

DRAFT

**Admission and Recruitment Committee  
Faculty Senate, University of the District of Columbia**

**Special Call Meeting**

**Minutes for May, 2013**

The meeting was opened at 11:10 a.m. by Dr. B. Michelle Harris, Chairperson of the UDC Faculty Senate Admission and Retention Committee. The meeting was held in Building 44, Room 212.

The meeting was attended by Ms. Kimberly Pennamon, Dr. Valerie Epps Ms. Sandra Carter (all three of the Division of Student Affairs), Dr. Cherie Ann Turpin (Faculty Senator), Dr. xxx Khatri (Faculty Senator), Dr. xx Elhelu, Professor Edward S. Jones (Faculty Senator), Dr. Elsie Williams, Professor Brenda Brown (Faculty Senator), Dr. Virginia Howard, Dr. Wilmer Johnson (President of the Faculty Association), Dr. B. Michelle Harris (Faculty Senator and Chairperson of the Admission and Retention Committee), Ms Stacey xxxxx and Ms. Xxx (both of the Office of the General Counsel), Mr. xxx Pooda (Immediate Past Student Trustee), and several UDC Flagship students: Ian xxx, Nikita xxx, Nova Coston, xxx, xxx, xxx, xxx, xxxxxx, xxxxx, and xxxxxx.

**SUMMARY:** Faculty and students expressed concern that the process for the election of Student Trustee was flawed. One point that needs to be explored is lack of representation by regular faculty, including in serving as Chairperson for the election of Student Trustee. Faculty questioned if Ms. Melba Broome is faculty or an administrator. Steps will be taken to reverse what is perceived as disenfranchisement of undergraduate students (Flagship and Community College) who opined that they did not get adequate support from Student Affairs, beginning with the timing of campaigning right after Spring Break, to being required to campaign on Friday and Saturday when most undergraduate students are not on campus. Problems with on-line voting were discussed. Faculty expressed concern that failure of Student Affairs to fully engage faculty when making changes to documents for such an important student position resulted in faculty's not being prepared to support undergraduate students adequately throughout the process. Students were admonished by faculty to take back control of their Civil Rights through anticipating barriers that might arise before and during student elections. General Counsel has agreed to provide faculty and students with documents related to elections for Student Trustee. Students will take action to collect signatures on a petition or two related to the office of Student Trustee. A request will be made to the Chairperson of the Faculty Senate to allow a student to speak for fewer than five minutes regarding the election for Student Trustee. Students reported that seeing faculty support them has ignited hope for their future at the University of the District of Columbia.

The meeting began with Ms. Pennamon's discussing the procedures for the election of Student Representative to the Board of Trustees. She admonished the Chairperson of the Admission and Retention Committee to "engage professionals before engaging students." When asked to clarify this statement, Ms. Pennamon indicated that she meant professional as "a philosophy" and a state of mind.

Ms. Pennamon stated that the elections procedures are based on documentation and that there is no deviation from policy unless approved by the Board of Trustees. She noted that this document was reviewed by the Office of General Counsel and referenced the **DCMR**.

Ms. Pennamon noted that elections must be held before May 15 of every year. She attempted to assure those present at this meeting that the “timeline was followed” and that election communication for Student Trustee was posted to Facebook, other social networking sites, Grades First. She then discussed the process of application for this position, including the collection of signatures on a petition page. She added that there has been a great deal of “misinformation.”

Ms. Pennamon continued by discussing eligibility of student candidates. She noted that Student Accounts must certify that the student candidate has a zero balance or is current in tuition payment. In addition the Division of Academic Affairs checks that the student is eligible academically. For the position of Student Trustee member, a criminal background check is conducted. All signatures on the petitions are verified to assure that all who signed are currently enrolled at the University.

Ms. Pennamon added that a delay in verification of names on the petition occurred due to the Institution of Planning (sic) and that the result was that Student Affairs was “pushed behind in verifying signatures” on the petitions.

[Two representatives from the Office of General Council arrived per invitation of Ms. Pennamon. Dr. Valerie Epps, Vice President of Student Affairs, also attended this meeting per invitation of Ms. Pennamon.]

One of the General Counsel representatives added, “No, you cannot push the deadline back.”

Ms. Pennamon continued explaining the procedures for the election. She noted that the announcement went out on March 15. She added that verification took place March 27 to April 3. Candidate orientation took place on April 4. Student candidates could then campaign April 4 to April 8. Voting was scheduled April 8-9. The swearing in took place on May 2.

It was stated that a Law School student served as Student Trustee in the past. Faculty asked Student Affairs the name of the Law School student who served as Student Trustee in the past and the year. Neither Ms. Pennamon nor Dr. Epps had this information at the moment. It was noted later by Ms. Saundra Carter that Law School students had run for the office in the past but did not win.

