

Meeting Minutes
Committee on Student Affairs, Religious Life, and University Relations
May 4, 2009

Committee Members Present: Scott McGinnis, Ken Kirby, Philip Poole, Elizabeth Dobbins, David Loudon, Mark Castle, Elizabeth Wells; Non-members attending: Garry Adkins (Assoc. Dean of Students), Marcia Hamby (Director, counseling services)

McGinnis called the meeting to order and described the agenda. The committee has been asked by the Senate chair to look into the issue of violence against women on Samford's campus, with particular attention to education, prevention, and support structures. The point of the meeting is to gather information from Student Affairs representatives, discuss existing policies and procedures, and determine if there is further work for the committee in this area.

McGinnis distributed copies of what information from the student handbook and campus safety website, including the government-mandated DPS annual campus crime report. Questions arose concerning whether criminal charges had to be filed and conviction obtained in order for an incident to be included in this report, and whether a problem existed given the low numbers reported by campus safety (2007-0; 2006-0; 2005-1; 2004-3). Dobbins indicated there was a recent student survey conducted by nursing students that put the numbers much higher, which may indicate that there is a large number of unreported incidents. Much discussion ensued concerning which if any aspects of the campus culture might contribute to this underreporting.

Adkins described role of Student Affairs and the values violation process. Students who are victims of sexual assault may choose to speak to a counselor or faculty member but not report it to his office. If they do, there is an administrative hearing which may then forward the issue to the Values Council. He recalled two such cases in the past three years. Separately, Adkins also encourages the victim to pursue criminal charges but this is a separate process through the local police dept.

Hamby spoke of meeting in counseling services with students who have been victims of sexual assault who choose not to pursue either values violations or criminal charges. In some cases the incidents occurred off-campus. Due to staffing levels, counseling services struggles to meet with students in a timely manner, and she is concerned that some may be discouraged from meeting with a counselor due to longer wait times.

The committee agreed that given the number of open questions and desire for more information, further investigation was warranted by the committee when it reconvenes in the fall.