Chair Koopmann called the meeting to order at 12:07.

I.) CHAIR REMARKS

Regarding the issue of priority registration, we will be working with student government to accommodate students who travel on University business and have class conflicts. This includes athletes, music and theater students.

The minutes from the month of February were submitted an approved. The minutes from January will be emailed out to the committee and approved electronically.

In the interest of time and hearing from the student panels, unfinished business was moved to the end of the meeting.

II.) VPSA REMARKS

VP Harper thanked the students for coming and introduced Melaku Mekonnen, director of the Northwood Apartments, and Jackie Simpson, director of the Spectrum Center, to the committee.

III.) SINGLE PARENT STUDENT PANNEL

Melaku explained that Northwood is a very diverse community including undergraduate and graduate students as well as families. There is a group called Parents Without Partners forming. Melaku then introduced Stephanie Oswald and Marty Allen to the committee as two representatives of Parents Without Partners.
Stephanie noted the problems that single parents, and parents in general, have as students—most notably childcare. For many single parents, the idea of even attending college does not seem like an option. Actively recruiting and encouraging student-parents would be extremely encouraging. Also, the isolation and lack of support systems is extremely challenging, so having a section of student-housing specifically for single parents would be helpful for creating a new support system among them. This would help single-parents support each other and share knowledge and resources. It would also be worthwhile to have someone in the University know when single-parents are coming to the University so that information about available resources could then be given to them. Childcare subsidies, WIC etc. are all things that one doesn’t necessarily know about. A practical measure the University could take towards making things easier on student-parents is making sure there are changing tables in public restrooms and spaces to breast pump.

Marty had a difficult time navigating resources in the community as well. Ann Arbor was considerably more difficult to navigate than the state of Washington. There was a time when he wasn’t sure if he would be approved to child care subsidy, and worried he would have to drop out of school. Having someone on campus that could be a resource to single parents would be extremely helpful. It would also be useful to extend the conditions for emergency childcare to cover situations of illness which last longer than the typical “emergency,” instead taking anywhere from 2-3 days. Also, it would be very helpful to have a space in libraries on campus where kids could be present and be able to study.

- A committee member noted that libraries currently have a retrieval program which is available to all students.
- This also drives home the point that housing single parents in the same space might make it easier to get this information directly to those who need it most.
- The more centralized and visible this group is, the better we as a University will be able to serve them.
- Perhaps there could be a work-study office where there would be peer counselors who could staff, give advice and/or baby-sit, while earning work-study funds.
- Are there any situations in which being an undergraduate puts you at a greater disadvantage than a graduate student?
  - Marty noted that he wasn’t certain what graduate students receive, but that all of his support comes from the state.
- Susan Wilson will be able to help the group get started and possibly collect that information and put it together on the internet.

Melaku noted that childcare is a very important service to the entire campus community. A few years ago, there was an initiative to help certify some North Campus residents to provide in-home childcare, which is currently being provided by about 5 families on North Campus.

IV.) LGBT STUDENT PANNEL
Jackie informed the committee that education, advocacy and support are the main goals of the Spectrum Center. They work with students as well as faculty and staff. Speaker’s Bureau is one way in which student can engage in the Student Affairs side of things.

Jackie introduced Andrew McBride, Amy Dickinson and Vikram Shah to the committee.

Andrew shared that he was lucky to find an academic program which is very affirmative and supportive of student’s sexuality, gender identity and gender expression. However, the vast majority of academic departments are not as supportive. This is very difficult for students who deviate from the norm. One way the environment could be more welcoming is to ensure that professors and staff are well-educated on appropriate ways to handle LGBT issues.

Andrew trained to be an IGR facilitator, and students in that program openly expressed homophobic sentiments and supported those with their religious beliefs. Residential Advisors as well as other student leaders are allowed to hold discriminatory or prejudiced views against LGBT students. Those views, even if not expressed, can make students extremely uncomfortable not only in student groups or class spaces, but even in their own residential situations.

Amy, co-chair of the LBGT commission for MSA and co-founder of the student group Bilateral, then shared her experiences transferring from Grand Valley State University. She found the LBGT community here extremely welcoming and open. The LBGT commission and office were also a very social space, and was not at all isolated as she initially expected. In terms of campus life, yearly there are publicity boards slashed, and protesters against the annual Coming Out rally, etc. Education and visibility efforts are extremely important in the office. However, in Speaker’s Bureau sessions, there are quite often responses that focus on religious issues and suggest there is still a strong prejudice against the LGBT community in terms of religious beliefs.

Vikram is a sophomore political science major and is involved in planning the annual South Asian Awareness Network Conference (SAAN). For him, problems occur with faculty, staff and students. Educationally, he found one way to address this, by offering a SAAN session on the Transgender community in South Asia. By helping one community address the issue from within itself, the office did a lot to further LGBT education in spaces it doesn’t often reach.

- What were your experiences in housing here? Should there be facilities or options in roommate situations?
  - Andrew noted his own personal situation was fine, but other’s were more difficult. One solution would be for every RA and housing employee should go through the office’s Ally Training Program. This is not only sensible, but essential to creating a more welcoming environment.
- One committee member expressed that excluding people based on their beliefs for RA positions would be unfair; that accepting people based on their beliefs is
different than accepting people based on their ability to be sensitive to all residents needs.
  o All students should feel safe in their housing situations, and RA’s should be a sensitive and a positive resource to all students.

- Is there any partnership between the Spectrum center and the Athletic Department?
  o NCAA is now requiring education for athletes and talks are beginning in order to explore how that will take place.

In terms of suggestions for things the committee can do to help, Jackie noted that for faculty, when creating committees, keeping gender identity and expression in mind would be helpful. It would also be extremely beneficial to make sure that the faculty and staff of the University have the necessary knowledge and access to resources in order to make sure that they are sensitive to all students’ experiences.

VP Harper thanked the students for coming and sharing their stories.

V.) UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Unfinished business was postponed until April’s meeting.

The meeting was convened at 1:32.

Respectfully Submitted,

Colleen Manwell
SACUA Student Support