

## Senate Executive Committee Meeting (11/22/2022)

Attendees: Elizabeth McNie (Chair), Sarah Senk (Vice Chair), Matthew Fairbanks (Secretary), Victoria Haller (Student Rep), Frank Yip, Wil Tsai, Christine Isakson, Aziza Jackson (Director of Public Affairs and Strategic Communications), Karyn Cornell (President's Chief of Staff), Aparna Sinha, and Provost Lori Schroeder.

Absent: Ariel Setniker and Julie Simons (invited, but could not attend)

- Minutes Review and Approval
  - *Minutes from 11/15/2022 were reviewed and approved by unanimous consent after small adjustments for accuracy.*
- Discussion of DEI Issues and the Campus 'Solidarity Message'
  - McNie thanked everyone for gathering. We're here to talk about the solidarity message that recently went out campus-wide and DEI issues more generally.
  - McNie turned it over to Aziza Jackson who was the original drafter of the email message. Jackson noted that she's relatively new and has been learning about the tension on campus around events that happened last year. She said that the message wasn't specifically to address DEI generally or Title IX. She wasn't looking to do a deep dive on these issues, but to convey that campus leadership was in solidarity – a sort of 'this is who we are and who we are not' message to the campus community.
  - Jackson stated that she's aware that the message has sparked some discussion. This doesn't bother her (noting her past experience in journalism) and noted that these discussions are important for furthering this work. People are clearly passionate about the issues and care about the future of the campus.
  - Provost Schroeder also noted that Jackson was prompted by her and by Karyn Cornell to draft a communication along these lines. Erika Nelson had been in contact with the Provost about some pretty strong threats on social media directed at tutoring affinity groups. The message timing was to go out prior to a Thursday meeting of these tutoring groups. Jackson was called in, and she drafted the message.
  - Yip thanked them for giving this context. He stated that students have given feedback to him that the message seemed apropos of nothing. *Why wasn't the reason of this message clearly articulated in the message?*
  - Provost Schroeder said that they were worried about attracting attention to the targeted individuals.
  - Jackson was also against calling out a particular targeted group for the reasons the Provost mentioned. She also articulated the concern of unintentionally leaving out groups that may also feel targeted, and thus wouldn't feel supported by a more specific message.
  - Sinha said that the message was good, well-intentioned, but some detail is important when the message is received by people who have no idea about the current threats.

- Yip acknowledged wanting to keep this discussion constructive. He noted this is the first campus-wide communication on these issues in this semester. This should be more consistent, more integrated, and more effective. How do we do this?
- Jackson welcomed Yip's comments and said that she's happy to help continue the messaging on these issues and help to build a better environment.
- More discussion: There's clearly a diversity of opinion about how this should have been approached with some attendees taking issue with the campus response. Yip stated that some students have indicated to Erika Nelson that they aren't comfortable attending this focus group tutoring currently or in the future. Provost noted that this email wasn't the only measure taken, and that there was increased police presence and awareness, which Erika indicated was helpful.
- McNie noted Sinha's expertise in this area (DEI issues) and thought that incorporating hers or others expertise as we craft these communications is a good idea. We should be prepared for the next event, which is a matter of when, not if unfortunately. She also said the broad coalition signing the letter was encouraging and should continue.
- Tsai wondered about next steps. We need to set community standards and to consider who we are reaching out to? The bad actors? The people who are quiet (and not actively being anti-racist or anti-bigot)? We should keep this in mind. Also, how we give these communications teeth to encourage action?
- Sinha said we're writing to the bad actors *and* to the people who are on the sidelines *and* the people we're trying to support. She wanted to reiterate that she is so pleased that something was done despite perhaps omitting some elements.
- McNie said the feedback she's heard around the communication has been reasonably positive. Looking forward, she wonders whether some of these themes can be included in the programming for CommUNITY Day.
- Yip said that he thinks the same thing (regarding CommUNITY Day). He thinks a half day is more effective. He stated that we need to confront these bad actors and bring these issues out in the sun. Also, it's important to be reaching out to students in the form of something other than emails – town halls, office hours, etc.
- Haller offered her perspective, saying that she thought, "That was nice. Where did that come from?" when she read the message. She noted that there's a lot of things, perhaps worse than the threat that prompted this message, on campus social media that goes unaddressed. Though people can make up whatever they want on these platforms, but she thinks the serious things should likely be treated as real, because sometimes they have been. She also commented that it's something of a running joke among students about what vague campus message will come out next.
- Senk noted that whenever something like this happens, she often gets communications from students' email or from student office visits. These students feel frustrated and feel like what we've doing as an institution isn't enough. These students also state there's so many worse things on campus social media, and that they feel like they generally aren't taken seriously.
- Senk continued, saying that students who have spoken to her feel like the forums are more performative because they aren't followed by much from the student perspective.

She noted that, for instance, the Corps doesn't get typically involved with these events and issues and that's the administrative structure students are closest to.

- Fairbanks asked whether the threatened students feel supported, since that's probably the best measure of the message's success. Provost Schroeder indicated that Erika Nelson indicated that the answer was yes, particularly in regard to the additional security.
  - Some more discussion regarding the influence and influencing of social media and ideas for events to promote more positive interactions on campus.
  
  - McNie – so, next steps: She likes the idea of a 'quick response team' for the future. We should know as a campus who to gather, what the steps are, etc. There should perhaps be forums with administration and faculty with some food to drive turn out. Also, a follow-on message of solidarity should be sent, not immediately, but soon.
  - Provost Schroeder noted that figuring out where the DEI Council comes into this process is important as well.
  - Yip said that faculty have a big role to play here, and we collectively need to step up. He recounted a meeting with OCN majors wherein many of the women indicated that they think the culture hasn't really changed, maybe even worse than last year, but just gone underground. In the end, the students need to feel heard.
  - Senk wondered whether there's a way to bring some closure to the events of last year. Students don't always know the rationale of why discipline for bad actors is either nonexistent or slow. They're often told it's complicated with no further explanation of why that is the case.
  - Haller shared that the messages she saw last year – those seem like statements worthy of expulsion – not simply being removed some leadership position within the Corps.
  - Tsai noted that in many instances we simply don't have procedures and processes written down. These circumstances occur, and then our campus' tools for dealing with them are pretty ad hoc.
  - Isakson made a comparison to the Brock Turner case and the need for us to properly enforce our policies when there are infractions.
  - Yip noted the Common Read started this year handling an important topic well, and students are wondering where that went. It wasn't carried forward.
  
  - McNie thinks that a resolution should be forthcoming on desired next steps. Hopefully ready for a first reading in the December meeting.
  - Tsai thanked McNie for navigating us through this conversation. He suggested that we collaborate with ASCMA or the Diamond leadership on the resolution. Perhaps a pizza and resolution drafting event in the near future.
  - McNie thanked everyone very graciously.
- Meeting Adjourned