Petitioners Branch Out: SACC Born

By Chris Fretz
Staff Writer and Jeremy Yoder
Editor-in-Chief

The group of EMU students behind the widely-debated petition to the Board of Trustees has a new name and a broader vision.

Originally formed to produce a petition against the Board of Trustees statement which warned that faculty and the administration, "who publicly advocate positions contrary to [the positions of EMU] ... jeopardize their positions as employees of the university," Student Advocates for Communication and Change (SACC) now want to bring attention to other various issues they are concerned about at EMU. Their goals include faculty tenure and the development of a faculty senate to act as a link between the faculty and the administration.

The group’s original petition was signed by 200 EMU students and reached a wider audience when the weekly church magazine The Mennonite published it and editor Everett Thomas commented on it in his regular column. Since publication, The Mennonite's "Letters" page has been full of debate about academic freedom at Mennonite schools, and Goshen College's student newspaper The Record has covered the stir created.

Since the petition went out, both Student Government Association and SACC have received similar letters from the Board of Trustees, deflecting the responsibility to the President's Cabinet for clarifying what the term "publicly advocate" specifically means. The issue has been taken up by the newly-formed Listening and Facilitation Team (LiFT) and SACC has formed four committees to work with LiFT and other organizations on their different goals.

An SGA committee has been formed to work with SACC at encouraging student involvement on campus and to hold the SACC accountable. A publicity committee will work with publicizing the SACC and making it a visible advocacy group on campus.

The group's original petition has also been formed to explore the needs and concerns of faculty and staff. "We're advocating a strong university, which includes concern for professors and student involvement," said publicity chairperson Sara Versluis. At this point SACC has no intention of becoming an official club so that there are no financial ties between it and EMU.

"There's a need for a watchdog; a system of checks and balances," said member Kevin Docherty. "We weren't satisfied with the SGA process. We didn't feel like they did it justice to what we as students came and asked them for," said SACC member Duane Miller. "Our lack of response from the SGA was a driving force, kind of a motivating factor in us putting the petition together."

Miller is the head of the LiFT committee for SACC, and attends meetings for both organizations, acting as a courier between the two groups.

"We're students keeping students accountable," Miller said. Members of the SACC expressed their hope in opening up new channels of communication on campus, and helping students become more involved in the decision-making process.

"We want to be an outlet for students who aren't being heard; to organize and change some of the systems that have decreased the value of student opinion," said Docherty.

"This involves everyone, not just the vocal people talking about it," said Versluis. "Once you start having a voice, you will be listened to."

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KAUFFMAN from pg. 1

He set his for his students and his philosophy of providing "hands on" experience with a broad range of scientific instrumentation has helped create a program recognized for its rigor and integrity. Glenn's contributions to EMU inside and outside of the classroom have been recognized and are greatly appreciated. Thank you, Glenn.

Kaufman was married to his wife Mary in 1972. Both were at the time teaching at EMC. Both their daughters have graduated from the college while Kaufman taught there.

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