Recommendations of the Task Force on Gender Specific Student Organizations

2017-2018

Co-Chairs:
Jordan Smith, Students’ Association President
Anne-Marie Algier, Associate Dean of Students

An earlier version of these recommendations were ratified by the Students’ Association Senate on 25th March 2018. This version is subject to final Senate approval on 9 April 2018.
Task Force on Gender Specific Organizations  
2017-2018

Charge:

This task force will provide a recommendation to the Students’ Association regarding how best to proceed in light of the ACJC Spring 2017 ruling about gender specific groups.

Related Questions:

1. What do we need to know in order to understand the issues?
2. What do we need to ask, and of whom?
3. What more information do we need from other sources?
4. Are there multiple options? Which is best and why?

Timeline:

If changes are to be made for the 2018-2019 academic year, the recommendations from this task force must be received, accepted and implemented before the budget cycle begins in February 2018. All options and timelines are on the table for discussion.

Membership:

Co-chairs: Jordan Smith, SA President, and Anne-Marie Algier, Associate Dean of Students  
John DiSarro: Director, Fraternity & Sorority Affairs  
Laura Ballou: Assistant Dean, Student Life Operations and Director, The Campus Center  
Jamia Leonard  
Hope Pungello  
Nick Kasper  
David Meister  
Sam D’Amico

Meetings:

First meeting held on 10/20/2017, began regular meetings on Fridays from 1-2pm. Minutes from meetings are attached to this document. The first several meetings of the Task Force were focused on training our members and educating ourselves on the most updated language and terminology in the LGBTQ+ community. Since, we’ve met with representatives from PRIDE and TINT, club sports, a capella, and Greek Life, as well as a representative from the Title IX office.
Recommendations

Throughout the course of our work, the Task Force on Gender Specific Organizations has seen a strong desire on the part of our students to create a more inclusive university community. We appreciate all of the students who spoke to us on behalf of their organizations and communities, and are proud of our student body’s willingness to work towards create a campus that is inclusive of all students regardless of gender identity or expression.

In Spring 2017, The All-Campus Judicial Council determined that a number of student organizations were operating in violation of the SA Constitution’s Non-Discrimination Policy. To address this problem, the Task Force on Gender Specific Organizations offers the following recommendations:

I. We recognize that certain organizations have eligibility requirements based on gender that are either required in order to comply with national policies, provide opportunities to participate in certain competitive leagues, or are otherwise deemed essential to the mission of the organization. We recognize the harm that these gender-exclusive policies can have on members of the transgender, non-binary, and gender variant communities, and that these students do not currently have the same access as others to the opportunities and resources that these gender-exclusive organizations provide. However, we recognize that removing these groups from the Students’ Association would decrease the overall number of opportunities for students to be involved in co-curricular organizations and, rather than lifting barriers for marginalized groups, may foster animosity towards members of the marginalized groups adversely affected by gender-exclusive membership policies. Further, this task force concluded that allowing these gender-exclusive groups to continue operating under the Students’ Association will give these groups an opportunity to increase the inclusivity of their membership policies and general operations, providing additional benefit to our university community as a whole. Lastly, we wanted to recognize the potential that these groups have as a means by which to educate more members of the community and develop allies around this issue, which would be lost should we remove these groups at this time.

Therefore, we recommend the creation of a Gender Exclusivity Waiver process for groups with gender-exclusive membership policies, to be implemented in Fall 2019. Through this waiver, these groups must demonstrate that their membership policy and selection processes are integral to the mission of the organization, are openly advertised, and are non-discriminatory on all other grounds. We recommend that:

A. Waivers must be filed and reviewed annually.
B. A successful waiver application shall include:
1. The exact gender-related requirements for any/all levels of membership in the organization.
2. Justification for gender-exclusive membership policies.
3. Evidence that the organization does not have a policy more exclusive than is warranted for the existence and function of the organization.
4. Evidence of education of members about the transgender, non-binary, and gender variant communities, and about the LGBTQ+ community more broadly.
5. Evidence of actions or policies that the organization has implemented to provide a more welcoming and inclusive environment for transgender, non-binary, and gender variant students and for LGBTQ+ students more broadly.
6. For Club Sports organizations: must provide evidence that the competitive leagues within reasonable distance of the university have been surveyed and that it is not feasible for the organization to join a gender-inclusive league.
7. For groups with a governing body that is external to the university: If the external governing body requires a gender-exclusive membership policy, the group should specify if their campus organization feels that they would like to see this policy change to be more inclusive, or if they feel that they would like to remain gender-exclusive, regardless of what constraints for their membership policy they may be under. In the latter case, the campus organization must clearly demonstrate the value that gender-exclusive membership policies provide to their organization.

