Committee: Student Life Committee

Chairs: Alissa Hare and Abby Parish

Members: Tamika Hudson, Joseph Rodgers, Sandra Rosenthal, Stacy Sherrod, Rebecca Swan, Claudine Taaffe, Lisa Thompson, Greg Walker, Michelle Grundy

EC Liaison: Ben Harris

Committee Description: To be concerned with policies relating to student matters including residential colleges, rules and discipline, student grievances, future composition of the student body, fraternities and sororities, intercollegiate athletics and club sports, intramurals, the Honor System, faculty-student relations, religious affairs, and the student health service. (Formerly known as Student Affairs.)

Committee Charges

Charge 1
- Background: The SLC is designated to hear any grievances.
- Goals: To hear student grievances as requested by the Office of the Chancellor
- Actions: No grievance panels were requested this year.
- Outcomes and/or recommendations: Continue to be available as needed.

Charge 2
- Background: Senate Task Force on Greek Life is now 5 years old and an audit is due
- Goals: Prepare a five-year update on the status of recommendations of the Greek Life report
- Actions: Committee met with Mark Bandas and Vanessa Beasley for administrative perspective. The report 5 years ago noted inequities in the Greek Life system; while the organizations have been taking steps to promote equity over the past 5 years, inequities persist, and in the summer of 2020, the Greek organizations received quite a bit of negative feedback and attention for persistent inequities in the context of broader social unrest following the killing of George Floyd. A formal process of reform is underway within the Greek Life system at this time; outside consultants have been hired, programming is ongoing, and organizations are responsible for planning for
change. Representatives from the 3 major Greek Life organizations gave a presentation at the SLC meeting. The representatives from IFC and the Panhellenic council affirmed the administrative perspective and verbalized an intent to cooperate with reform and improvement. At a later meeting, Greek Life staff provided further information about ongoing reform efforts and continued robust interest in Greek Life/rush.

- Outcomes and/or recommendations: Due to the amount of activity occurring internally in Greek Life, the committee did not conduct an external audit this year. It was suggested by the Greek Life office that it would be most useful to provide feedback and external oversight for their current reporting program. If an additional audit is considered next year, we suggest that the questions from the historic task forces may require revision in the context of current events and ongoing reforms.

Charge 3
- Background: VSG and other student groups have supported the adoption of a test bank
- Goals: Follow up with student government on the progress of implementation and faculty participation in the test preparation bank proposal.
- Actions: Co-chair Hare received an update from Tracey George and VSG vice president on the test bank. The Learning Exchange is now running on Brightspace and is taking submissions from faculty. Vanderbilt Academic Affairs Committee compiled a list of high priority courses to target for faculty participation and have reached out to the identified faculty via email.
- Outcomes and/or recommendations: Continue to meet with VSG representatives about ways to increase faculty participation. Discuss bringing a motion to the Faculty Senate to encourage faculty to contribute to make access to test banks more equitable.

Charge 4
- Background: Graduate Student Neighborhood has stalled since COVID
- Goals: Generate a progress report on Graduate Student Neighborhood including recommendations for faculty involvement
- Actions: The committee received a report from Vanessa Beasley. The Graduate Neighborhood is on pause, due to both COVID and the search for a new Vice Provost for Graduate Education and Dean of the Graduate School. After André Christie-Mizell was appointed, we reached out to him. He confirmed that the neighborhood is on hold. He looks forward to exchanging ideas with the committee when progress resumes – he will contact us.
- Outcomes and/or recommendations: We suggest contacting André Christie-Mizell in fall 2021 to introduce new leadership and remind him that we are available whenever progress on the neighborhood resumes.

Charge 5
• Background: Ongoing Student wellness needs
• Goals: Continue to assess ways that faculty can support student wellness.
• Actions: Committee members have been meeting with representatives from student orgs. We made contact with 5 student organizations, spanning from undergraduate to graduate and professional schools. We received updates on this topic from Mark Bandas and Vanessa Beasley monthly. Themes from these meetings indicate that students are fatigued but resilient. We composed and sent an email to faculty suggesting attendance accommodations for students to be able to vote in the Presidential election. We proposed a motion to the Senate acknowledging the SEC championship for the women’s soccer team. We are working with the VSG president on videos for social media that model faculty-student relations. Alissa and Abby partnered with Catherine and Rob Nelson to record a video series for faculty about supporting LGBTQ+ students during COVID. Bandas and Beasley both suggest that wellness efforts have often been reactive and question how the VU culture can be adjusted to proactively prevent mental health deterioration. We will continue following up with student orgs and considering how we can support their specific needs.
• Outcomes and/or recommendations: Continue networking with student organizations. Continue to involve G.L. Black (replacing Mark Bandas) and Vanessa Beasley in meetings.

Charge 6
• Background: Misconduct of student athletes garnered recent media attention for mishandling by the athletics department. This is a new charge for the committee that we were tasked with after the start of the academic year. There also exists a Faculty Athletics Committee within the Office of the Provost that may provide context and/or support.
• Goals: Begin a partnership with Student Athletics
• Actions: Reached out via email to Candice Storey Lee, Vice Chancellor of Athletics, to invite her to our committee meetings to discuss how we can better help support the students participating in athletics here at Vanderbilt. We were hoping to start a relationship between the faculty senate and the athletics department to see how we can work together.
• Outcomes and/or recommendations: We suggest reaching out to several people in the Athletics department in the future to see if there is interest in this partnership.

Suggestions for Future Charges/Actions

Suggestion 1
We anticipate the following charges to be important and/or the most pressing in the upcoming year
• Charge 5: Student wellness – see notes above

• Charge 2: Greek Life update – see notes above

• Charge 4: Graduate Student Neighborhood – see notes above