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# Faculty Senate postpones ResLife proposal decision

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After a lengthy discussion about the proposed Residence Life curriculum on Monday, the Faculty Senate decided to postpone voting on the issue until its meeting next week.

University President Patrick Harker suspended the former program in November after controversy arose about the diversity-training initiatives, which were implemented in the residence halls throughout campus.

Professor Alan Fox, Faculty Senate president, said the Residence Education Advisory Committee was formed to advise the Residence Life staff on producing a report that outlined the problems of the previous program. REAC, along with the Faculty Senate's Student Life committee and Residence Life officials collaborated to produce the current proposal.

During the Faculty Senate meeting, which took place in 104 Gore Hall, debate arose regarding the content of the proposal.

Matt Robinson, chairman of the Faculty Senate's Student Life committee, told attendees he wanted to bring up a number of points about the proposal. He said the new program being put forth is completely voluntary. All students have the opportunity to opt out of the events being held.

Second, Robinson said the program will be administered by trained faculty and/or professionals. The role of the resident assistant is to facilitate in identifying potential speakers and directing students to the appropriate professionals.

"If there is an event in the dorm complex, the role of the RA is to encourage students to attend and inform students that those opportunities are available," he said.

Robinson said the new program will include extensive assessment and oversight.

"In our recommendations and our observations of the past program, we thought that there wasn't faculty input," he said. "There was faculty input in developing this program. Several components of the new program were direct recommendations from faculty members."

During the course of the program, there will be an independent assessment conducted by the Office of Educational Assessment, Robinson said.

When faculty had the opportunity to discuss its views and concerns of the program, Philosophy professor Kate Rogers addressed issues about the ambiguous definition of sustainability.

"I think we need a very clear, written definition of sustainability so that we can see that it is turning off the showers and that it's not a code word for the kind of political agenda that Residence Life is pushing throughout the fall," Rogers said.

She said the proposal also needs to include a clear and developed explanation on how students are going to be encouraged not to feel pressured to attend events.

"I think given the history of this, it's not enough to say it's voluntary," Rogers said. "I think we need a developed plan for how students are not going to be pressured in terms of peer pressure and in terms of RA pressure."

Robinson replied by saying Michael Gilbert, vice president for Student Life, will communicate to incoming students in a letter, that this is a voluntary program.

Education professor Jan Blits, who was one of the two faculty members who informed the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education about the university's Residence Life programs in the fall, spoke at the meeting. He said the new program still seems to be about students' concepts of justice, their values and attitudes.

"On the first page, the goal of the program is to affect people's thoughts, values, beliefs and actions," Blits said. "That is not simply protecting the environment."

Adam Kissel, director of FIRE's Individual Rights Defense Program, said in an interview Friday, FIRE ultimately would like to see the Faculty Senate reject the new Residence Life proposal.

"ResLife has changed the wording of its goals slightly," Kissel said. "It has changed the names of its activities somewhat, but it looks like the programming remains the same."

Senior Casey Patriarco, Student Government Association president and a student representative on the Faculty Senate Committee's Student Life committee, in an interview after the speech, said she understood all sides of the argument, but feels the program could be beneficial for students.

"To encourage people to explore things, to understand differences are all positive things and the academic environment is a place to stimulate those ideas and thoughts," Patriarco said.

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