



State Council of  
Higher Education for Virginia

# SAC MINUTES

## Student Advisory Committee Minutes December 4, 2007 Meeting

**Members Present:** Luarnie Bermudo (ODU), Bianca Brodie (additional rep from VSU), Laura Castro (JSRCC), Todd Eley (UVA), Chris Inzirillo (CNU), Stephen Lee (substitute from Longwood), Seth Levey (W&M), Monty McGee (NSU), Dominique Price (VSU), Ryan Stamper (WCC), Virginia Taylor (VMI).

**SCHEV Staff Present:** Kathleen Kincheloe, Dan LaVista, and Kirsten Nelson.

(For brevity, after first reference, only first names may be used.)

- Kathleen Kincheloe opened the meeting by indicating that the minutes from the October 4 meeting have been posted on the SAC web page at <http://www.schev.edu/AdminFaculty/StudentAdvisoryCommittee.asp>.
- Kathleen then introduced SCHEV's Executive Director, Dan LaVista.
- Dan spoke to the SAC members about their power as a voice for the students. He explained that SAC is one of several Council advisory committees, and we rely on feedback from its members in order to effectively serve as a voice for the entire higher education system.
- Dan mentioned several SCHEV responsibilities that directly impact students, such as recent budget and development recommendations, including a \$200 million request for student financial aid. He added that Virginia is typically considered a high tuition/high aid state.
- Dan concluded with remarks about key issues in the upcoming legislative session, mentioning topics such as student privacy, campus safety, and intellectual diversity. He asked whether such issues were being discussed on the representatives' home campuses.
- Seth Levey (W&M) noted that an active contingency on his campus is trying to get a bill passed which protects intellectual diversity, but added that he personally worries about the ramifications of such legislation. Wouldn't such legislation require government officials to become overly involved on individual campuses?
- Monty McGee (NSU) says Norfolk State is searching for a balance, but he finds that faculty viewpoints can sometimes influence class discussions.
- The next item on the agenda was the election of SAC officers. Those present voted by secret ballot after re-reading the prepared statements of the 5 candidates. Laura Castro withdrew her name from the election due to the time constraints of her new position in student government at JSRCC.
- The ballots were counted following the meeting, and though the race for chair was close, Todd Eley (UVA) was elected Chair and LJ Bermudo (ODU) was elected Vice Chair.
- Following a short break to get lunch, Kirsten Nelson led a discussion about the upcoming legislative visit, and a majority of representatives expressed an interest in tying the visit to an education subcommittee meeting if at all possible.
- Representatives had a lengthy discussion to select two or three topics that interested members would address during the group's legislative visit, which is planned for February 2008. During a brainstorming session, the students suggested a number of topics that were of concern to them and ultimately chose the following as talking points they wanted to cover during their visit:

1. Higher education funding, specifically as it relates to STEM programs and faculty salaries. Several SAC representatives expressed concern that current budget cutbacks were impacting course offerings and faculty raises, both of which they felt had an adverse affect on students' educational experiences. Specifically, there were concerns about campus hiring freezes and faculty salary freezes with some students reporting their perception that faculty members are looking elsewhere for jobs.
2. Immigration issues  
Several students felt this would be an important issue during the upcoming legislative session and they felt that elected officials should at least recognize that students are informed and involved with this issue. Kirsten and Kathleen agreed that this is a hot topic and suggested that representatives should visit the Hot and Long Lists on the website for more information about bills as they are introduced. The group decided to hold a subsequent meeting once it is known where the Council falls on this issue and what bills are still being considered after Crossover.
3. Campus safety  
SAC representatives discussed their firsthand experience with the sirens and text messages that have resulted from the increased emphasis on campus safety following the Virginia Tech shooting. Their discussion focused on the importance of informing students and parents about the safety procedures in place on campus, the need for institutions to use all methods of communication to make students aware of emergency situations, and the importance of institutional mutual aid agreements with local authorities. They also discussed opt in vs. opt out methods of compiling emergency notification lists.
  - During the previous meeting, Kirsten and Kathleen had asked that all representatives speak with students on their respective campuses to brainstorm on how colleges and universities can provide important information to students without overwhelming them or inundating them with messages. Students shared their personal findings and reaffirmed their earlier decision to address campus safety with legislators.
  - Following the group discussion, SAC reps agreed that all members interested in visiting with legislators should meet again in Richmond in January. An exact date and time will be sent via email to all reps. Another meeting of the full SAC group will be held later in the spring semester.