October 2, 2007

Lindsy: Welcome to Caucus! We’ll begin with committee reports.
Franklin: I had a First Year Experience committee meeting. We had a nice presentation from the RD of Sunderland – Natalie. She’s doing all kinds of stuff for the first years. We talked about scheduling for various things, and we meet with the first year faculty and staff. They talked about how the seminars and transitions are going and how to schedule them in with the classes and make them work.
Ryan: On the Work Program Advisory Committee, we are talking about the good old “integration of the triad,” which is probably about as amorphous as it sounds. It’s a big conversation on how to get the work component better integrated with academics and whatnot. The way it’s going is, trying to get people to reflect more on how their work experience is actually affecting them while they’re working instead of waiting ‘til your senior letter to look back. I suggested using the crew meeting times, maybe once at the end of each semester, to have an hour-long meeting – some sort of debriefing thing like that. We’re thinking up some other creative things on allowing people to reflect on how their work is affecting their Warren Wilson experience.
Lindsy: Do you know if there’ll be any way for the student body population to give feedback on this?
Ryan: Oh, yeah, bring it. People have been shooting me and Christen Booth (the other representative) with ideas about some other things related to work hours for people who have a lot of external commitments. When we get those kind of comments, I can tell Ian and we’ll make time during the meeting, so if you have ideas, let me know. We could even have 15 minutes on a Caucus meeting.
Lindsy: Ok.
Ryan: And Student Trustee report: has anyone not seen one of the announcements I’ve put out on eating lunch with a trustee? Next Friday, the trustees are coming. Who are they? What are they up to? You can find out by having lunch with one of them. You’ll find out that they are not boogey men and boogey women, but they are simply awesome people. Most of them really like doing this, and I need about 25 people. I’ve got about 15 or 17 right now, so spaces are filling up quickly. It’s Friday from 12:00pm to 1:00pm, so if you have a class, email me and I can put you on standby, but most of the trustees have meetings at 1:00pm.
Candace: Are you only taking 25 people?
Ryan: If we get a lot of interest, we can pair people up. But 25 is what I’m shooting for, so email me soon.
Gretchen: I won’t be here that week – is there any other chance to meet them?
Ryan: Not that weekend, but there’ll be two other weekends during the year for faculty and staff, so maybe we could squeeze in a student.
Kathy: We’re also thinking about having a reception at one of the residence halls and inviting students to host that so they can meet with the trustees, and we’re thinking about that for the spring. We don’t have detailed plans yet.
Candace: Student Life committee met. We created a set of sanctions for people who violate the smoking policy, although keeping the smoking policy in check will be more dependant on verbal warnings. Someone would have to be a pretty serious violator to get sanctioned.
Kathy: And this is a recommendation – Student Life was asked to come up with this when they drafted the smoking policy. Basically, for our first reported violation, you get a warning and you meet with someone to talk about the policy and resources for quitting. A second violation would mean completing an online program about tobacco and secondhand smoke. We’re going to test that – there’re students who are going to look at that and make sure it’s a good resource. A third violation would involve participation in a restorative justice process, which is basically sitting down and talking with the people who feel that they have been inconvenienced or affected by the action.

Candace: We’re going to bring that here to vote on eventually. It’s still in the works.

Paige: Is this to be installed next semester?

Candace: Yes, if it passes.

Clancy: The Constitutional Review committee met. We talked about mainly the attendance policy and voting membership. We were talking about, starting next semester, that every student on campus is a voting member at the beginning of the semester, and if you miss three consecutive meetings or a total of five throughout the semester, you lose your voting membership. Then that could be reinstated by, instead of going to three consecutive meetings, going to three out of five meetings.

Candace: We also talked about exceptions – if people have substantial reasons why they couldn’t come to a number of meetings, like for training or having to go home, we would make allowances for that.

Emily: So, if you lost your voting right one semester, would that be reset the next semester?

Candace: Yeah.

Renée: But if everyone is a voting member for the first three meetings, then we won’t have quorum for those meetings, since, most likely, most of the school won’t be there.

Candace: I guess we’ll have to think out the details. Thank you for bringing that up.

