

SENATE COMMITTEE ON STUDENT AFFAIRS  
MINUTES OF MEETING  
MARCH 3, 2004

[In these minutes: Approval of February 4, 2004 Minutes, Continued  
Discussion of Student Housing, Periodic Review of Student Conduct Code]

[These minutes reflect discussion and debate at a meeting of a committee of the University Senate or Twin Cities Assembly; none of the comments, conclusions, or actions reported in these minutes represent the view of, nor are they binding on the Senate or Assembly, the Administration, or the Board of Regents.]

PRESENT: Adam VanWagner, chair, Gerald Rinehart, Iraj Bashiri, Yasemin Kaygisiz, Kim Roufs, Janet Schottel, Emily Brown, Shawn Lavelle, Matt Painschab, Divya Raman

REGRETS: David Lenander, Jean-Marie Del-Santo, Nathan Hilfiker

ABSENT: Erin Albrecht, Nathan Saete

OTHER(S): Tina Falkner, Gabriele Schmiegel

I). Adam VanWagner called the meeting to order.

II). The Committee unanimously approved the February 4, 2004 minutes.

III). Adam VanWagner introduced the Director of Housing and Residential Life Laurie McLaughlin who will participate in today's continued discussion on student housing. Discussion highlights are below:

- According to Ms. McLaughlin, returning students would never be bumped from their student housing assignments in the event there was not enough space for first year students. Housing and Residential Life (HRL) has been fortunate in the fact that the percentage of first year and returning students that choose to live on campus has been fairly consistent; roughly 75% and 25% respectively. In order to accommodate the University's first year student guarantee, the University has not, to date, been put in a position to limit the number

of returning students. Current residents get first opportunity for any space that is not reserved for a special program. Special programs include first year experience programs, living/learning communities, etc.

- Projections for fall 2004 appear to be the same as in years past in terms of first year and returning student housing applications. It is not uncommon for HRL to receive applications from students who pay the \$100 advance payment and \$25 application fee in order to guarantee a place to live because their living arrangements for the fall have not been finalized. If students cancel their application before May 1<sup>st</sup>, they are refunded their \$100 advance payment. Students that cancel after May 1<sup>st</sup> would lose their \$100 advance payment.
- Does HRL get a sense that a given number of students do not apply for returning student housing because the process starts so early after spring semester starts e.g. early February? To the best Ms. McLaughlin<sup>1</sup>'s knowledge this has not been an issue with students.
- HRL will once again institute a more formalized process for collecting information on why out-going students are choosing to leave on-campus housing. Ms. McLaughlin distributed a draft survey to members for their review and input. The survey asks out-going students the following question: <sup>3</sup>Why did you choose not to live in the Residence Halls or Apartments at the University of Minnesota - Twin Cities for the Fall 2004 semester?<sup>2</sup> Response options include: graduating, transferring, withdrawing from the University, studying abroad, do not want a University meal plan, inability to reserve a particular room type or apartment type and a response that seeks to learn if the desire for independence and autonomy is the motivating factor for their decision.
- The University has roughly 150 students that do not show up on move-in day each fall. The reason is primarily because there is no financial incentive for students to inform HRL if they are not planning to attend the University in the fall. Therefore, HRL, starting this fall, will no longer refund a student<sup>1</sup>'s \$250 advance payment fee, which is due by May 31<sup>st</sup>, if they do not contact the University by August 1<sup>st</sup> to let them know they have had a change of plans. This policy is intended to help HRL better manage its housing facilities.
- Are there a lot of students that decide to move off campus and then want to move back on campus? A few students choose to do this but

it is by no means an overwhelming majority, according to Ms. McLaughlin.