Dr. Epps stated that she did not want to disenfranchise Law School or Community College students by not supporting them in running for the Student Trustee position. Faculty responded by noting that it is not the intent of faculty to disallow Community College to run for this office. The problem faculty have is when students of the Law School or graduate school students run to hold this position.

## DRAFT

Dr. Khatri asked Student Affairs if per the Master Agreement, the Law School has its own charter. He noted that because of this separation of governance, the appeal to the Faculty Senate regarding a Law School faculty issue was denied.

Ms. Pennamon stated throughout today's meeting that she would request that General Counsel provide to faculty documents related to eligibility and elections for Student Trustee.

Dr. Turpin asked Student Affairs a series of questions to determine "who is over what" regarding student services for Law School students versus non-Law School students. She also asked, "What do you deal with?" Ms. Pennamon's list included the following: Disabilities, Career Services, Financial Aid, Work Study, Counseling Services, Health Insurance, Student Organizations. She stated that "Anne Marie" at the Law School handles some of these functions for Law School students. She added that there are some equivalency at the Community College and at the Law School for various student services.

Dr. Khatri asked Dr. Epps, "Does your office admit Law School students? Do you keep records for Law School students in your database?"

Dr. Epps responded that Student Affairs keeps some, but not all, Law School students' records in their database.

Dr. Khatri asked, "Do you have the same database as Law School?"

Ms. Pennamon answered, "No."

Dr. Khatri inquired about who handles financial aid for Law School students.

Ms. Pennamon responded that it is the Main Office that handles financial aid for all students. She added that "staff from the Law School comes here."

Dr. Wilmer Johnson stated, "A wrong needs to be corrected. You are too defensive at defending something that is not right. This is an undergraduate undertaking. Law students are too busy to serve on the Board of Trustees. The wrong needs to be corrected."

Dr. Howard reported that she served on the Board of Trustees in the past and that "the courts declared that I can run for the Board of Trustees again. The legal document needs to be available for all to see it."

Dr. Elhelu announced that law schools and medical schools in the United States operate independently of undergraduate schools.

To this, Ms. Pennamon responded, "That is incorrect."

Dr. Williams stated that the problem is that a Law School student has been elected. "This has to be corrected. We should not interrogate Student Affairs. We must find out how this decision was made." Dr. Williams ended with stating that the error must be corrected.

The Assistant General Counsel, Stacy xxx stated that the DCMR allows a 30-day comment period. The document governing the election of Student Trustee was updated July 2010 after a 30-day comment period where the public, including those at the University, had a chance respond to the proposed changes.

[Ms. Carter, a predecessor to Ms. Pennamon who served in that role from 2007 to 2009, arrived to the meeting at this point.]

Ms. Pennamon asked Ms. Carter, “Has a Law School student ever served in this position?”

Ms. Carter answered that someone from the Law School had run, but did not win.

Ian xxx stated that many students complained of not being able to find the link to vote for Student Trustee “unless we went to the actual office. “To me, there was not enough campaigning. There was no debate between the two candidates. There was not enough time for a debate.” Mr. xxx and other students stressed that many of their schoolmates expressed that they did not feel comfortable visiting Building 38 to vote.

[At this point, Ms. Pennamon shared with me a document with the contact information for the two candidates who ran for the Student Trustee position this year. The Law School student candidate was Kenneth D. Isaacs ([isacskd@mc.com](mailto:isacskd@mc.com)). The undergraduate candidate was Nova Coston ([novsmile4ever@yahoo.com](mailto:novsmile4ever@yahoo.com)).

Dxxx Young stated that students should “take the blame for not voting.” “Not having to deal with Administration to vote.” He noted that both Administration and students shared the blame “50-50” for the low turnout for elections.

Dr. Williams entreated, “African Americans need to be more vigilant about voting matters. This is a great opportunity... Civil Rights need to start in the Black community and among faculty. To my colleagues: We were not vigilant enough to have the Dean of the Law School step down from the Faculty Senate. Therefore, she [Dean of Law School] reigned.” Dr. Williams added, “The DMRs got called with expediency” as are other important decisions at the University.

Dr. Turpin asked, “Do students have the option to recall if the person is not doing their job?”

Students: “The law student was too busy to even collect his signatures. They expressed concern about whether he will actually have time to serve effectively in this role to support undergraduate students.

