hartman explained the purpose and timeline for the Undergraduate Student Representative to the Board of Visitors and then opened the floor for nominations of those to serve on the subcommittee that is needed to select the three finalists who would then go on to be interviewed by the Board of Visitors. Those nominated were: Monique Johnson, Frank Hernandez, Brandon Carroll, Ben Wade, and Nathan Lavinka. The nominations were seconded, and the motion was approved.

- **Other**

Before announcements, McLeese raised an issue that had been discussed last semester regarding anonymous postings/comments in the Collegiate Times. After explaining to new members of CSA that as a follow-up to the discussion during a CSA meeting last semester, a follow-up meeting had been held to discuss this matter with the CT and it has sort of gone under the rug (there were some extremely offensive comments made on the blog site following last week's Diversity Summit). Brandon Carroll and Laura Freeman are jointly working on soliciting feedback in an attempt to try and move this issue forward. Some suggestions were made on how CSA might be able to provide support to this effort:

- A statement of support from CSA in support of the CT changing their commenting system
- a resolution, pulling ads by all the groups from this commission, having a statement in support of them changing their commenting system
- Charging a subcommittee to work on this.
- Dr. Spencer noted that this can be taken all the way to the University Governance system to withdraw their support of the media association.
- The commission could request that Dr. Sims' office hold up on signing the agreement with the Educational Media Company until they have a chance to reach an agreement with the CT.
- Get statements from faculty and staff senates.
- At minimum, pass the resolution that UUSA hold up on signing the agreement. The budget board could also note that we will not entertain funding for CT Ads.
- Give them the opportunity to correct their mistakes before pulling funding. It was noted that this could ultimately upset the student body if there is not a student newspaper.

A motion was made asking Dr. Sims' office not to sign the renewal of the contract with EMCVT until the Commission has time to attempt to resolve its differences with the Collegiate Times. The motion was seconded and carried. A motion was made to form a subcommittee to look into this. With the motion seconded and approved, the subcommittee is: Anna LoMoscolo, Monique Johnson, Meg Gough, Aimee Kanode, Ben Wade, Frank Shushok, Tom Medina, Frank Hernandez, Kristina Hartman, Sharmin Shamsalsadati, and Leighton Vila. (Leighton and Tom will serve as Co-Chairs)

Ms. McLeese will alert the editor of the CT that the Commission is contemplating pulling budget board funding of CT ads if an agreement is not worked out.

- **Announcements**

- Lessons from the past, challenges ahead for a new Haiti, Wednesday, February 10, 2010, 7:00 p.m., in the Graduate Life Center

- Laura Freeman will resend the link to the Membership Review Survey for members to fill out.

- A Latina Forum will be held on February 15, at 6:30 p.m., in Colonial Hall

- **Adjournment**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:06 p.m

Respectfully submitted,

Rhonda M. Rogers
Recording Secretary

Commission on Student Affairs
November 19, 2009
3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Brush Mountain Room
Squires Student Center

Present: Sandy Bass, Sara Brickman, Brandon Carroll, Kimberly Carlson, Kristin Carr, Ashley Davis, Rick Ferraro, Laura Freeman, Rebecca French, Charisse Ghattas, Monika Gibson, Hannah Goff, Kristina Hartman, Frank Hernandez, Monica Hunter, Brad Klein, Nathan Lavinka, Anna LoMascolo, Sharon Meehan for Shane McCarty, Michelle McLeese, Matthew Penny, Donna Ratcliffe, Karen Eley Sanders, Robert Sebak, Sharmin Shamsalsadati, Frank Shushok, Guy Sims, Camille Waldron

Absent: Tom Brown, Brian Golden, Shivana Handa, Monique Johnson, Mary Ann Lewis, Ed Spencer, John Steger, Leighton Vila, Ben Wade, Daryl Whitehurst, Nigel Wray

Guests: Kimberly Brown, Eric Schwartz, Carl Krieger, Alicia Cohen, Sue Kurtz, Tracy Newton, Jim Gresham, Shelly Burkholder, Mary Grace Campos, Samantha Kidd, Stephanie Feinberg, Kristen Houston, Dexter Bush-Scott, Adam Rubin

I. Call to Order

Ms. McLeese, Chair, called the meeting to order at 3:31 p.m.

II. Adoption of Agenda

Motion was made to adopt the agenda as written. The motion was seconded and approved.

III. Welcome and Chair Update

Ms. McLeese welcomed everyone to the meeting and gave a few updates:

- University Council has met three times this semester and the SGA constitution was approved at the last meeting.
- CEOD has passed Policy 1025 in support of Gender Expression, but it still has to go to University Council.
- The Diversity Summit will be held on January 29.
- Reminder that the Vice Chair position will need to be filled next semester. Nominations and elections will be held at the December 3 CSA meeting.