Kathy: You can set your own quorum if you’re not following Robert’s rules. You can decide what’s quorum. But that’s a good point.

Paige: Are we going to try to find a bigger space, assuming that, since we’re all going to be voting members, we might have more people? That’s part of the student space issue.

Lindsay: We’ll have to think about that.

Chris: Will voting be done in a similar situation like this, at Caucus meetings, if there are 300 people coming to a Caucus meeting? Or would it be done online, or…

Candace: Gosh, I can’t even imagine a Caucus meeting with 300 people at it.

Lindsay: One of the things we were talking about is having some kind of online poll, and if the online poll seems like a lot of people are leaning one way and the Caucus group seems like they’re leaning another way, or we feel like there’s just going to be too polarized, we wanted to bring it to the student body and like, sit outside with tables to do elections. But we’re still thinking about it.

Ben: Dining Services committee talked about how they run it, how they try to do better than a lot of other colleges here…

Lindsay: We brought up the issue that a lot of people feel that they should be able to get all of the meals that they pay for, whether by bringing guests or having one week flow into the next, and part of the reason why we can’t do that is because we’re only paying $2 for our meals. They have to count on the fact that some people aren’t going to come, or meals would cost more. It helps a lot that we have student labor because we don’t have to pay benefits, but it’s still difficult.
Ben: We need more people there, too. And we need more people to come to the meeting.

Lindsay: We also talked a little bit about the idea of having a brunch instead of breakfast and lunch on Sundays, but we need to talk it over with Kathy first.

Franklin: Apparently, we’re one of the last schools in the country to serve 21 meals a week. Most of them practically shut down on the weekend.

Kathy: This isn’t really a committee report, but this is an issue that came up at Staff Forum that I think students should be aware of. It wouldn’t necessarily come through Caucus. There’s been a new policy proposed by employees that has to do with consensual relationships faculty/staff/volunteers/contractors and students. Our current policy is that romantic or sexual relationships are not permitted under conditions where the staff/faculty member has some kind of power differential with the student, for instance, a professor teaching the student’s class, a couch, a supervisor, a mentor, etc. It’s considered that it’s very difficult to have a consensual relationship when there’s a power imbalance in that way. The new proposal is that relationships of a romantic or sexual nature would not be permitted ever, regardless of whether or not you have contact with that person in the work setting. So that’s what Staff Forum is discussing. Because it’s an employee policy, it doesn’t come to Caucus for approval, but I thought you should know about it, because it’s something that impacts students, and I think it’s important to have your feedback.

Emily: Would the employee policy cover RD’s and RA’s?

Kathy: At this point, the way the new policy is written is that RD’s and RA’s would still be under the old policy. That was actually brought up at Staff Forum – a couple of people thought that RD’s should be covered under the new policy as well.

Ryan C.: What are some of the reasons for this prohibition?

Kathy: The reasons, as they were expressed, were that, even if you aren’t over direct supervision of someone, there might be a perceived power differential where the student might not feel that they have a free choice in the relationship.

Franklin: How all-encompassing is this policy going to be? Like, I’m a student manager in the dining hall. I don’t work for the college, but I supervise students on the dining work crew. Would I be included in that policy?

Kathy: At this point, it wouldn’t apply to student employees. I think it would be the same as with RA’s and RD’s.

Candace: What would the consequences be?

Kathy: The employee would be in the position of ending the relationship or leaving the college. There was a question asked about parody – if the relationship was not permitted, would there be sanctions for the student as well? At this point, we haven’t done anything with that – there wasn’t an intention to do that, but it might be called for if this comes into play. There’s going to be discussion and it will come to a vote at Staff Forum, but I thought it was important for students to be aware that this was happening.

Renee: What is someone comes in and they’re married to a faculty member?

Kathy: That would be an acceptation. There’s a separate policy for that.

Ryan: What is the best venue to voice if you have opinions?

Kathy: You could email the Staff Forum leadership and tell them, or if Caucus wants to put something forward, the co-conveners could report that at the meeting.
Lindsy: If you want, we could have another discussion about this next week, and then we can give them our comments before they meet.

Kathy: That would be the best way.

