

Senate Committee on Environments, Quality of Life, and Disability Issues
Minutes of Meeting, October 7th, 2009

Present: Dion Pincus (Chair), Pete Mauro (Secretary), Alicia Sinclair, Carol Soto, Patricia Spradley, Mel Rodriguez (Environmental Health and Safety liaison), Diane Call (President's designee), Esther Lee (student), Leen Feliciano (student)

Absent: Cristina Suzuki, Steering Committee designee

The meeting began at 1:00 pm

Item #1: Approval of minutes of prior meeting.

The Committee voted to approve the minutes of the September 17th, 2009 meeting.

Item #2: Election of Officers.

Pete Mauro was nominated for Secretary; the vote was unanimous: Approved.
Dion Pincus was nominated for Chair; the vote was unanimous: Approved.

Item #3: Date for next meeting.

The next meeting date was set for Wednesday, October 21 at 1:00 pm in room L-118.

Item #4: Discussion and review of charge from Senate Steering Committee

Review of Charge; review of 08-09 Annual Report.

Dion Pincus reviewed the charge on the proposed smoking ban on campus. He distributed and reviewed all relevant documents, past and present, including e-mails exchanges between Emily Tai, President Marti, and Professor Brozinsky regarding concerns about smoking on campus. These e-mails served to give the Committee a general framework in which to review the issue.

He then went on to review relevant excerpts from the 2008-09 Annual Report to the Senate drafted by last year's Committee.

Review of KCC's smoking policy.

Dion Pincus continued the review of the issue by going over Kingsborough Community College's draft policy on smoking, as well as CUNY's more general "official" policy on campus smoking, which was drafted in 1994. In general, the KCC draft policy takes the following position:

- Smoking "ban" within 25 ft. of all building entrances, doorways, vents, windows, loading docks, bus stops, etc.
- Posting clear signage at these locations advising people of the policy.
- Designated smoking areas at strategic locations around campus.
- Posting signage at these smoking areas advising smokers that they can smoke at these locations; however, signage also carrying the warning label from the Surgeon General.

The KCC policy was stripped of any disciplinary measures for non compliance; however as part of their daily rounds, Public Safety officers ask those smoking at smoke free zones to observe the rule. Additionally, it had been found that members of the campus community people have taken it upon themselves to ask smokers to observe the policy, and so far smokers have obliged. Finally, prior to the KCC policy being implemented, an informational campaign was executed, involving temporary signage at all the proposed smoke free zones (“Smoke Free Zones are Coming!”), and by using email, electronic bulletin boards and word of mouth. This was tied in with a Smoking Cessation information and campaign.

Committee consensus: Review of KCC’s draft policy, while not accepted wholesale by the Committee, was deemed serviceable as a framework for possible policy recommendations.

Review of CUNY policy on smoking.

Review of the CUNY policy shows it is explicit in its ban on smoking in the interior of buildings; however, whether implicit or not, there is no language pertaining to a ban of smoking on grounds exterior to campus buildings and facilities. The Committee’s assessment is that enforcement of policy concerning areas other than the interior of buildings has largely been left to individual campuses.

Review of campus concerns.

Dion Pincus continued the review with discussion of Professor Brozinsky’s concerns, as expressed through the QCC Community Dialogue, which provide background for consideration of the issue of QCC policy on smoking. The Committee concurred with Prof. Brozinsky’s suggestion that a campus-wide survey be conducted in order to gauge stakeholder/college community opinions relevant to smoking on campus.

Finally, Dion Pincus reviewed opinions and concerns held by Provost Call, President Marti, and Professor Tai regarding a recommendation to the Academic Senate on a campus smoking policy. It was noted that President Marti suggested that governance is the appropriate venue to review and recommend action on this issue, as opposed to the issuance of a direct executive order. Other concerns raised by Provost Call related to the enforceability of any smoking ban. Professor Tai’s hope that the Committee might have something to present, in the form of a report or actual recommendation, in time for the November 11th meeting of the Academic Senate was duly noted.

Committee discussion.

A group discussion of the issue ensued. The discussion revolved around the nature of any policy that might be adopted, as well as the enforceability of that policy. It was agreed that any policy which was to be initiated would have to be a community effort, and not simply a mandate from the Committee. As such, the consideration of any such policy, as well as of any instruments required for its consideration (i.e., a survey) ought to be jointly conducted by the Committee, in concert with Student Government and the Academic Senate. The entire Committee, as well as Provost Call, Mr. Rodriguez, and the two student representatives concurred on this general point.