IV. Guest Speakers

A. Adam Rubin, President, Stephanie Feinberg, Vice President, Samantha Kidd, Treasurer, Jewish Student Union – *Jewish Student Union's petition to join the Commission on Student Affairs*

The Jewish Student Union presented the first reading for their petition to join the Commission on Student Affairs. They were approved as a CSO in April of 2009 and are the only CSO without a seat on the Commission. The organizations that fall under their umbrella are: Alpha Epsilon Pi, Campus Entrepreneur Initiative, Friends of Israel, Hillel at Virginia Tech, Keshet, Mazon, Sigma Alpha Epsilon Pi, and Teva Outdoors Club. They are requesting a seat to serve as a voice for their constituent organizations, to address issues faced by Jewish students, and to contribute to the minority representation of the student body on the Commission.

- B. Kevin McDonald, Vice President for Equity and Inclusion and Karen Sanders, Associate Vice President for Academic Support Services – *Equity and Inclusion: The Office, The Past, The Present, and The Future*

Mr. McDonald announced that he will be leaving the University to go to Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) beginning in January. Dr. Karen Sanders will serve as the Interim VP for six months. She is well situated to continue to move the initiatives of the Office forward. He also gave an overview of what the Office of Equity and Inclusion does and highlighted some of the programs that are a part of that office, some information about things to come, and noted that the functions of this office touch faculty, staff, students, and alumni.

Dr. Sanders indicated that the Office of Academic Support Services works closely with the Office of Equity and Inclusion on a lot of projects and that she also worked closely with Ben Dixon, the previous Vice President before Mr. McDonald was in the position. She will be looking towards the commission for guidance and to offer some ideas about the direction that the Office of Equity and Inclusion should be headed in and to push our diversity efforts forward. While Dr. Sanders serves as Interim Vice President for the Office of Equity and Inclusion, Dr. Kimberly Brown will be serving as the Interim Associate Vice President for Academic Support Services. Dr. Brown is very familiar with the academic support area and has worked with all of the Associate Deans on campus.

Mr. McDonald commended Brandon Carroll on his participation and his working with the Office of Equity and Inclusion and appreciates his efforts to “push the envelope” in the area of diversity.

In response to a question, Mr. McDonald noted that the institution has to be more transparent and more willing to share. We are not so good at acknowledging the things that we are struggling with and this is an opportunity for us to continue to move forward in the area of diversity and continue to push that envelope, acknowledging where the shortfalls are in this area and where we should be going. Students can help with these efforts by continuing to connect the work that you do. It is time to continue to connect and envision diversity with all of the work that we do. Dr. Sanders suggested that students should always keep the Student Representatives to the Board of Visitors apprised of any concerns that they have in the area of diversity. Mr. McDonald also noted that we need to continue to challenge the campus community as a whole to embrace the Principles of Community.

V. Old Business

A. Conflict Resolution and Mediation (update)

Ms. McLeese reported that the survey has not been closed with about half of the student members responding. Even though it is directed to students, she has asked that the faculty and staff also take the survey to let us know if you think this program is a good idea for students and then she will forward those comments to Mr. Robinson and Ms. Sloane next week.

B. Brown Bag Forum for CT Discussion on Anonymous Blogging (update)

The brown bag forum was held yesterday and the attendance was good. Most importantly, there was a very good dialogue discussion with the CT Managing Editor, the Features Editor and the Opinions Editor.

There will be a discussion in December about action items that we may want to pursue during spring semester. Although the attendance was good, unfortunately there were only 3-4 undergraduates in attendance, so at the next forum, it would be great to have more undergraduate students attend.

The CT representatives did express a concern about the lack of resources to make these types of postings anonymous, so they are looking for information technology people who can help them with that.

Due to some comments that were posted by a staff writer for the CT regarding fraternities, IFC has pulled all of their funding support from the CT.

Ms. McLeese noted that clearly this is very important to this commission and we will continue the dialogue and discussion and think about ways to strategize and improve this situation. They are thinking about a public forum in the spring where anyone can attend to have a dialogue in the spring semester. If there is interest in doing this, please let Ms. McLeese know.

VI. New Business

A. Stephanie Feinberg, Vice President, Jewish Student Union – *Resolution for the addition of JSU to CSA, 1st Reading*

The Jewish Student Union Presented the first reading of their Resolution for the addition of JSU to CSA. With the first reading being done, there is a requirement that there be a second reading before voting on any resolution. Ms. McLeese asked that the members go back and share the resolution with their constituents for feedback. Laura Freeman then made a motion to table the JSU second reading until the time the subcommittee gives the formal report to CSA; the motion was seconded. Following a very lengthy discussion, the question was called and the motion was not carried.

