

College Council on Community Policy

Meeting Minutes March 1, 2013

Members Present: Carla Cooke, Ashavan Doyon, Beth Gillespie, Ana Gorman, Stacie Hagenbaugh (chair), Susan Levin, Irene Rodriguez Martin, Kristen Miao, Samuel Masinter, Donna Safford, Vera Shevzov, Laura Smiarowski, Barbara Williams, Sherry Wingfield, Pamela Nolan Young

The meeting began at 12:10 p.m. Chair Stacie Hagenbaugh presented further updates on the Political and Campaign Activities Policy review process.

There was a conference call with an attorney from the firm retained by the college, and the investigative subcommittee has met this week to discuss the findings. Stacie indicated that the next meeting will be to review a draft of the revisions to the college's policy.

It appears that Smith's current policy isn't that far off the mark. It must be made clear that Smith spaces are available within reason, and may be rented subject to the standard rental fees. Anyone can rent Smith facilities pursuant to availability and scheduling constraints. It's likely that the "non-profit rate" will be charged in these cases. A more specific policy is appropriate for guest speakers of student organizations, which do have college funding; they may invite political speakers for educational purposes, but the visit may not be a political campaign event—no rallies, stump speeches, or support solicitations are permitted. College funds may not be used for in-kind donations, e.g., students may not hold a dinner for political speakers. Laura Smiarowski said there would likely be disclaimers included in online and printed material, such as "these opinions do not represent the opinions of Smith College" and "Smith College does not endorse this campaign."

Vera Shevzov said that a number of candidates have come to campus only in unopposed campaigns. Stacie brought up the point that colleges sometimes host primary debates; this has not come up for Smith. Sam Masinter indicated that different parties (Democrat, Republican) can be hosted; it's not required that both be invited by student groups. Laura also stated that candidates are aware of the ethics rules and might say something like, "Thank you, but I cannot accept this tee shirt" so that they will not be breaking campaign laws.

Susan Levin expressed concern that the “educational purposes” clause does not sound sufficiently precise, and asked if other campuses had policy examples that were more precise. Stacie responded that although the intention was that the Smith policy would be brief, this may not be possible. Other colleges (Brown, Dartmouth) have specific sections on campus appearances by candidates, chosen for reasons other than running for office, that create a non-partisan atmosphere. Pamela Nolan Young said that “educational purposes” is a legal term that has been defined, and Sam added that the candidate won’t want to break the rules, in any case. Susan wondered whether there was some kind of back story to prompt the policy sections mentioned above, and Stacie speculated that these campuses simply have a politically engaged student population, and candidates are familiar with how they should behave. There will be specific procedures regarding bringing speakers onto campus, and there will be staff assistance for student groups. Laura said that Tamra Bates, Director of the Office of Student Engagement, will make the policy part of orientation for student organizations. Stacie said that Tamra is on the subcommittee, and when any student org reserves space, she meets with them; at this point she would share the policy with them.

Kristen Maio asked if student groups can go to other offices and departments to request funding beyond what they have as student orgs. Ashavan Doyon said there would be no speaker fees for politically related guests. Kristen asked about funds for food and advertising on campus. Stacie responded that it would be reasonable to use college funding to advertise an event, but having a dinner at the Campus Center would be considered an in-kind contribution in support of the candidate, and it would not be allowed. Carla Cooke asked if the student-requested space reservation would be considered an in-kind donation, since the speaker would otherwise need to rent space on campus. She was assured that if the reservation is for a student group for educational purposes, the guest would not have to pay rent and it would not be an inappropriate contribution.

The meeting ended at 12:27 p.m.

Next Meeting: Friday, April 5, 2013, at noon (Campus Center 103/104)

Minutes respectfully submitted by Carla Cooke and Sherry Wingfield