- Is there a strong demand for student housing by transfer students? In Ms. McLaughlin<sup>1</sup>'s opinion there is a fairly healthy demand, particularly for those students that are transferring after their first semester or first year. In fall 2004, HRL is starting a transfer student house in a portion of Bailey Hall. This initiative will offer programmatic links for transfer students in addition to having them share a common living space. Similarly, there has been a demand for graduate student housing, particularly for international graduate students. In response to this demand, HRL reserved about 20 spaces in University Village and another 20 in Centennial Hall this past year to address this demand. Surprisingly, the single rooms in Centennial Hall were more popular than the apartment style housing in University Village.
- Is it fair to say that the University is unable to accommodate all the students that want to live on campus? According to Ms. McLaughlin, it is fair to say the University is unable to accommodate all transfer and graduate student requests for housing. So far the University has been successful in accommodating most other housing requests by undergraduate students. Is it also fair to say that there are not that many undergraduate students, after their freshman year, that want to live on campus? Ms. McLaughlin agreed that this statement would be fairly accurate and noted that there are roughly 1,700 non-first-year students that return to on-campus housing each year.
- It was noted that there may actually be a fair number of students that would like to live in the University<sup>1</sup>'s apartment style housing, however, when they realize their chances to secure one of these accommodations is questionable, they do not even try. Ms. McLaughlin responded by citing the large number of developments that have been constructed recently by private developers near campus and their high vacancy rates. If the University were to build more apartment style housing units it would face steep competition in terms of the special enticements private developments are using to attract renters. Ms. McLaughlin also reminded members that the University<sup>1</sup>'s apartment style housing still has rules and regulations
- A comment was made that it would seem likely that students would prefer on-campus housing over off-campus housing because most off-

campus housing requires a 12-month lease. Ms. McLaughlin noted that the University's apartment style housing units require a 12-month lease. However, in the case of the University Village complex, the University is experimenting with its 12-month lease requirement and has decided that the private bedroom apartments will remain 12-month leases, but the shared bedroom apartments will have 9 1/2-month leases.

- Does the University have housing for married couples? Ms. McLaughlin noted that the University has two housing cooperatives located on the St. Paul campus for family and partnered housing. The co-ops have extended the traditional definition of family to include single parent households, domestic partner households and extended family households. The University owns the co-op property. However, the co-ops hire a management company to run the facility and through a board of directors residents manage their co-op community. The co-ops are very popular and affordable. There is a waiting list for these properties. At any given time there could be up to 750 students on the waiting list and they can expect to wait on average 11 - 24 months to get in. Students are allowed to live in these facilities for 7 years. One of the co-ops has a major mold problem and the University expects this to be a \$10 million abatement project.
- What alternative housing options are available for undergraduate students that do not want a CA, etc.? Is the University looking at expanding its co-op housing facilities to accommodate undergraduate students that desire other housing options? According to Ms. McLaughlin, no formal discussions have occurred regarding expanding co-op housing options for single student housing although this is an interesting model to consider. She reminded members that University housing for undergraduate students has staff and it is committed to helping students not only with their academic pursuits, but personal growth and development as well. These services make University housing unique.
- How is the HRL survey going to be conducted? What will be done with the results? Ms. McLaughlin noted that the survey will be sent over email, and, depending on the survey results, the University could potentially look into making changes, which could make on-campus housing more attractive to upperclassmen e.g. modify the meal plan, etc. However, as long as the University has a first-year guarantee for

incoming students, then the University may be put in a position to limit the number of returning students; something the University has not had to do before.

- Does HRL intentionally try to keep its demand for returning student housing relatively low in light of the first-year guarantee and the University<sup>1</sup>'s limited amount of student housing? What are the prospects that the University would increase its housing supply and consequently work to increase demand by returning student for this housing? Ms. McLaughlin said a big issue is cost, which is a direct pass on to students; the University is not eligible for State dollars for capital projects. Some of the factors to consider if the University were to build additional student housing include affordability for students, property availability, and competition with private developments close to campus. Ms. McLaughlin posed the question, is there really a demand for student housing close to campus? In reality, there is quite a bit of space on or close to campus currently available for students to live.
- The proposed survey deals with reasons why students are leaving student housing, conversely should HRL consider adding questions so students could share the reasons they liked living on campus? Ms. McLaughlin noted that HRL conducts a couple of surveys each year, however, they do not specifically ask students what they like about living on-campus housing. Currently, HRL is conducting focus groups in each of the residence halls and are collecting this information through this method. Ms. McLaughlin noted that this is a good idea and could be incorporated into the *OEIntent to Return*<sup>1</sup> form.
- When will the survey be sent out? HRL plans to send out the survey next week. Ms. McLaughlin welcomed suggestions and feedback. Feedback from members included:
  - The way this survey is designed, students are only able to choose one option. Instead, students should be able to choose multiple options as their reason(s). It is likely more than one reason may be applicable.
  - Allow students to rank their responses.
  - Include an open-ended question that would permit students to share what they enjoyed about living in student housing.
  - Besides sending this to survey to students that have indicated they will not be returning to student housing in the fall, send it