Hanna Goff made a motion to forego the second reading, it was seconded. Following the question, the motion was not carried. We will proceed with the 2nd reading of JSU at the December 3 meeting.

- B. Frances Keene, Director of Student Conduct – *Resolution for on campus ammunition ban, 1st Reading and Resolution regarding suspension policy, 1st reading*

In Ms. Keene's absence, Frank Shushok presented the resolution on the Campus Ammunition Ban for the first reading. He also presented a first reading for a resolution related to interim suspension policy. The second reading will be done at the Dec. 3 meeting.

- C. Sara Brickman, Gay Awareness Week Chair, LGBTTA – *LGBTTA Constitution approval*

Ms. Brickman highlighted the changes to the SGBTA Constitution: have their elections based on academic calendar instead of the yearly calendar which will assist with budget matters, event planning and additional information regarding the academic calendar elections. The other change was to antiquated information – their office is not located in the Office of Student Life.

VII. Announcements

1. In response to a concern that Virginia has been underfunding higher education for almost 20 years, Mr. Carroll announced that SGA is organizing students, alumni, and administration to gather and spell out "OUR FUTURE?" on the Drillfield, Saturday, November 21, 11:00 a.m.. He asked members to come out and help support this effort. They need about 500 volunteers to make this work.
2. Dr. Sims announced that Monica Hunter has been appointed as the Interim Director of Student Activities.
3. Dr. Shushok expressed his regret regarding the discussion around the JSU's presentation of their resolution for membership which was echoed by Ms. McLeese. Ms. Freeman also offered her apologies noting that her comments were made in the best interest of the Commission.

VIII. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:59 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rhonda M. Rogers
Recording Secretary

Commission on Student Affairs
November 5, 2009
3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Brush Mountain Room
Squires Student Center

Present: Sandy Bass, Sara Brickman, Bruce Hayden for Tom Brown, Brandon Carroll, Kimberly Carlson, Ashley Davis, Akiko Nakamura for Laura Freeman, Rebecca French, Charisse Ghattas, Monika Gibson, Hanna Goff, Kristina Hartman, Frank Hernandez, Monica Hunter, Lydia Michailan for Monique Johnson, Brad Klein, Erin Beksel for Nathan Lavinka, Mary Ann Lewis, Anna LoMascolo, Shane McCarty, Michelle McLeese, Michael Doughty for Matt Penny, Donna Ratcliffe, Karen Eley Sanders, Robert Sebak, Sharmin Shamsalsadati, Guy Sims, Ed Spencer, Leighton Vila, Camille Waldron, Daryl Whitehurst

Absent: Kristin Carr, Rick Ferraro, Brian Golden, Shivana Handa, Frank Shushok, John Steger, Ben Wade, Nigel Wray

Guests:

I. Call to Order

Ms. McLeese, Chair, called the meeting to order at 3:33 p.m.

II. Adoption of Agenda

Motion was made to adopt the agenda as written. The motion was seconded and approved.

Ms. Mcleese reported that there are two meetings left in the semester, November 19 and December 3. Any items that need to go before University Council need to be brought to the Commission as soon as possible because any items brought to University Council take two readings.

Ms. Waldron announced that because of the Panhellenic Council calendar, she will be going out of office at the end of this semester, which will result in the office of CSA Vice Chair becoming vacant. Anyone interested should talk to her about the nominations process.

III. Guest Speakers

A. Anna LoMascolo, Co-Director of Programming , Women's Center, Susanna Rinehart, Director of Education for Diversity and Inclusion, Ennis McCrery, Graduate Student Ombudsperson, and Manuel Perez -Quinonez, Associate Dean

of the Graduate School – Campus Climate Issues, Blogging, Anonymity, and the Collegiate Times.

Ms LoMascolo reported that Monika Gibson is also a part of the group that will be participating in the discussion. This is a group who have come together from across campus: faculty, graduate, and undergraduate students, who came together to talk about safety, security and issues in regard to violence against women, but also issues that affect the safety and security of the whole university community. This group came together following the tragedy at the GLC—concern that we didn't deal with that incident as a campus community and we didn't name it as a "violence against women" even though that is what it was. Instead, it was framed as a personal tragedy to let us know that we were not in jeopardy. There was no statement made that we do not tolerate violence. Below are some items that the group has been working on:

1. The tone of the alerts that come out
2. The degree to which some of our female students do not feel safe on campus and the effect it has on their studies because they often have to be on campus late at night.

The issue today is anonymous postings in the Collegiate Times and the ways in which this allows for incivility on the internet-- a lot of violence happens online.