Ms. Coston discussed the time issue for elections. She described it as “quick.” “We had one day to campaign. I went to the Community College. On Fridays, no students are here [on the Flagship campus]. On Saturdays, there may be a few students you may catch.” Ms. Coston added that she availed herself of opportunities for Facebook, social network, etc. She then stated, “In the end, it was a short amount of time. One day to get the word out. Not a full day. The meeting was on Thursday.” Ms. Coston reported that the process did not work. “Many students could not

find the link to vote. I sent students to Building 38 to vote.” She added that she did not enter Building 38 to avoid any potential accusation of her influencing the elections at the voting site in any way.

Ms. Coston shared that this entire experience was “very disheartening.” She stated to Ms. Pennamon, “We were told that we could not campaign until after meeting with you.” She added that this left very little of Thursday for campaigning.

Someone asked if the elections guidelines could be altered. General Counsel stated that the guidelines can be altered without having to return to the Board of Trustees for approval of edited procedures. Faculty were of two minds about this. On the one hand, they appreciated that Student Affairs can easily correct the identified flaws in the election process. On the other hand, they were not in happy that Student Affairs could easily make alterations without due notice to students or faculty and without true input from all shareholders.

Mr. Pooda testified that the time period to run was short. He advised that work be done on changing that. He shared that when he ran for election for Student Trustee, he faced challenges with a short time to campaign. Mr. Pooda demonstrated support for both students and Student Affairs.

A student stated that when students clicked on “Elections,” they could not find the link for voting for Student Affairs.

A faculty member advised, “We need to improve the voting process. The information channels used may not be the ones students usually address.”

Dr. Brown stated, “Computer voting is not as secure as other means of voting. I am concerned with Administration being so much involved in the process for electing a student representative. At the Community College, there were serious problems with voting. In some areas, there were lines of students at the Flagship and they were having problems with voting. We need to deal with the time-honored practice of voting. It is ridiculous to have to campaign on Friday and Saturday when students are away from campus. We cannot guarantee that ever student can avail themselves to use the computer or that the e-mail address that they use...”

Dr. Epps stated that she is “glad students are here [at today’s meeting], but should have announced a Town Hall Meeting for all students to attend.”

Someone recommended that students do a recall election and petition for a new election.

Nakita xxx, current USGA Secretary, stated that she is “speaking as a student” and not as a student representative. “The Law School student could not even campaign for himself. He was too busy. Law School students do not have time to engage students, to come to campus, to attend student-run activities.”

## DRAFT

Dr. Epps: “On behalf of the Law School student. His platform...Law School students have not been active on campus.” Dr. Epps added that they[Law School students] are, however, active in the community.” She added that his platform included a statement that he would “bridge gaps.”

Dr. Elhelu stated that in Washington, D.C., residents of the majority population (African Americans) often do not put out the majority of the vote.

Someone stated that last year, 300-something students voted for Student Trustee. This year 200-something voted. A faculty member found this downward trend to be interesting and wondered if this was a consequence of voting difficulty for students in this round of voting. Faculty questioned whether the challenges undergraduate students faced with this election was by design.

PH: 30 to 60-day rule: Spring Break—vote the first week back. This person found the timing of the elections puzzling. Even more puzzling is that with 4,900 students, only 200-something voted.

Mr. Young asked Ms. Pennamon that if they submit paperwork for the petition, would she assure them that it would not sit on her desk for three weeks.

Ms. Carter, in response to Dr. Brown’s concern about irregularities with on-line voting: “We used to do paper ballots. They were tampered with by students. We moved to electronic voting. Students have cell phone...” Ms. Carter added that Student Affairs asked the Faculty Senate and they approved it.”

Dr. Epps stated, “I followed the process. If feel it was an election irregularity, then that is where it is gone.” She added that this is a student-driven process.

Ian xxx asked if there is an outline for the process for election petitions. The response to Mr. xxxx’s inquiry was that it is recorded in the Board Resolutions.

A question arose as to whether there was faculty representation on the Election Committee for the Student Trustee. It was reported that Ms. Melba Broome served as Chairperson of that committee. Faculty inquired as to whether Ms. Broome is actually faculty or if she is an administrator and, thus, was not eligible to serve as Chairperson for the Student Trustee Election Committee.

[Note: Ms. Broome was invited to today’s meeting, but e-mailed that she would not attend.]

Faculty present at today’s meeting informed students that challenging an election is distinct from challenging a candidate. Each is different from petitioning for a recall.

Dr. Williams stated, “The process is what we are questioning. We are questioning the process by which the DMR was xxxed.

Ms. Coston restated that there was an issue with the time allowed for campaigning and for voting.

DRAFT

Dr. Brown closed by stating that today's meeting was an information-gathering meeting. She advised students to review next steps "with your various advisors."

The meeting was adjourned at 12:50 p.m. by Dr. Harris

The minutes were respectfully submitted through e-mail by Dr. B. Michelle Harris on May 6, 2013.