Student Town Hall Meeting Minutes  
Tuesday November 5, 2013  
Foster Hall 300 12:30pm

Attendance: Dr. Weldon Hill, Meadows, Dr. Michael Shackleford, Terrell Bratcher, Dr. LaVerne Briggs, John Griffin, Cortez Dial, Hubert Harris, Chief Michael Wallace, Rev. Delano Douglas, DeAndrea Neal, Corey Bland, President Keith Miller, students, and staff as listed on the attached attendance sign in sheet.

Meeting brought to order with introductions from the administrators listed above, along with present departmental staff representation. Mr. Jahliel Thurman, SGA President, delivered an opening statement, welcome and discussed future SGA initiatives.

SGA future initiatives presented by the SGA cabinet members include:

- University book exchange will allow students to exchange book with one another versus selling book back to the bookstore.
- Anonymous online comment/suggestion box now available for students. The link has been provided through social media platforms such as twitter.
- Male initiative program by VP of SGA, Hyisheem Calier will be introduced in the near future. Its purpose will be to mentor male students. Program will begin Spring 2014
- SGA will be promoting a scantron happy hour M-F to give away pencils and scantrons to help students prepare for final exams.
- SGA will also be promoting Trojan pride efforts by trading any college t-shirt for a VSU t-shirt. Shirts collected will be given to the local homeless shelter
- Continued support of Trojan Pride Tuesdays
- SGA would like to host one large campus wide food drive versus many smaller departmental food drives. The recipient of food items collected will be the Petersburg or Colonial Heights Food Bank.
- A newsletter will be distributed to student listing and detailing SGA initiative updates

Questions to SGA

Student Question #1: Will there be any opportunities to liven up University Avenue with plots or displays of social organizations versus just Greek organization displays?
Dr. Shackleford responded to the above student question as follows: “Not at this point.”

**Student Question #2:** Are there any plans being made for students to support the last football game or Winston Salem CIAA championship game?

Mr. Jahliel Thurman responded to the above student question as follows: We are in the process of figuring out details and the number of buses that will be needed to support the upcoming football games.

Staff administrators 1 on 1 to address student concerns and answer student questions related to their departments we conducted in the following order:

- **Mr. Hubert Harris, Chief IT Officer**

  IT team has been tracking data usage between the hours of 7pm - 3am daily to improve campus WiFi services and plans to order a bigger circuit to increase connectivity. Mr. Harris is also considering working with SGA to discuss possibly establishing a university bandwidth limit for students to minimize network over loads.

  **Student Question:** Why now is it such a big problem when we have fewer students enrolled?

  Mr. Harris responded to the above student question as follows: The WiFi overload is a result of the amount of data being used versus the number of students enrolled.

  **Student Comment:** Not all students are surfing facebook, twitter, and instagram excessively, some professors require online tests, blackboard use, and video learning sessions. If the bandwidth is cut or limited how this will affect students’ academic related internet use as well.

  Mr. Harris responded to the above student comment as follows: We are attempting to identify and address those that are “hogging” data versus student that uses WiFi for academic and personal use in moderation.

  **Student Question:** Why do TVs in Quad A & B have static on every channel while those in the newer Quad facilities do not?

  Mr. Harris responded to the above student question as follows: Although that is not my department I will attempt to answer your question. Cable related issues may exist in Quad A & B and this information will be shared with Dr. Briggs for it to be addressed.
• Mr. Cortez Dial, President’s Office & Athletics

**Student Question:** What initiatives are in the making to encourage students to attend other games like baseball and softball versus just heavily promoting football and basketball games?

Mr. Dial responded to the above student question as follows: I appreciate your concern and we would like to encourage more students to attend other athletic events, schedule and appointment to meet with me, I’d love to hear your suggestions on how we can improve for our students.

**Student Comment:** President Miller should be here at town hall meetings to hear what our concerns are as well.

Mr. Dial responded to the above student comment as follows: I will pass what you have expressed on to the president.

**Student Question:** Are there any future plans for VSU to become a D1 school? What is being done differently to better our athletics program?

Mr. Dial responded to the above student questions as follows: Comp fees would increase to contribute to athletics and categorize our university as a D1 school. The students pay more money and we do not want to raise student fees simply for the sake of a D1 title however is the student would like fee increased and the D1 classification, prepare a referendum and vote.

• Dr. Weldon Hill, VP for Academic Affairs

Dr. Hill express the newest Academic Affairs initiative to finish classes and final exams before Thanksgiving so that student are able to enjoy an extended holiday break and avoid making multiple travel arrangements during our now currently separate Thanksgiving and Christmas holiday observances.

