



**Richmond College Student Government Association**

**2020-2021**

*Meeting Minutes for Tuesday, October 13, 2020*

*“To create and ensure the highest quality of life for Richmond College.”*

**I. Roll Call**

**II. Visitors**

**A. Ashleigh Brock, Assistant to the President, for the Free Expression Statement:**

1. The Office of the President hopes to provide a platform for students to comment on the draft of the Free Expression statement recently released.
2. Free Expression is about the set of guarantees that are provided by the first amendment
3. The University has formed a committee to draft an expression on how to guarantee those freedoms on campus, and have drafted a statement that is currently up for discussion by the student body.
4. The Office of the President will be reaching out to the student body in order to better gather feedback.

**5. DISCUSSION:**

- a) VP Greven: What body would be in charge of approving the statement?
  - (1) Once feedback is received, then proposed revisions will be made to the statement as necessary. Then, the president and provost will consult with the task force that drafted the statement, and then the president will approve the recommended changes.
- b) President Polcari: How is hate speech being defined? Would it be possible to provide an addendum to the statement that recommends appropriate methods of speech?

(1) The draft proposed is not a policy, but a statement of values. The Free Expression Statement can affirm positive communication, even if some abuse that power.

c) Senator Cheatham: Would providing examples of welcome speech vs. unwelcome speech undermine the concept of a free speech draft?

(1) This is a time where the University can come together and discuss why what we consider “unwelcome speech” is considered unwelcome. In doing so, we will foster empathy.

d) Senator Villagomez: What is the product that the Office of the President is looking for? Are they asking the senate to put these principles into action personally?

(1) The President’s Office wants to make sure that the student body knows that their voice is heard, and that they are able to provide feedback on the statement as drafted.

e) Senator Modi: How does this apply to university faculty, staff, and student staff? To what level will the university be able to monitor student employee speech? Also, how can we assure that free speech is safe speech. How does public discourse look on campus with this statement?

(1) The statement is meant for our community, and is consequently meant to apply to faculty, staff, and students. This takes many different forms, and impacts the entirety of campus life. It also calls us to be active members of the community, and tackle tough issues. The University has separate policies against speech that is directly harmful to historically underrepresented communities. Mrs. Brock can’t speak directly to the effect this statement may have on student employees, but she can say that it is up to the student body to say how their culture will develop over the long term.

f) VP Greven: The draft statement is excellent! The fact that in the status quo, protests have to be approved by the Student Events office 48 hours in advance is unacceptable. Where is the locus of control for that?

(1) Time, place, and manner restrictions can still be applied to protests, as student safety must be maintained above all else. If that is something that students feel strongly about, however, that is something that can fuel further discussion

g) Senator Manley: Why has this been kept as a statement, rather than a policy proposal?

(1) It can be used to inform further policies; the task force could not come to a conclusive consensus on the exact wording of a potential policy, but the statement is meant to represent an assertion of values.

h) Chairman Steinman: Responding to Mano's initial question, the conflict between hate speech and welcome speech could be ameliorated by assembling a supplemental conversation on how to use speech.

(1) General college experiences do not share skills like empathetic communication, and it would be highly edifying for the university to teach them!

### **III. President's Report**

A. As midterm season draws to a close, President Polcari wants to remind the body that sessions for the burial memorialization information sessions are ongoing; they will be held on October 20th, 12-1:30, and October 28, 4-5:30. These are strongly recommended

B. Tots will be having a Halloween event in the Eco-Corridor on October 17th, 12-2. There will be apple cider, and mingling opportunities

C. A series of 10 movie nights will be put on by CSI in the coming weeks; a sign-up sheet will be distributed shortly.

D. To work polls on election day, visit [powertothevotes.com](http://powertothevotes.com). In order to do so, you must be a registered voter in Virginia.

#### **E. QUESTIONS**

1. Senator Modi: Poll working is restricted to US citizens, but non-citizens can still volunteer in other ways

### **IV. Vice Presidents' Reports**

A. Administration

1. The campus crisis amendment will be presented in the coming weeks.
2. On Thursday at 7:00pm, there will be an RCSGA event in the Stern Plaza. It'll be an opportunity for senators to meet each other, and have some socially-distanced fun!

V. **Class Chair Reports**

VI. **Dean's Report**

A. Registration begins November 9th; students should be meeting with their advisors to discuss plans for next semester in the coming weeks.

B. Classes start the day after Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, and Spring Break will not be part of the calendar. However, the administration is working with the faculty to make an effort to lighten students' load during that time.

C. **QUESTIONS:**

a) Senator Modi: What are quarantine regulations for international students?

(1) In terms of quarantine for international students, the university is awaiting further guidance. As it stands, there may be a period of quarantine, but that is constantly changing. If a student can not return to the US in time for the next semester, the option to declare remotely is always available. However, if someone declares remotely, then their housing contract is canceled, and their housing cannot be guaranteed in the Spring

b) VP Lawrence: When we come back next semester, will we be in the red phase?

(1) This is currently undecided, and will adapt in accordance with global trends

c) Senator Villagomez: If a vaccine is released, would the university mandate that vaccination for students?

(1) This, again, is not yet decided.

d) Senator Cheatham: Regarding the vaccine, approximately  $\frac{1}{3}$  of Americans would object to taking the vaccine.

## VII. Announcements

## VIII. Open Floor

### A. Senator Geraghty and VP Patel: Africana Studies Resolution

1. Senator Geraghty and VP Patel have been exploring ways to get feedback on the Africana Studies program. A vote will be held next week, and

#### 2. DISCUSSION:

a) Senator Cheatham: How would this be funded?

(1) VP Patel: Largely through alumni donation. This may be difficult during a pandemic, but the process will take time.

(2) Speaker Mehta: As a student government, we can't control financials in any respect, but those are details that are further down the line. Our job is merely to say that this is something that ought to be done.

(3) Dean Boehman: The University budget is developed by the planning adjustments committee, and is not controlled by the student government. However, a student government resolution can help convince the faculty senate to make this issue a priority.

(4) President Polcari: A resolution helps to communicate student needs to the administration, and communicates our priorities.

#### 3. VP Lawrence: Campus Crisis Amendment

a) The administration committee has been drafted in order to help the student government better respond to sudden student concerns.

#### b) QUESTIONS:

(1) VP Greven: Would it be possible to shift this to a bylaw, rather than an amendment? Crises require us to be adaptable, and this amendment is highly specific and highly didactic in its requirements. It may be overly binding.

(a) VP Lawrence: The Campus Crisis Amendment will be introduced as a bylaw.

(2) VP Patel: The amendment is exceptional as it stands, and VP Patel is in support of it.

(3) Senator Cheatham: It seems too easy to trigger the initial process with a single senator. It is also concerning that there is no language stating when the body has to vote on a resolution.

(a) VP Lawrence: Prior to this amendment, the President could call a state of crisis at will; this is raising that bar. The limit of 20 senators was chosen arbitrarily, and can be raised. If there is an executive decision to call a vote

4. Senator Manley: Does the body have any thoughts on forming a committee regarding improving the environment on campus?

a) Senator Cheatham: A committee on this topic is unnecessary, and could be handled by student affairs.

b) Senator Levine: A sustainability committee could be highly useful; individual committees are better suited to developing individual projects.

**IX. Closed Meeting**

A. DJ AJ's top hit: Good Vibrations by the Beach Boys

**X. Adjournment**