Aspects of a campus policy entailing restrictions on smoking, as well as the implementation of such, were discussed. These included creation and posting of signage, whether it was prudent to have

designated smoking areas, and the need for a campaign to increase community awareness on the dangers of smoking.

Committee consensus: While a smoking “ban” on campus is still an alternative under consideration, it was deemed a likelier path of pursuit to consider a series of informally “enforced” restrictions, combined with 1) a campaign to educate the college community on the dangers of smoking, 2) offering no-smoking related educational activities, and 3) the offering of smoking cessation/intervention opportunities. Such informal restrictions, as well as supporting activities might include:

- A campus community-managed "ban" on smoking within 25 feet of doorways/entranceways of buildings;
- Using digital signage, written in courteous language, to reinforce the no-smoking message;
- Posting signage, written in courteous language, to be placed by entranceways/doorways;
- Initiating a collaborative "education campaign" with Student Government, Health Services, as well as the academic departments and learning academies in which activities such as campus Smoke-Out Days can promote better health through non-smoking, encourage smoking cessation, and remind the college community of the doorway/entranceway policy.
 - Activities could cull from, and integrate with, a variety of campus curricular resources, esp. the **learning academies**, which might consider utilizing no-smoking as a cross-academy theme with which to contribute to the community effort, i.e., presenting information on the health risks and concerns (ED/Health Sci); the business/economics of “Big Tobacco” (Bu); the biology and chemistry of addiction (STEM); the psychology/sociology of smoking (LA); music, dance, art, prose, poetry or theatre pieces focused on addressing the culture of smoking/non-smoking (VAPA); foreign language translations of signage into Spanish, French, Arabic, Chinese, Korean, etc (LA).

Item #5: Prioritize concerns and outline a timeline for information gathering, submitting a report to the Senate Steering Committee, and submitting a recommendation to the Academic Senate

The Committee concluded that while a progress report on the measures under consideration concerning a non-smoking policy on campus was important to forward to the Academic Senate and the Steering Committee expediently in order to keep the college community informed, drafting an actual recommendation for a non-smoking policy to the Academic Senate in time for its November 11th meeting was not the best way to manage what has become a “hot topic”.

On a campus with more than 16,000 stakeholders – smokers and non-smokers alike – who would be effected by any policy implemented on this issue, the Committee would like to be able to review evidentiary data on stakeholder’s opinions by constructing and conducting a survey of students, faculty, and administrative and support staff. The Committee would like to be able to present a draft of survey questions to the Academic Senate for its November 11th meeting and then ask for the expertise of the Senators to assist the Committee with the survey’s implementation by providing feedback on best practices for the construct and deployment of this survey.

It was decided that the Committee would reconvene in 2 weeks' time to assemble its sampling of draft survey questions, and to discuss progress made by faculty and student Committee members and liaisons with Student Government and academic departments to contribute toward an educational campaign.

Committee consensus: To present the Academic Senate and the Steering Committee with a progress report and a draft of survey questions for its November 11th meeting, requesting assistance from the Senate on how to best deliver the survey. Simultaneously, the Committee will move forward with detailing the mechanics for conducting an educational campaign that engages students/Student Government, Health Services, academic departments and learning academies. The Committee will continue to move forward with discussion on issues raised by a non-smoking policy, but will await information from the survey before crafting a policy or forwarding a formal recommendation to the Academic Senate.

Item #6: Sub-committee assignments

There are several other issues on campus that require the Committee's attention this year. Provost Call suggested that the Committee reach out to groups and individuals who are already working on these issues to best gather information on them. These issues include parking, facilities infrastructure, construction/renovation, campus safety/security, health & environmental issues, sustainability, and disability issues.

Provost Call then offered a brief update on various other campus issues. Among these was a report on the elevator in the Science Building, which broke down on Monday and is thus causing problems with access to the 3rd and 4th floors of that building. It will be fixed by next Monday. She also mentioned plans to construct a new cafeteria structure in the courtyard of the Science Building. Finally, she addressed the most recent campus security report. She related that the uptick in statistical crime at QCC was in part due to a number of factors including nomenclature of crime categories, and the fact that crimes committed on streets adjacent to the campus were counted as QCC statistics, as were incidents that might have occurred off campus but subsequently spilled onto campus.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Pete Mauro, Secretary

Minutes Approved: 10/21/09