Dr. Hill also clarified student concerns presented during the last town hall on October 3, 2013 related to the campus grading scale and the professors use of + and - when submitting grades by responding as follows: + and – have been eliminated from our grading scale, if you see them on your transcript report the incident to Dr. Hill right away so that it can be addressed.

**Student Question:** I have + and – on my transcript from previous courses, how will that affect transferring classes to another institution?
Dr. Hill responded to the above student question as follows: Institutions accept the grading scale of previous schools based on the highest grade on a 4.0 scale. Our newly defined highest grade is an A so that will count as a 4.0 versus our old highest grade which was an A+.

**Student Question:** Some students have already applied for early admission into grad school using transcripts that reflect + and – already haven been sent will that affect my graduate level GPA?

Dr. Hill responded to the above student question as follows: I will review those types of scenarios on a case by case basis and write letters for students in necessary.

**Student Concern:** I am a biology major, our department is broke and we don’t have adequate supplies in our labs to complete experiments while other departments get more money and attended conferences regularly.

Dr. Hill responded to the above student concern as follows: I will see to it that the Biology department gets more funds.

**Student Concern:** The federal government will visit our campus in 2 weeks, are we prepared?

Dr. Hill responded to the above student concern as follows: A SAACS review and student performance will be evaluated. The national graduation average is 55%, our graduation rate is 44% which is one of the highest among HBCUs. The government is watching institutions receiving federal money very closely they are very serious and are not playing around.

Dr. Hill also clarified student concerns presented during the last town hall on October 3, 2013 related to the freshman testing and responded as follows: We have considered making the freshman testing a required noncredit course for students to help improve the seriousness of the testing for freshman.

- **President Keith Miller**

To many of the student surprise President Miller appeared in the town hall meeting to listen to student concerns and gave a brief speech mentioning the following topics:

You all are asking great questions, I am impressed with today’s turn out. We’re working on our reputation. We are currently ranked #4 in the graduation rate for HBCUs. A lot of great things are happening here at VSU. Give back, it doesn’t stop with you, it begins with you. When you graduate that’s just the beginning.
There are generations after you that will have a more difficult time. The advantages they will have is YOU because you are going thru it and experiencing it right now and you will know what it takes to achieve and move through the hard times.

- **Mr. David Meadows, VP of Administration & Finance**

Mr. Meadow introduced himself and stated that his main purpose and role is the guardian of the money. He assured students that VSU is on sound financial footing and no financial problems. Mr. Meadows provided information regarding the new multipurpose center. The center will be 190,000 sq. ft. State of the art facility and VSU will be one of a few HBCUs in country to have a facility this grand. The center will have 5300 fixed seating and other flexible floor seating options. Basketball and volleyball games will move from Daniels gymnasium and be held in the new multipurpose center. The center can be compared to a smaller version of the John Paul Jones arena in Charlottesville, VA. Construction will begin in 30 days. We will notice fencing and increased traffic. With building and construction comes traffic related issues. Allow more travel time when in the vicinity of campus, adjust time schedules for timely arrivals and departures. Dupy Rd. will become 3 lanes from Wawa to Moore Hall. Chesterfield Ave will become 4 lanes. Road way construction combined with building construction will be a challenging obstacle.

**Staff Question:** Will the Petersburg gate be opened when construction on Chester Ave begins?

Mr. Meadows called Chief Wallace to answer the above questions and Chief Wallace responded to the above faculty question as follows: We will evaluate and consider all options now that we know of the building and construction plans for the safety and accessibility of students.

**Student Question:** Will tuition go up to cover cost of multipurpose center?

Mr. Meadows responded to the above student question as follows: No, state funding is covering the cost of the multipurpose center p.

**Student Question:** Will there be parking accommodations during the building construction?

Chief Wallace responded to the above student question as follows: Our current parking arrangement will not be affected once construction of the multipurpose center begins.

**Student Question:** Are there any plans for an indoor track facility?
Mr. Meadows responded to the above student question as follows: There are no plans for an indoor track facility at this time.

Food Service
Mr. Meadows also discussed VSU’s food service contract renewal period. Thompson Hospitality’s contract will end 2015. Multipurpose center may possibly have multiple food options.

Student Concern: Pink chicken
John Griffin responded to the above student concern as follows: KFC no longer fries chicken. The pink color is a result of the muscles of chicken being injected with various hormones to induce rapid growth. Anything meat above 141 degrees is safe to eat. Food temperature is verified in our dining facilities.

Student Concern: I would like breakfast and light lunch back at Gateway 2. Students have to walk very far from Moore Hall to Jones Dining Hall for breakfast. This causes students to rush to make it to class on time.

