

Minutes*

Senate Consultative Committee
Thursday, March 24, 2005
3:00 – 4:00
Room 238A Morrill Hall

Present: Mary Jo Kane (chair pro tem), Jean Bauer, Charles Campbell, Carol Chomsky, Dan Feeney, Rubens Feroz, Taquee Khaled, Scott Lanyon, Jamie Larson, Judith Martin, John Sullivan, Nathan Wanderman

Absent: Josh Breyfogle, Tom Clayton, James Kanten, Marvin Marshak, Seyon Nyanwleh, Tom Pielow, Catherine Popp, Jeff Ratliff-Crain, Colin Schwensohn, Teresa Wallace

Guests: Vice President Kathleen O'Brien, Associate Vice President Laurie Scheich, Laurie McLaughlin (Director of Housing and Residential Life)

Others: none

[In these minutes: (1) housing issues; (2) Senate docket]

1. Housing Issues

Professor Kane convened the meeting at 3:10 and welcomed Vice President O'Brien, Associate Vice President Scheich, and Ms. McLaughlin to discuss housing issues.

Ms. Scheich recalled that last summer Housing and Residential Life looked at housing demand and what the University provides. A committee was formed to assess the needs; after the report was issued, they presented it to various governance groups. This meeting is for the purpose of providing an update on the recommendations.

Ms. McLaughlin reviewed the four recommendations. First, the University should study the feasibility of adding a 200-300-bed facility if the enrollment target exceeded 5400 new students. Since the number is less than that, they believe the number of spaces they have in housing is manageable. This year they had a number of students in "expanded housing," some until the end of the semester. (Expanded housing is students living in lounges, two students in larger singles, and so on. This is not ideal, Ms. McLaughlin commented, and the students in the residence halls wanted their lounges.)

The second recommendation was that the University should continue to investigate housing options for under-served groups such as graduate/professional students, transfer students, and Greek students. They have formed a task force to look at housing for graduate and professional students; the Graduate and Professional Student Assembly and the Council of Graduate Students will conduct a survey this spring focused on housing. They will also do financial modeling of a 200-300-bed apartment building dedicated to graduate and professional students; they will also explore a public-private

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partnership to provide such housing. It will be important, she said, to have graduate and professional students look at apartment styles because some appear to be more attractive than others.

Vice President O'Brien noted that the Graduate School has raised the issue of cost of attendance: one factor in the University's ability to recruit graduate students is the cost of attendance and the availability and affordability of housing. Some other institutions provide more attractive housing than does the Twin Cities campus of the University.

They are also looking at housing for married/partnered students, Ms. McLaughlin said. Historically they have had a long waiting list for such housing because it was seen as more affordable, but this past year they have had vacancies in one-bedroom units (which are not big enough), so they now allow single graduate students to move into the one-bedroom apartments. They told the Graduate School about this option; it will help but it will not be enough.

There is interest in a Greek village, a residence hall on University land, plus aggressive remodeling of existing Greek houses. There is a group working on this issue as well.

The third recommendation had to do with managing the cost of attendance, Ms. McLaughlin told the Committee, and that includes housing costs. They try to stay very competitive, and the campus is holding at about sixth in the Big Ten in expense. They will look at different funding models, if they need new construction, so that the costs do not have an impact on existing housing.

The fourth recommendation dealt with the possible expansion of the Academic Health Center into the superbloc for clinical services. The task force talked about this proposal and asked that it not be implemented. Students are passionate about the superbloc; it has a residential feeling and provides green space in an urban setting. The task force also said that IF the AHC must expand into the superbloc, the superbloc should be reproduced in its entirety and replacement residence halls should not be spread all over the campus. Vice President O'Brien commented that the superbloc feels like a village, and if the University envisions using that space for other purposes, it also needs to think about constructing a new residential village. At present, however, the Academic Health Center and Fairview are looking at different options.

Professor Martin asked if the Fairview campus on the west bank is closing. Vice President O'Brien said it is not but that Fairview's goal is not to be operating on two campuses within 15-20 years. When a change does occur, there will be an opportunity to make the Riverside neighborhood more stable and residential.

Ms. McLaughlin next reported that they had had conversations with Professor Marshak and Mr. Wanderman about a couple of issues. One was gender integration in the residence halls; Professor Marshak was interested in seeing more such integration. All of the residence halls are coed and 58% of the houses within the residence halls are coed: men and women live in close proximity and share the same community advisor. They were asked to explore the possibility of closer proximity (e.g., men and women in every other room). They will do a pilot project; they are not opposed to that option but there may be some logistical issues (e.g., use of restrooms). They will always offer some gender-segregated options because some students want it and some international students' religious or ethnic beliefs require it.

Has it been suggested that such integrated housing is better, Professor Kane asked? Students are better behaved, Ms. McLaughlin said. There is research demonstrating that students behave better (that is, there is less vandalism) in mixed facilities than in all-male halls.

Professor Martin observed that student-athletes are housed together in residence halls; some believe they would have a better experience if they were spread out. Ms. McLaughlin said she had spoken with Professor Marshak about this issue and will talk with Athletic Director Joel Maturi. They reserve approximately 300 total spaces for all student-athletes (including first-year and upper division) of which approximately 170 are for new first-year students (all first-year students are guaranteed housing if they are admitted to the University and apply for housing by May 1st, so first-year student athletes would get housing even if they did not reserve the spaces). Some coaches believe that having the ability to offer first-year students housing in one of the on-campus apartment facilities is a recruiting advantage. Housing & Residential Life does not believe that placing first-year students (athletes or not) in apartments is the best housing arrangement for first-year students because the apartments can be more isolated and first-year students miss out on many of the opportunities provided for first-year students in the traditional residence halls on campus. Some first-year athletes have reported that living in an on-campus apartment was attractive initially, but they also wondered if they missed out on some of the "college experience" because they didn't have as many opportunities to get to know and interact with other students on campus.

Professor Kane said this issue will be taken up by the Advisory Committee on Athletics and thanked Mss. O'Brien, Scheich, and McLaughlin for joining the Committee.

2. Senate Docket

The Committee unanimously approved the Senate docket.

Mr. Wanderman reported that the Student Senate approved a statement on program closure that it wishes to have on an upcoming Senate docket.

Professor Kane adjourned the meeting at 3:45.

-- Gary Engstrand