



COMMITTEE ON STUDENT LIFE 2006-2007

The Committee on Student Life had a quiet first semester. Other than holding a training session for new members with University Counsel Dickens Mathieu, the Committee met to plan the 2007 Wendell Phillips Award competition, which it runs in conjunction with the Office of Student Activities. The Wendell Phillips Memorial Scholarship is one of two prize scholarships (the other assigned to Harvard) established in 1896 by the Wendell Phillips Memorial Fund Association in honor of Boston's distinguished preacher and orator. The award is given annually to the junior or senior who has best demonstrated both marked ability as a speaker and a keen sense of public responsibility.

The Committee asked applicants to address two questions in the preliminary round. For the oral presentation (of not more than four minutes), they had to consider the following: "According to Lewis Thompson in *Lives of a Cell*, 'We are told that the trouble with Modern Man is that he has been trying to detach himself from nature. He sits in the topmost tiers of polymer, glass and steel, dangling his pulsing legs, surveying at a distance the writhing life of the planet.' Paraphrasing the words of author Terry Tempest Williams, does the natural world matter in the human 'concept of beauty, justice, and the sacredness of life'?" They also had to write a 500-word essay on the following topic: "There is a growing tension between representative governance and the rights of minorities. Pick an issue for which you believe this tension exists and discuss how you might resolve it."

The Committee met in January and chose five finalists from the 49 applicants: Casey Beck, Elizabeth Manno, Sarah Newton, Aditya Nochur, and Shanti Sattler. Each finalist was asked to speak for 3-5 minutes in response to the following topic: "'Our doubts are traitors/And make us lose the good we oft might win/By fearing to attempt' (Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*, Act II, scene 1, lines 77-79). Which doubt do you think most impedes involvement in public service? How have you helped yourself and others to overcome that doubt and work together to contribute to the larger community. The oral presentations were open to the Tufts community and took place in the Coolidge Room on Monday, March 5, at 4:30pm. Although all the speakers were impressive, the Committee chose Casey Beck as the winner of the 2007 Wendell Phillips Award. She will deliver an address on Saturday, May 19, at Baccalaureate.

On a less pleasant note, the Committee held two hearings in the spring semester. The first, on Thursday, April 12, involved a disciplinary case. A second-year student, who had been placed on Probation Level Two, appealed that sentence on the grounds of severity

of the consequences. After listening carefully to the evidence presented, the Committee ruled in his favor and reduced the sentence to Probation Level One, which does not carry transcript notation and seemed more appropriate given the nature of the offense.

On Monday, April 30, the Committee heard two complaints against *The Primary Source*. The first, filed by a senior, charged *The Primary Source* with harassment and creating a hostile environment on campus through the publication of “O Come All Ye Black Folk,” a carol featured in its December 6, 2006 edition. The second, filed by the Muslim Student Association (MSA), charged *The Primary Source* with harassment and creating a hostile environment on campus through the publication of “Islam-Arabic Translation: Submission,” a commentary published in its April 11, 2007 edition that imitated the format of the MSA’s advertisement for events during Islamic Awareness Week. The hearing joined the two complaints by agreement of all the parties.

The panel, which consisted of seven voting and three non-voting *ex officio* members, listened attentively to the five and a half hours of testimony and argument from the parties: the first complainant and his four witnesses; the second complainant and his three witnesses; the two respondents, their one witness, and their advocate. The CSL also heard the testimony of the current Editor-in-Chief of *The Primary Source*.

This complicated case required the panel to resolve a conflict between two important principles at Tufts University: freedom of expression on the one hand, and non-discrimination on the other. The Committee’s finding that *The Primary Source* had in both cases violated the University’s policies was unequivocal. Determining the appropriate consequence, however, was more complicated because of the principles involved. After many hours of deliberation over several days, the Committee decided to require *The Primary Source* henceforth to attribute all published material to named author(s) or contributor(s). Such a consequence is both fair and necessary. *The Primary Source* can continue to print what it chooses, but it should not have the shelter of anonymity from which to launch hurtful attacks. In addition, the Committee recommended that student governance consider the behavior of student groups in future decisions concerning recognition and funding.

The Committee on Student Life
Faculty Chair, Barbara W. Grossman, Drama and Dance
Christoph Börgers, Mathematics
Alva Couch, Computer Science
Calvin Gidney, Child Development
Steven Hirsch, Classics
Colin Orians, Biology
Elizabeth A. Adams, Child Development (graduate student)
Clara Chan A10
Matthew Gardner-Schuster A08
Alison Hoover A08, Student Chair
Theodore Weisman A10
Vanessa White A09

Ex officio members

Veronica Carter, Judicial Affairs Officer

Jodie Nealley, Student Activities

Father David O'Leary

Bruce Reitman, Dean of Students