Mr. Meadows responded to the above student concern as follows: Our food service cost is related to student enrollment. We could not afford to have all dining facilities open, as mentioned in our last town hall meeting on Oct. 3, 2013. We had to make a difficult decision to close certain facilities at certain times of the day. A&F hope to re-open the Foster Hall dining corner Fall 2014.

Student Question: Why isn’t the C store open on Fridays as the hours of operation in the window displays?

John Griffin responded to the above student concern as follows: The hours of operation on the window may currently be incorrect due to the changing in dining services hours. That can be removed and/or correct. The C Store is closed on Fridays.

Dining Facility Customer Service

Student Concern: Customer service in dining facility is not good. Food was pulled off of the line after student had swiped her VSU 1 card.

John Griffin responded to the above student concern as follows: If food is pulled off of the line prior to the dining hall closing please contact management right away.

Student Concern: Offer more food options for lactose intolerant students or students with gluten and allergies restrictions
Mr. Meadows responded to the above student concern as follows: Please attend the advisory committee meetings once a month to make food suggestions. I will provide contact info for you to collected meeting dates and information following today’s meeting for those that request it.

Mr. Meadows also discussed the launch of a new 1 card vendor that will be deploying soon. Book vouchers, flex dollars, dorm access, etc. will continue to be available through the student 1 card.

Additional A&F updates discussed: there will be a new face to our university bookstore when student return Spring (Jan) 2014.

**Student Question/Concern:** Was the cosmetic update to the bookstore necessary? There are other important projects versus fixing the appearance of the bookstore.

Mr. Meadows responded to the above student question and concern as follows: There were piping concerns that the renovation of the bookstores exterior will address and repair.

**Student Concern:** Had to pay for a new decal after her original decal was stolen during homecoming. Is there a way to move the parking decal placement back to the inside of cars so they won’t be stolen?

Chief Wallace responded to the above student question and concern as follows: Report reflects that these types of theft happens every year during this time. Some stolen decal reports and investigations have revealed that students in fact sold their decal to another student and later reported their decal stolen.

- **Dr. Michael Shackleford, VP for Student Affairs**

Dr. Shackleford provided an update on his decision to provided busses for students that will go to the Winston Salem CIAA championship football game. He will meet with Ms. Martin to discuss the number of busses necessary. Game entry costs will also be covered for students.

Dr Shackleford ensured students that he does not question the quality of the student body. He is a 1972 graduate of VSU and loves this place. Students were urged not to let people talk about their institution or devalue their degree they have received from VSU and to discourage others from doing things that don’t reflect positively on our university.

**Student Comment:** Some students are here only to party. I don’t want to be penalized for other student actions.
Dr. Shackleford responded to the above student concern as follows: We are a sum of the part. I don’t play with individuals. I address groups and organizations as a whole. Whatever the student body does directly affects the VP and directly affects the rest of the student body. We don’t need to do things that jeopardize the safety of students. I have to make decisions for your well-being because parents have entrusted the safety of students to us.

Dr. Shackleford continued by explaining his reaction when watching the video footage of the Oct. 16, 2013 riot incident that took place at the conclusion of the Organization Bazaar. “I almost cried because it hurt me to see that.” Students were urged to make mistakes while in school versus in the real world so that their lively hood isn’t affected. Yes, the gym jam was cancelled, yes student organizations we suspended and other will be suspended if they involve themselves in unwise activities. “The footage was the most embarrassing and pathetic thing I have ever seen.”

**Student Comment:** Students should use web platforms for better purposed, put better things on instagram/facebook/twitter, and advertise positive things online about VSU. Students are putting the negativity out there themselves. I could go online within minutes and see numerous photos of the stabbing incident but rarely see positive posts.

Dr. Shackleford adds: A common point had been made, a culture has been created here at VSU where it’s more honorable to be in an organization that to be a Trojan. The umbrella is upside down. Students should be a Trojan first then an organization member.

**Student Concern:** There is a drug dealer on the 2nd floor in the Quad. I have contact the police and notified Dr. Briggs by email. The police pacified me by saying they were coming to my residence hall but never showed up.

Dr. Shackleford responded to the above student concern as follows: your allegation will be addressed.

**Students Concern:** I disagreed with overrides opportunities being eliminated.

Dr. Hill responded to the above student concern as follows: I will review override request on a case by case basis.

**Students Question:** Is it reviewed when lots of students drop a particular class? I am currently enrolled in a class where the professor does not teach us. The class started with 30 students, now there are only 10 students left in the class, the rest have dropped the course.
Dr. Shackleford urges students to complete the professor surveys in response to the student’s concern above and directs her to speak with Dr. Hill privately about her professor.

In closing students are encouraged to be more engaged and connect with a member of SGA to volunteer toward positive campus initiatives.

Meeting adjourned.

Minutes submitted but April Bennett