Lindsy: So we’ll do that. Alright, we have three new voting members to vote in – Todd, Liz, and Gideon.

(vote taken – yays have it, no nays, no abstentions.)

Lindsy: Alright, next we have Dan Seeger.

Dan: Hi. I’m Dan Seeger – I’m the new director of Student Activities... I was asked to talk a little bit about what our approach is going to be out of Student Activities and Sage Café… In terms of what we’re doing with Student Activities, a lot of what we’re trying to do is to maintain the vision that has been part of Student Activities for an awful long time, which is to make sure that we’re providing a pretty vibrant group of programming, a diverse slate of programming, doing the best we can to be responsive to students who come down and say, “Hey, listen, I found this band that I think should play, I this speaker who I think would be great, I don’t think we’re doing enough of this, that, or the other thing,” and for us to work with those students and the very strong crew that we have in the office to make some of those ideas a reality. A lot of the best programming that we’ve had this year so far was just initiated by someone walking through our door, which is just down the hall past the post office. Additionally, one of the things that we’re really putting a lot of effort into this year is trying to make sure that things are not over-programmed, and that we don’t have programs of a very similar nature competing for the same audience at the same time. Additionally, I’m the crew supervisor for Safe Café and, by extension, the baking crew. One of the things we’re doing this that – currently, we’re in the process of trying to assemble a committee that can come together and put together some real, good suggestions for how we can improve Sage Café. As you might know, the Café is not really operating as it’s supposed to be in terms of having all its licenses to serve food… We also have some real capacity issues – our current approved capacity is only 35 people. We’ve been talking to a lot of people preliminarily about what options we have. So if there’s anything that anyone wants to know or to let me know, I’d be glad to hear it.

Ryan: Have you ever thought of, like – we have this board down here that’s broken up by day, and then we have that new board outside Gladfelter that’s just a wall of… stuff. I can’t make sense of it ever, and I feel like advertising and getting the word out is always a big obstacle.

Dan: I sort of agree with you. And one of the things that we’ve talked about lately in Student Activities is the difference between week one when we put up flyers, as opposed to now. Quite understandably, even on this board, it’s really easy for things to get lost, even if everything up there isn’t outdated. We’ve been talking about ways to still let these things be very free and flowing, but still maximize the capability that everyone has to actually reach an audience. It might make sense to do something like this board – it might make sense to try and find a way to simply do a “here’s what’s going on today” kind of board. That would be the place to do a more streamlined board.

Geoffrey: Last year, someone actually came around and went through the boards like once or twice a week and took down everything that was obsolete, rearranged everything that still applied, and put it back up there one layer of paper deep. That was very helpful.

Allison: It was Heavy Duty.
Dan: We’re supposed to be doing that too. I’ll offer a reminder.

Paige: Maybe a section of each board could be for general flyers, and then part of it could be for things that are happening that day.

Dan: Yeah, that would also make it very easy to know what can be taken down everyday. I have crew on duty pretty much from the morning on, so it would be a very easy project. I appreciate that vote of confidence.

Chis: And friend and I were wondering if it would be possible to open up Safe’s brick oven and have a night when the oven is going – I know a lot of people on campus who like to bake bread, and we were thinking that would be an awesome night activity.

Dan: That’s a great idea.

Allison: Going back to the bulletin boards – the daily thing? Very cool. I was also wondering if we could have something for things that happen every week. Like, I’m on Spanish crew, and every week we show a movie and we have a conversation table.

Dan: The other thing I’d really like to do is connect with all of the groups who are doing weekly movies and put it all together so students can see what their movie options are for the week all at the same place.

Candace: It sounds like there’s a lot of different sections that need to be on the boards, so maybe if we encouraged shrinking flyers to half of a page, it would save paper and also save space.

Dan: That’s a very good idea. I think that would be very workable as long as we all tried to work together to make sure that everyone is doing that so that a few little flyers don’t get lost in a sea of regular papers.

Lindsy: Alright, thank you Dan for coming in and talking to us, and thank you all for coming. We’ll stick around for a while if you have any questions or comments, and you can come in anytime during the week. We’re see you all next Tuesday.

Ended 7:20pm