

Student Life Committee
Vanderbilt University Senate
Report for Academic Year 2016-2017

Committee Members:

David Cliffler, chair, A&S (2017)
Brian Heuser, Peabody [Executive Committee Liaison]
Brian Bachmann, A&S (2017)
Nicole McCoin, Medicine (2017)
Debbie Rowe, Peabody (2018)
Sarah Rohde, Medicine (2018)
Jeremy Wilson, Blair (2019)
Ban Allos, Medicine (2019)
Barbara Stengel (in place of Debbie Rowe for the spring semester)

Meetings of the Student Life Committee

The Student Life Committee met four times in the Fall Semester (Sept, Oct, Nov, Dec), and three times in the spring semester in January, February, and May. The May committee meetings was to follow up on the Greek Life Task Force Report and full Senate meeting last year. Given the lateness in the spring semester of the special SLC meeting with concerned Greek Life student leadership, this report is late. Overall, the SLC member attendance at committee meetings was around 50%.

The September meeting outlined the work of the committee for the year in terms of the initial charges. The October meeting focused on a discussion on the Student Life needs in terms of a new wellness center and expansion of the PCC. The November meeting. .

Initial Charges for 2016-2017

1. Continue to monitor Greek Life taskforce:

Charge: Both the SLC and Greek Life chairs embrace the student leaders' recommendation that the students themselves provide an annual update to the Student Affairs Committee, as the burden of work is actually on the students, not the senate committee. Identify a process for students to provide the recommended annual update to the FS.

Results: An annual update meeting in May 2017 between the SLC, plus the incoming faculty senate Chair and Vice Chair, and the student leaders of the Inter-Fraternity Council (IFC); Panhellenic, National Panhellenic Council (NPC), and the new Inter-Cultural Greek Council was held. In short, the Greek Life task force report suggested a number of items, and the student leaders addressed progress on each item in turn. One key area of weakness is faculty engagement opportunities with Greek Life, this is an area that needs help from the Faculty Senate. Other areas showed significant progress including new limits on hourly obligations per week, RA training for Greek Houses, enhanced appreciation of diversity through the IGC and in general, more clarity in financial costs presented to each member, and expanded member scholarships.

2. Graduate education study group

Charge: The Graduate Education Study Group (GESG) report was the start of significant changes in graduate education, including a new dean and some SLC members, including the chair, attended one or more forums, the process of reviewing how these changes will come

about is left to future SLC committees. Review GESG report and meet with the new Dean of Graduate Studies to identify top potential charges.

Results: In the fall, the discussion focused on how the new Dean of the Graduate School was looking to bring student services typical of the BRET office to all graduate students. After brief discussions of the SLC in January along conversations between the SLC chair with the Dean of the Graduate School, and the number of new initiatives he is working to implement this spring 2017 including graduate application fees, an office of postdoctoral affairs, and joint student/faculty committee to implement additional ideas from the GESG, this charge was pushed forward to the next academic year as it was too premature to review them.

3. First year student experience

Charge: Reach out to the new Dean of the Commons to learn about her vision for the first year students in her new role. Identify and list areas of need and potential programming.

Results: The committee spent time to generate an extensive list of questions to Dean of the Commons Vanessa Beasley, which was sent to her a month in advance of her meeting with the SLC in February 2017. One identified need was increasing the ways that faculty come into the space of the residence halls. Another discussion point was how the first year commons experiences/programming translate to the new Kissam College Halls, especially with their different design. Both Dean Beasley and Dean Bandas reiterated that the availability of programming is the conversation to have, along with faculty engagement and community engagement.

4. Student Well-being and Mental Health

Charge: Increase awareness of mental health issues when considering all aspects of student life, including the new Center for Student Wellbeing. Investigate and report to the FS the issues of mental health for students at Vanderbilt.

Results:

Significant discussion in the Fall semester focused on the new Center for Student Well-being and its role in comparison to the Psychological and Counseling Center. Despite the new center, the PCC backlog continues. Significant discussions focused on the PCC, especially long-term care, as a student services' program outside of the student's personal health insurance. The ability of the PCC to provide long-term care was questioned as to why such needy students were not sent home on leave, and Dean Bandas replied that the university felt like long-term care was a retention issue. Early in term, the committee made it clear to Dean Bandas in October and November meetings, and he indicated the university was also concerned and possibly planning a review. To help further that cause, the SLC then followed up with a letter to Vice Provost Cynthia Cyrus at the end of November. The SLC Chair as well as members of the executive committee met with an external review committee for the Psychological and Counseling Center (PCC) on December 7th to help with the universities' improvement of these resources. As far as I know, the results of this external review are not known.