There is a connection between on-line anonymous, hostile comments and damage to a welcoming, inclusive, diverse community. This is an issue of concern for the entire University community. This is a concern because this is being represented in the Virginia Tech newspaper.

Technology speaking, this is easy to resolve because there are mechanisms for balances and checks to avoid this type of childish behavior and the CT does not have that at this time. This is not a censorship conversation, but in an academic institution it is a matter of accountability. The CT is reluctant to block this type of behavior because of the effect that it would have on their revenue. This is your newspaper and if the VT community should indicate that they would like to use this technology on-line with an accountability feature. Below are some thoughts on this issue:

- Misrepresentation of campus climate
- If an accountability feature is in place, those posting would think twice before they post
- CT does not allow anonymous postings to be posted in their paper, but they are worried if they allow people's accounts to be known, at some point they could get sued or be held accountable and liable for things that were said there, so they would rather not know.

- Incivility spiral – you read something like that and it makes you feel a certain way which makes you in turn act in an uncivil manner. It makes it permissible to act this way face to face.
- Good for advertising revenue and the fear of losing that revenue-- so ask advertisers to stop advertising and have a conversation to try to convince them that there is another way to get this on-line community.
- In terms of accountability, the editor is responsible for everything his/her publication puts out. They define themselves as the Virginia Tech newspaper-- isn't that a privilege and doesn't this misrepresent the University?. If they do not represent the majority or moral fiber of this University, then they should have no right to say that they are the Virginia Tech newspaper.
- Dr. Spencer noted that this is what happens when we grown up in a "Jerry Springer"/reality TV society. Tragically, what we are seeing and reading is a piece of our campus climate. Fifteen years ago the University divorced itself from the media by forming a separate corporate media corporation, the Educational Media Company at Virginia Tech (EMCVT). This includes the CT, Bugle, VTTV, WUVT, etc., so you should work through the Editor first and also possibly or subsequently with the EMVCT Board. Set up a public forum for debate so both sides can participate. If you want to handle this issue organizationally, this is the path we should take.

Ms. LoMascolo noted that they have been in conversation with Sara Mitchell, the CT Editor, and actually have set up a somewhat informal conversation where they will be inviting CSA and others, to be held on November 18, at 12 noon, in the Graduate Life Center, Room G. This will be a brown bag conversation to talk about the issues. Depending on where this goes, there is an extraordinary opportunity to begin some self-education around these questions about who we are and how we want to be. Ms. LoMascolo asked that the Commission members share this conversation with your groups, spread the word, see what they think, and bring back feedback and input to them at any time.

IV. Old Business

Policy 1025 discussion/feedback updated (Maggie Sloan)

Ms. McLeese gave an update on the status of the policy noting that the Commission needs to make a statement of support or non-support on this policy even though we don't have voting privileges for the final decision, the CEOD did vote to accept the revisions, and so have the Commission on Faculty Affairs and the Faculty Senate. The Commission on Staff Affairs did not vote because they wanted some revisions made.

The motion was made and seconded to vote to support the document for the revision of the Policy 1025 noting that the CEOD is the host commission to pass or not pass the resolution. The motion carried.

Conflict Resolution and Mediation (survey and feedback update)

At the October 1 meeting there was discussion about services being offered to faculty and staff and whether or not students would be interested in having this service as an option. A survey was sent out to the commission to respond with their feedback and thus far there have been 12 responses of support, but we need to get a sense of the rest of the Commission. Ms. McLeese asked members to go back and visit the link and fill out the survey so that the appropriate feedback can be shared with Ms. Sloan and Mr. Robinson.

CSA Membership Committee update (Kristina Hartman & Laura Freeman)

Ms. Hartman reported the Committee met once, had a good discussion, but nothing concrete. They will meet again on November 10 and hopefully have something to bring back to the Commission as a preliminary report.

V. New Business - There was no new business

VI. Announcements

- Asian American Student Union Culture Show - Where in the World is Carmen San Diego, November 7, 7:30 p.m., in the GLC auditorium
- SGA is sponsoring "30 days of Blacksburg" – November 1 – December 6. This is a facebook event in an effort to encourage students to support local venues and see what they offer. You can get a 10% discount at all of the downtown restaurants and stores just for showing your Hokie Passport.
- Maroon Five concert –November 10, 2009. Everyone is encouraged to wear maroon.
- Undergraduate Man and Woman of the Year applications are now available
- Annual funding workshops are happening this week and next week, November 2 – November 13. In order to be eligible to apply for Budget Board Funds, you must attend one of these sessions.
- BOV meetings this weekend—try and attend whatever meetings that you can.
- Beginning Sunday, November 8 – November 11, there will be a clothing sale at the Alumni Center-- up to 75% off.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned 4:57 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rhonda M. Rogers
Recording Secretary