Present: Fred Askari, Bonnie Fauman, Rachel Goldman, Donna Hayward, Simone Himbeault-Taylor, Charles Koopman, David Potter; student reps Matthew Talley; Paula Pawlowski.

Absent: Royster Harper, Lisa Low, Leo McAfee, Stacy Peterson.

Guests: Greg Merritt, Senior Associate Director, University Housing & Director, Residence Education

Chair Potter convened the meeting at 11:50.

Chair Remarks
Chair Potter welcomed Greg Merritt back to the Committee.

VPSA Remarks
The VPSA remarks were deferred because of low attendance at the meeting’s beginning.

Living Learning Experience
The discussion of the Residential Life initiative was continued from the last meeting, starting with funding. “Phase 2” of the initiative focuses on preventing crumbling infrastructure. To prevent surprise costs, resources need to be continuously put towards maintenance and updates. Housing funding comes from student fees and infrastructure changes must be self-sustaining. Any investments and new construction must go through the Regents and stipulate how Housing plans to pay back construction costs, given that the fees for room and board are separate from any fee structure from Res activities. Looking at them together might be useful to see if this current separation functions well.

Merritt continued to describe the type of residences found at the U and recent changes, such as fewer families staying in the apartments specifically designed for families. He continued to describe how residences are being transformed into community-learning centers. Computer labs are being transformed into group study areas, focused on new technology. Each residence has “Peer Academic Success specialists,” who can help their fellow students and refer them to professional staff members who can give formal advice. There is much to do in order to reach students, particularly younger students, who have difficulty assessing and connecting to the community. To this extent, the front desk is now called the “community center,” with the intention to make students perceive the front desk as an open area and all who work there are residents. North Quad’s website is also designed like a social networking site.

These changes aim to integrate learning from inside the classroom to outside. The intentionality of buildings is emphasized with the creation and transformation of a number of residences into themed buildings. North Quad, for example, has a technological and international focus, with programs like the Max Kade German House and the Global Scholars anchoring the theme. Buildings without themes will still exist to acknowledge that not all students fit comfortably into a rubric.
The Committee discussed the various existing Living Learning Communities. One of the biggest challenges is bridging the sense of community after students leave a Living Learning Community. There is a variety of academic connections, with the RC being very intense, and programs like the MLC being less academically rigorous. There is a move to do similar things on North Campus, specifically in Bursley, to get the engineers, artists, musicians and theater students to connect and think about creativity in a different way. The U wants to avoid creating insular communities and strives to create community across all places; the goal is to have a cohort of students to rally around something substantial. The sophomore year and beyond programs have been enhanced over the past five years, with students coming back to the LLCs and connecting with underclassmen.

The biggest hurdle is the eagerness to move to apartments while there is no requirement for students to live on campus. Despite this, the U is at higher occupancy for first years than at other universities that mandate living on campus. Most students encourage others to live on campus freshman year. We need more housing. It is difficult to locate students once they leave the residences. It is important to know whom we are serving in each res hall and to serve their needs. There are plans to make special programs for transfer students, who face particular problems. Second year housing usually continues the pattern of a student’s first year, with students either living with the same people, living at a Greek house or moving to co-ops. While the percentage of 40% of first year students who come back to live sophomore year has remained stable, the numbers have actually gone up because the U has more students. North Quad is built suite-style to make it more appealing and Stockwell is also directed to only non-freshman students. The admissions target has increased to 6,000 students, but a wrong prediction affects the whole system and can result in an unhappy and crowded experience for students.

This whole approach is a question of focus, not of quality. Every residence has quality activities and staffs and themed residences add layers to the quality we already have.

There is structural rub between the academic units and the Res Life initiatives. Some communities, like MCSP or the RC, have good academic connections, but in other departments, this connection is not prioritized. Much of the education on campus happens in “faculty-free” zones, but this separation is usually institutional rather than natural. It was noted that the U is greatly decentralized in this way, but Res Life needs more faculty integration. The Committee noted that it would like to revisit the topic about faculty integration. Future related topics include the funding model, living conditions, and capital improvements.

Approval of Minutes
The November 12, 2010 minutes were approved.

Proposed SPG on Discriminatory Harassment
The new SPG discusses many aspects of discriminatory harassment. The guidelines provide reasonable procedures for harassment cases, but the procedural guidelines of handling cases have been problematic and heavily abbreviated. Evidence that the complaint in question occurred must prove with a 51% certainty that the event occurred, but there are no evidentiary standards.
There is also the question of whether the person against whom a complaint has been filed should be made aware. There have been cases where accused faculty spoke freely about incidents without being aware of the consequences. There is no sort of “Miranda” to protect these faculty members.

Chair Potter will pursue the wording, procedural, and evidentiary issues and report back to the Committee. Suggestive language changes will be circulated for the January meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:02.

Respectfully submitted,

Paula Pawlowski
SACUA Student Support