

## Faculty Senate

### Year End Committee Report 2021-2022

**Committee:** Student Life

**Chair(s):** Sandra Rosenthal, Alissa Hare

**Members:** Ryan Belcher, Christian Ketel, Jeremy Payne, Amanda Satterthwaite, Stacy Sherrod, Claudine Taafe, Julie Vernon, Lisa Thompson, Vanessa Beasley, and GL Black.

**EC Liaison:** Ben Harris

**Standing Charge:** To be concerned with policies relating to student matters including residential colleges, rules and discipline, future composition of the student body, fraternities and sororities, intercollegiate athletics and club sports, intramurals, the Honor System, faculty-student relations, religious affairs, and the student health service.

#### Focused Charges for this Academic Year

1. Assess standing charges to be certain that the Faculty Senate is engaged in providing overview of undergraduate, graduate and professional student life in both VU and VUMC. Bring any proposed changes forward in the form of the resolution during a 2022 meeting of the Senate.
  - **Actions:** Throughout the year, members of the SLC met with various student groups on campus to understand the needs and issues that they were facing. In addition to the International Student Council, the Graduate Student Council and the Vanderbilt Student Government (see item 3 below), the SLC was contacted by and met with student groups interested in Divestment from fossil fuels on campus. In December, the SLC met with student Divestment Movement groups (DoresDivest and DivestVU) along with several faculty members who supported the movement to urge the administration to divest from fossil fuel companies. The SLC had been asked by this student group to support their motion in the Faculty Senate and while the SLC did not fully support the notion of a student-led motion to be brought to the full Faculty Senate, the committee provided a forum for the student groups to find like-minded faculty members. Almost 35 faculty and students were in attendance for this meeting. By the end of the meeting, several of the guest faculty spoke up in support of discussing a motion in the Faculty Senate.
  - **Outcomes:** The SLC decided the best opportunity to discuss the topic was in the closed Senators-only Faculty Senate Meeting. During this January meeting of the Faculty Senate, Sandy Rosenthal spoke about the topic and there was a general agreement that this topic should be discussed further by Faculty Senators. The Executive Committee of

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the Faculty Senate moved this agenda item into an ad hoc committee of Faculty Senators to deal with the question of the Faculty Senate's role in this movement as it did not fit with the goals of the SLC.

- Recommendations: The SLC should continue to meet with student groups on campus to better understand the issues they face and the topics that are important to them. Continuing to connect and meet with these student groups provide many of the topics discussed or agenda items in the SLC monthly meetings.
2. Develop charges related to Mental Health and Wellbeing of the student population. Bring specific recommendations to the Faculty Senate in the form of a resolution.
- Actions: Student mental health across the whole campus (undergrad and grad) was a critical topic for the SLC this year. The SLC focused on developing a training program with Student Life for students in distress and how to identify and help those students. The committee decided to help organize and promote a Gatekeeper training program. This pilot program was envisioned to target and train those on campus who come into contact with many undergrads and graduate students and was run by the UCC and the Student Care Network on campus. The initial Gatekeeper trainees on campus would be graduate teaching assistants and other faculty and staff who regularly see and interact with students on a weekly basis. Training gatekeepers would identify problems before professors may see any problems, could show the trainees issues with their own mental health, and provide them with the information to help their peers in distress. In January, Sandy Rosenthal as co-chair of this committee also reached out to Deans in Engineering, Basic Sciences and in Peabody to help raise awareness of this program. She also presented this program to all of the A&S Department Chairs in January and announced this pilot program during the February Faculty Senate Meeting.
  - Outcomes: In January, the first Gatekeeper training was held in the Chemistry Department for all graduate Teaching Assistants and other graduate students. It covered all the ways that the student care network can support all students. It also showed how to identify, and handle student in mental distress at all levels. It also provided take away materials for dealing with possibly suicidal students. 45 TAs and faculty were in attendance at the first meeting. Since then, due to the committee's work on promoting this program across campus, several different programs across several colleges have reached out to organize training.
  - Recommendations: Given the importance of this topic and the net benefit for our community, the SLC recommends that this Gatekeeper training be provided for the members of the Faculty Senate and the SLC continue to promote this program.
3. Collaborate with Vanderbilt Student Government to promote partnering, cooperation, and greater understanding of both Faculty and Student-oriented Shared Governance at Vanderbilt.
- Actions: During the December meeting, members of the Vanderbilt Student Government discussed partnership ideas between the SLC and VSG. The VSG asked for help promoting their thrift shop and permanent food pantry in Rand. Additionally, a permanent resource guide for students was also discussed. VSG is currently developing a guide to many resources on campus that students forget/don't

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know are available to them. The guide is not yet finished but during our discussion SLC members suggested that it be posted on the Learning Exchange on Brightspace so that it is easily accessible to all students.

- **Outcomes:** During the February Faculty Senate Meeting to all Senators and all faculty in attendance, the chairs of the SLC promoted the VSG thrift shop and food pantry. Several faculty members reached out to the chairs about information and VSG saw an increase in donations.
  - **Recommendations:** SLC should continue to meet regularly (1-2 times a semester) with VSG to help them with outreach and projects that they are focused on. Additionally, the future SLC should discuss finalizing the Resource Guide and uploading it to Learning Exchange on Brightspace. They can reach out to Tracey George for help with the Learning Exchange.
4. Recommend the establishment of specific formal relationships that would enable more direct faculty input into Student Affairs in both VU and VUMC.
- **Actions:** For each of our general SLC meetings, the committee invited Vice Provost Vanessa Beasley and Associate Provost and Dean of Student G.L. Black to highlight issues and provide context to what the SLC members were observing on campus.
  - **Outcomes:** These guests of the committee were a vital part to the committee's work this year. They provided guidance and information that allowed the committee to focus on projects that would be attainable, as well as most important to the student body.
  - **Recommendations:** It is recommended that the future committee ask Vanessa Beasley and G.L. Black to attend future meetings, as their schedule allows.

### **Suggestions for Future Charges/Actions**

- 1.
- Student Wellness will be an ongoing issue for students on campus. With the interruption of normal campus life due to COVID receding, students are having/will have trouble adjusting to new version of campus life. As noted by President Biden in the State of the Union Address, there is a surge in anxiety and depression, particularly amongst younger people. We will be welcoming many of those students as Freshmen next fall, and we have to be prepared to meet their needs.