MINUTES
The Graduate Student Association
The Catholic University of America
Senate Meeting - SPECIAL
March 29, 2012 – 7:30 pm –McGivney 014

Members present:

Emily Alianello   LaVonne Doucette   Lawrence King   Carter Rawson
Fr. Charles Benoit  Allie Dryden   Bridget Ledford   Jufang Tseng
Rachel Berquist    Joseph Forte   James Lewis   Homer L. Twigg IV
Angelique Brown   Erikk Geannikis   John Mickey   Ryan Vilbig
William Buracker    Vernice Grajeda   Sean Moberg   Edmund Walsh
Chloe Canton    Elizabeth Greeley   Louise Mundstock   Jonathan Zappala
Joshua Canzona    David Grothoff   Daniel Petri
Elizabeth De Mahy  Amber Hanson   Nathan Ponzio   Also Present:
Philip De Mahy    Mimsi Janis   Tony Purcell   Dean James Greene

I. Meeting was called to order by President James Lewis at 7:38 pm.

II. Roll was called by Jufang Tseng, filling in for Secretary Thad Garrett in his absence.

III. Agenda approved.

IV. Prayer was offered by Fr. Charles Benoit.

V. New Business

a. Denial Petri moved and Allie Dryden seconded that the senate confirm the results of the election as follows: President - Joshua Canzona; Vice President - Joseph Forte; Treasurer - Vernice Grajeda; Secretary - Homer L. Twigg, IV; Academic Senators - LaVonne Doucette and Peter Furlong; Ratified constitution approved. Motion passed.

b. President James Lewis announced that Katie Jennings, Director of the Office of Campus Activities, had sent notification that “sexual orientation” must be removed from the non-discrimination clause of the new constitution (Article I, Section 6).

Vice President Joshua Canzona, author of the non-discrimination clause, shared the following statement:

I wrote the text of the non-discrimination clause and purposefully included sexual orientation in the list. I believe it is possible that gay and lesbian graduate students on our campus have apprehensions about their place in our community. These may be apprehensions based on negative interpersonal
experiences, on the lack of any GLBT student organizations, on the lack of other campus resources for GLBT students, or on an interpretation of Catholic teaching related to sexuality. My only intent was to reach out to these students by name and reassure them that their Graduate Student Association welcomes them.

The university, if I understand their position correctly, has informed us that we cannot include an item in our non-discrimination clause that includes a named population not included in the university’s own statement of non-discrimination. This seems to be an obvious effort to dodge the important issue at hand.

I could talk about why I feel that our non-discrimination clause as originally written does not contradict Catholic teaching but I do not believe that such a conversation is appropriate to this venue. It is sufficient to say that I did not, and we did not, intend the inclusion of “sexual orientation” in the non-discrimination clause to be a subversive signal of our opposition to Catholic teaching.

I could talk further about what “non-discrimination” really means but I don’t believe that such semantic arguments are fruitful at this time either. It is sufficient to say that something will be lost when this item, this naming of “sexual orientation,” is cut from the non-discrimination clause we previously approved.

Parliamentarian John Mickey established that, as a constitutional issue, being governed under the old constitution, a 2/3 vote is required to modify the language of the new constitution.

Thusly, Lawrence King moved and Jonathan Zappala seconded that the list of possible bases of discrimination following “shall not be restricted on any basis,” be removed.

i. Philip de Mahy moved and Lawrence King seconded that the non-discrimination clause cite the University’s Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action Policy. Amendment passed.

ii. Daniel Petri moved and Jonathan Zappala seconded that the non-discrimination clause also cite the General Counsel’s website that explains the DC Human Rights Act of 1977, which explicitly mentions “sexual orientation” as basis on which discrimination is prohibited. Amendment failed.

iii. Daniel Petri called the question. Fifteen (15) voted in favor and eleven (11) voted against. Motion failed due to lack of 2/3 majority vote.

c. Lawrence King moved and Philip de Mahy seconded that President James Lewis submit the previous failed motion to the Office of Campus Activities (allowing them to modify the non-discrimination clause despite the senate’s decision to keep it the same). Motion withdrawn.

d. Daniel Petri moved and _______ seconded that the Resolution as drafted by President James Lewis (see attached) by presented to the President and his council. Motion failed.

e. Vice President Joshua Canzona suggested that President James Lewis inform the University that the senate would not or could not remove “sexual orientation” from the non-discrimination clause at this time, and moved to adjourn.
VI. Meeting was adjourned at 9:20 pm. Next regular Senate meeting will be held in Pryzbyla Great Room A on April 4, 2012 at 7:00pm.

Thad E. Garrett
Secretary