During these discussions, the undeniable link between student mental health and drug and alcohol abuse on campus was reinforced. Thus, the SLC committee asked to have the Dean of Students Office to present a summary of this years' Drug and Alcohol report as a special focus of the entire December SLC meeting, as it had last year to the committee. In general, slight reductions in use seemed to be indicated but levels of use/abuse were still considered very high. Debate about whether this could be better by stricter policies on campus were countered with concerns about students moving this activity off campus into less

controllable environments, with the current philosophy tilting towards regulated on-campus parties.

5. Student life needs

Charge: Identify any assistance and needs that exist for students to feel completely safe in who they are at Vanderbilt related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Identify any issues with accommodating acceptable meeting places for students to feel welcomed and safe. Reach out to Lisa (*sic*=> *Tina*) Smith and VC George Hill to discuss needs.

Results: Brief conversation with Tina Smith, now interim VC for DEI, in January indicated that their office was entirely overwhelmed at the time, and this may be something more to be pursued in the future.

Additional Items:

The SLC was asked to provide a representative on the director of campus dining search committee, and Dr. Bachmann agreed to help.

Attachments:

SLC Letter to VP Cyrus
Questions for Dean Beasley



Faculty Senate

November 28th, 2016

Vice Provost Cyrus:

First, on behalf of the Faculty Senate Standing Committee on Student Life, we thank you for your continuous service to Vanderbilt. Your presentation to the full Faculty Senate in October was tremendously useful for helping Senators understand the extensive nature of the University's wellness support services. We acknowledge the significant efforts you and your colleagues in Student Affairs make every day to support our students, and we appreciate our collaborative relationship with you.

Consonant with the Senate's priorities this year related to wellness, we are writing to you out of concern for how student mental health and wellness services are structured at Vanderbilt. While we applaud the opening of the new Center for Student Wellbeing (CSW), it is not clear to us that the relationship between that Center and the VUMC Psychological & Counseling Center (PCC) is functioning as it should. We have heard numerous reports that the PCC is overburdened with clients, that they are overly clinical in their approach to care, that their external referral practices are overly costly and bureaucratic to students, that their client confidentiality protocols are lacking, and that the referral mechanisms between the PCC and CSW are underdeveloped.

Members of this Committee have heard enough anecdotal evidence to believe that real problems may exist and should be assessed. To this end, we are strongly recommending that your office (or that of the Provost) retain external consultants to conduct a review of both the functions/ practices of the PCC and their alignment with the CSW. We make this request in the spirit of shared governance and out of a genuine concern for student wellness.

Again, thank you for your efforts and for your consideration of this request. Please let us know if you would like to discuss this matter with our Committee in person, or if we can be of any service to you in your endeavors.

Most sincerely,

David Cliffler, Chair of Student Life Committee, A&S
Brian L. Heuser, Senate Vice Chair & Committee Liaison, Peabody
Ban Allos, Medicine
Jeremy Wilson, Blair
Brian Bachmann, A&S
Nicole McCoin, Medicine
Debbie Rowe, Peabody
Sarah Rohde, Medicine

Student Life Committee
Questions for Dean Vanessa Beasley
February 24, 2017 at 3:30 pm
Stevenson Center, Room SC 7963

1. Elaborate on Vanderbilt Visions.
2. Does Visions influence the first year students' culture academically, socially, and cognitively? Is Visions really working?
3. Does communal living in the first year impact how students live subsequent years?
4. What do you perceive to be the role of faculty engagement in communal living?
5. Other than the residential faculty, how are other faculty engaged in The Commons?
6. What are your thoughts on the relationship between The Commons experiences and:
 - a. Greek life
 - b. athletes
 - c. band members
 - d. other organizations
7. Initial evaluation of cohorts of students from their first to junior years revealed that Visions and Commons was associated with a very small effect on academic achievement. Elaborate on reasons this could have occurred and how we could improve this and do it differently in the future.
8. As Vanderbilt now opens Warren and Moore Colleges, what can we do differently to try to continue this theme of academic progress from first to second year? How much of the programming from The Commons is carried into the sophomore experience? Is over-programming an issue?
9. There is a general concern of over-programming in The Commons during the first year experience. Is this really true?
10. How has first year experience impacted diversity?
11. Is time-management an issue during that first year?
12. Do you believe there's a strong intellectual presence in the first year experience?
13. Do you find that Greek recruitment and other activities impact the first year experience? Please note positive and negative aspects.
14. Is programming the first year something that we should continue into the sophomore, junior and senior year? Or is it unique to first years?