

University Senate discusses international students task force and solidifies smoking ban

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The University Senate of Hofstra University met for their third meeting this year on Monday, Nov. 12, to discuss unresolved agenda items and pass new resolutions. The meeting began with questions about how everyone was coping with the aftermath of Superstorm Sandy. The meeting then continued with its usual routine of Liora Schmelkin, Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, asking for approval of the minutes from the previous meeting (October 8). Immediately afterwards, Schmelkin announced the official passing of the smoking ban on south campus, which was recently signed by President Stuart Rabinowitz and will go into effect next semester.

The meeting passed several basic resolutions, including format changes of phrases used in the Graduate Bulletin specifying the definition of an unofficial withdrawal. A second resolution passed was a revision to what defines basic regulations in governing graduate programs found in the Graduate Studies Bulletin. A third resolution called for the review of University Senate Representation every three years and the amount of representatives allowed for each department dependent on the department's amount of faculty members. The fourth resolution passed was most discussed as it had the potential to carry the most influence on the University if implemented.

The fourth and final resolution called for the creation of a taskforce to study the increasing population of international students at Hofstra University. The resolution at present states:

"This Task Force will study and propose recommendations on issues, such as:

- a) Language barriers
- b) Cultural and social integration into the university community
- c) Academic standards and expectations
- d) Enhancing relationships with other student groups"

"This growth has been for the last couple of years a trend," said Schmelkin.

While the proposal listed these four issues to focus on, it also stated that the composition of the task force would include individuals to represent the nine following organizations: Graduate and undergraduate admissions, faculty from different academic units of the university, various University Senate Committees, University Counsel's Office, Center for the University Advisement, Office of Multicultural and International Student Programs (MISPO), English Language Program, Provost's Office and at least three students to represent undergraduate and graduate international students.

Some senate members present were concerned about the representation of these groups and thought additional representation was necessary.

Dr. Gerda Kamberova said she could relate to the concerns of international students. Kamberova, a professor of computer sciences and member of the Faculty Affairs Committee, was an international student when she attended college in the U.S. She believes that better services to assist students with navigating the University and the Long Island region are pertinent to enhancing students' experiences here at Hofstra.

"There are complaints from students [requesting] services that can help them navigate," said Kamberova.

As discussion of the task force progressed and recommendations and changes to the resolution's current written form were suggested, many senators added their opinions on the subject according to their own experiences with international students.

Student senator Jesse Crosson, a senior at Hofstra and major in political science, said, "As a friend and bible study leader of a lot of international students, many [international students] say there is a difficulty of integrating with [the local community]."

Jesse wanted to highlight that integration is a vital part of the study, which is centered on the increasing number of international students. Many senators agreed that this subject should be treated with utmost importance.

The task force was introduced to the senate's attention by professor and senator Dr. Carole Papper, and would be the first task force at Hofstra to address the growth of international students and the improvement of student life for these students through improved programming and services. Currently MISPO takes the lead on providing information and aid for international students at Hofstra University. Jessica Eads, Vice President of Enrollment Management, said that a recent survey examined MISPO and that recommendations are being considered for what the office can improve on.

Eads said that she wanted the university to address the MISPO office with a message stating, "Here is the progress we made and here are the holes that still exist."

Before a task force can be officially formed, the resolution must be passed at the next faculty meeting on Dec. 7 and must follow a resolution's usual process of being approved by the Provost and signed by President Stuart Rabinowitz.

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