Senate Committee on Student Life  
Meeting #2, October 21, 2014

Members present: Steven L. Andelin, Kevin Harwell, Gul E. Kremer, Barrett A. Lee, Mary C. Miles, Daniel F. Murphy, Alexei Novikov, Lisa L. Sherwood, Damon R. Sims, Anand R. Ganjam

Members absent: Enica Castañeda, Emily J. McDonald, Rosemarie Owoc, Bradley J. Sottile

1. Approval of the Minutes of the September 9, 2014 SLC meeting.

2. Welcome and opening remarks by the Chair

Chair Miles welcomed the members to the meeting, and reported on the following:

   a. Senate session will feature the progress of the General Education Task Force as articulated in their informational report.
   b. Our committee’s request to postpone the forensic session on 21st Century Literacy Skills and Strategy was approved. Our committee will continue working on preparations for the forensic session.
   c. Senate leadership is considering the possibility of and potential mechanisms to grant emeritus status to non-tenure track faculty members.

3. Recruitment of a member to fill the role of Secretary for this meeting.

G. Kremer volunteered to capture the minutes of the meeting.

4. Report from Associate Dean Dennis Shea regarding the task force report on student health care

As part of our preparation for the 21st Century Literacy Skills and Strategy forensic session, Associate Dean Dennis Shea was invited to provide insights on the Task Force on Student Health Insurance. He summarized the charge, and the process by which recommendations were identified.

The task force was charged in April by Provost Nick Jones to explore the interpretation of how the federal Affordable Care Act (ACA) applies to the Penn State student health insurance plan; and to examine factors that contribute to the rising costs of coverage, challenges and opportunities facing student health insurance at Penn State. Over 5-6 weeks, task force members collected and compiled information from stakeholders, peer institutions and providers. Given the complexity of the issue at hand, additional time was requested to complete the work. Task force then organized itself into sub-committees focusing on six areas: (1) mental health, (2) provider network and relationships, (3) health insurance requirements and waivers, (4) process, organization, and engagement, (5) premiums and university contributions, and (6) plan structure, benefits and coverage. The subsequent six-month period was used to continuously sharpen clarity of the challenges and recommendations addressing these challenges.

Overall, issues surrounding student health insurance plans vary with the characteristics of the student sub-populations (i.e., international students, undergraduates (who might be covered by their parents’ plan), and graduate students, out-of-state students (no network coverage)). Recommendations provided were respond to various needs.

Senator Barrett Lee asked if there was a standing committee addressing student health insurance issue. In response, Associate Dean Dennis Shea mentioned the Student Insurance Advisory Council, and Student Insurance Board. However, he also indicated that there was not sufficient student representation on the board, and therefore, requests for representatives were sent to UPUA and Graduate Student Association (GSA). Good representation from GSA was observed. The task force recommended that formal student appointments should be made. A further recommendation was to have a health benefits consultant specifically focusing on student insurance.
Chair Miles asked about the health insurance for World Campus students. At this time, World Campus students are not permitted to enroll in Penn State health insurance plans.

Other significant points of discussion included the need for healthcare providers, focusing on mental health, coverage for chronic illnesses, accidents, and complications from pregnancies, and the complexity of coverage for international students.

Vice President Damon Sims congratulated Associate Dean Dennis Shea on the accomplishments of the task force, and indicated that administration will carefully consider and then move the recommendations into implementation. He also indicated that the mandate on insurance would tie into Lion Path implementation.

5. Brief Updates from Administrative Liaisons and Student Leaders

a. Damon Sims, Vice President of Student Affairs:

New funding was made available to counseling services due to the 25-30% increase in student visits with relevant needs. Services during after-hours and weekend are being reviewed. There is also an initiative for Hershey Medical Center to establish a larger footprint with relevant services in the State College area. However, there are Penn State campuses located away from providers, with no counseling services available.

An initiative is underway to make training and resources available for LGBT services across all campuses.

Student housing issues within the Borough of State College continue to surface. Only one third of our UPstudents live on campus. Programs and services addressing housing issues are important as they impact student well-being and success.

Increasing textbook cost is an issue we may need to address soon.

Damon Sims is serving as the chairman of the Sexual Assault and Harassment Task Force created by President Barron. The charge of the task force is to “collect, review, and provide an evaluation of Penn State’s activities relating to sexual assault and other forms of sexual or gender-based harassment.” Laws and regulations are changing, and Penn State needs to be compliant; the work of the task force responds to this need.

b. Anand Ganjam, President, University Park Graduate Student Association

Anand updated the committee on the following activities of GSA:

1. Sexual violence prevention,
2. Transportation services and ride sharing,
3. New student orientation, and transition issues,
4. New student borough advisory committee to address the issues downtown (noise, etc.). Intended end goal is to improve communication between fraternities and the borough.

C. Daniel Murphy, Liberal Arts Undergraduate Council

Daniel updated the committee on the following activities of UPUA:

1. Campaign on registering to vote.
2. 25 student leaders are to meet with Provost Jones to discuss student engagement.
3. Consideration of reexamination of the Freeh report.
4. Proposal on the permanent student and faculty trustee members.
5. Alcohol policy for 21-year-olds residing in residence halls, and/or designated areas.
6. Town hall meeting with the President’s Council.
6. Discussion of this year’s reports and progress updates

   a. 21st Century Literacy Skills and Strategy (Forensic, January)
      The discussion led by Associate Dean Dennis Shea was intended to help with our preparations
      for this report.
   b. Report on Counseling and Psychological Services (Informational, March)
   c. Joint report on Engaged Scholarship (Informational, December)
   d. Joint reports on Diversity, Internationalization of the Student Body, and Health Care

7. Old Business

8. New Business

9. Adjournment

Respectfully submitted,

Gül E. Kremer