

Minutes of the Student Life Committee for April 7, 2015--draft

Present: Mike Benveniste, Lisa Ferrari, David Latimer, Jennifer Neighbors, Brad Reich (Chair), Dean Mike Segawa, and Lisa Fortlouis Wood

The meeting was called to order at 8 am.

Minutes: The committee deferred review of previous minutes until the next meeting.

Old Business:

No students were present, so rather than solicit student feedback, the committee began with old business. Neighbors presented her proposed response to the SLC's new charge regarding freedom of expression. Discussion ensued with positive remarks for the crafting of her proposal. The committee decided to delay action on the proposal until its next meeting.

New Business:

Wood initiated a discussion on some of the questions that might arise when fleshing out the issue of freedom of expression on campus. As an example, Wood brought up the campus-wide email from Dean Michael Benitez addressing recent anonymous biased statements made toward UPS students on the Yik Yak platform. Wood questioned the decision making process in addressing such incidents; namely, who decides whether an incident warrants a response, particularly in the case of a social media platform that extends beyond the confines of the UPS campus. Wood noted that the administration could not protect campus members from potentially harmful or biased language/actions outside the bubble of UPS, nor should it. A balance must be struck, acknowledging and interacting with the broader community.

Segawa commented that feedback from the campus regarding these issues runs the gamut. Some feel that the administration overreacts to issues like the Yik Yak incident, while others feel that the administration's response is underwhelming. Segawa said that there is no written policy on addressing such issues. In weighing a response, he considers the seriousness, proximity, and impact of a particular incident. The students are contractually obligated to abide by an integrity code, which includes a statement on freedom of expression.

Wood thought it wise to champion the principles in our integrity code; i.e., bring these policies to the forefront of discussion. In her opinion, a discussion of these principles only occurs when there is an alleged violation of the code, and a full discussion is not possible since the details of the conduct process are largely hidden for privacy reasons. Wood favored developing a series of hypothetical examples/case studies to foster dialogue between the faculty and administration about freedom of expression issues.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 am.

Respectfully submitted,
David Latimer