C. A successful waiver application may also include:
   1. Evidence of correspondence with external governing bodies about membership policies.
   2. Evidence of programming related to the transgender, non-binary, and gender-variant communities and/or about the LGBTQ+ community more broadly.

D. Full details of waiver approval and consequences for unsuccessful waiver application will be determined by the Working Group outlined in recommendation IV.

II. In the 2023-2024 academic year, the working group will meet with all organizations which have not achieved full inclusion. The working group will offer support to organizations which have consistently worked to become more inclusive but have not been successful in their efforts to lobby governing bodies such as national organizations or athletic leagues. However, the working group may recommend sanctions or
derecognition for organizations who have not complied with any steps mandated by the working group.

III. In order to implement this waiver process, we recommend the following amendment to the SA constitution:

“Organizations whose existence and/or activities depend upon following gender-exclusive membership policies set by an external governing body (such as a national organization or intercollegiate league) or otherwise believe that gender-exclusive membership policies are warranted must have a Gender Exclusivity Waiver approved annually in order to retain recognition by the Students’ Association. Through this waiver, these groups must demonstrate that their membership policy and selection processes are integral to the mission of the organization, are openly advertised, and are non-discriminatory on all other grounds.”

IV. In addition to the preceding amendment, we recommend amending the Students’ Association Non-Discrimination Policy, as found in the Students’ Association Constitution, to match the University’s Non-Discrimination Policy. This does not substantially change the classifications of protected classes but rather aligns the policies the SA and University have for consistency for students and other community members.

V. We recommend that the University begin resource allocation to develop an LGBTQ+ Center on the River Campus.

VI. We recommend the creation of a Working Group comprised of students and staff members to further refine the details of the waiver process and to ensure the educational recommendations outlined in recommendation V are implemented in a timely manner. We recommend that this group begin meeting in Fall 2018.

VII. We recommend the implementation of a comprehensive educational plan by January 2019 to provide students and student organization leaders opportunities to be educated on the issues faced by the transgender and gender non-conforming communities.

A. We recommend that these educational efforts include, but not be limited to:

1. Safe Zone and other trainings for students focused on building cultural awareness and solidarity with the transgender, non-binary,

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1 Membership for this working group will be selected jointly by the SA President and the Burgett Intercultural Center LGBTQ Coordinator, and will include (but not be limited to) representatives from OMSA, MSAB, the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Affairs, Students’ Association Senate, PRIDE, and club sports. The application process will also include open applications, so that passionate students committed to creating a more inclusive campus may have the opportunity to serve.

2 We recommend that most of the educational plan be implemented by January 2019, but recognize that some elements of educational programming may take longer to develop.
and gender-variant communities and with the LGBTQ+ community more broadly.

2. Education on empowering students to be agents of change when dealing with external governing bodies and on creating meaningful dialogue with governing bodies to work towards more inclusive policies.

3. Education for student organization leaders on how to craft a membership policy that is as inclusive as possible and to otherwise avoid gendered language in the constitution.

4. Education for Club Sports Organizations about finding and joining more inclusive leagues.

5. An orientation event or program to raise awareness among first year students about this Task Force’s work and any forthcoming changes based on our recommendations.

B. We recommend that the Working Group lead the determination of the full details of this educational program and assist in its implementation.

VIII. We recommend that all Students’ Association organizations be required to have clear, specific, and transparent membership policies in their constitution and on their CCC page.

IX. We recommend that the SA Government Administration & Review Committee update their template constitution to ensure the consistent use of gender-neutral language.

X. To increase representation and raise awareness, we recommend the creation of an LGBTQ+ representatives program for all student organizations, either a separate organization similar to the Fraternity and Sorority Association’s Pillar Program or an expansion of the Pillar Program.

XI. We recommend that the Associate Dean of Students work with the Associate Director of Athletics and Club Sport Advisor to identify to what extent our club sports are or are not equitable according to Title IX.

XII. Student representatives from the a cappella community expressed to the Task Force that vocal range and timbre, not gender, was their most important membership requirement. We recommend that single-gender a cappella groups consider revising their membership policies to focus on vocal range rather than gender before submitting an application for a Gender Exclusivity Waiver.