to students who are currently not living in student housing to find out why.

- Consult with other universities that have conducted similar surveys in order to craft a better, more comprehensive survey that will yield useful results.
- It is unlikely survey participants will choose the "Other" category at the bottom of the survey, instead they need to be able to answer yes or no or be given choices rather than come up with a response on their own.
- Associate Vice Provost Jerry Rinehart suggested drafting a question or two to be included in the Senior Exit Survey either this year or next year to better understand students' housing experiences and frustrations.
- In the University's Housing and Residential Life mission and goals statement, there is no mention of "affordable" or "safe" housing. This should be reviewed and possibly revised.
- A member asked whether Ms. McLaughlin was familiar with Harvard's 2001 Affordable Housing Development Competition? This competition raised awareness on the Harvard campus and in the community of the need for tasteful, affordable housing. Ms. McLaughlin noted that she is not familiar with this competition but would be interested in learning more.
- A member asked Ms. McLaughlin if she had two wishes regarding student housing what would they be. Ms. McLaughlin stated that without being given time to think about this question, off the top of her head, she wished that:
  - There would never have to be another rate increase for student housing.
  - Ideas and strategies on how HRL can better serve the needs of students from a dining perspective will be arrived at.
- Ms. McLaughlin was then asked what are the two biggest barriers she faces. Again, with not much time to think, Ms. McLaughlin stated:
  - Housing rates are of a great concern in the context of what is happening with tuition increases and the overall cost of education.
  - There may come a time in the not too distant future that it will be increasingly unacceptable for students to share a 180 square

foot double room. This will require major rethinking of student housing as privacy issues surface.

- Are there plans to expand the family and partnered housing in light of the long waiting list? According to Ms. McLaughlin there are no immediate plans to expand family and partnered housing or any other types of student housing for that matter. One of the biggest barriers is cost because anything the University would build would need to be affordable for students.
- How long has the University<sup>1</sup>'s meal plan been in existence? How has it been able to sustain itself for so long and yet create so much controversy? The University for many, many years has had a mandatory meal plan noted Ms. McLaughlin. Unique to the University is the fact that the Twin Cities campus has 8 traditional residence halls and 6 dining facilities. This model is very expensive to operate, and, in order to make ends meet from a budgetary perspective, the plan needs to be mandated. If the University were to consider changing its meal plan, it may need to consolidate some of its dining facilities.

Adam VanWagner thanked Ms. McLaughlin for her participation in today<sup>1</sup>'s meeting. Ms. McLaughlin thanked the Committee as well for their feedback on the proposed survey and agreed to share the results with members once it has been compiled.

IV). Periodic Review of the Student Conduct Code: Adam VanWagner stated that concerns have been raised with respect to the role the Senate Committee on Student Affairs (SCSA) should play in the periodic review of the Student Conduct Code. The primary concerns are:

- The periodic review of the Code is a large task. Is this too much work for the Committee to take on?
- Can SCSA actually appoint itself as part of the review body of a regental policy?

Therefore, instead of SCSA members actually serving on the committee that reviews the Code, a suggestion was made that the Committee<sup>1</sup>'s charge be modified to include a statement that would ensure that during the review process the Committee<sup>1</sup>'s input will be solicited. A member stated that the Committee<sup>1</sup>'s involvement should not be limited to input on the Code review

but to all issues that fall under the SCSA domain. Members continued their discussion of the feasibility and logistics of SCSA<sup>1</sup>'s involvement in review of the Code.

Adam VanWagner asked members if they would like to incorporate a statement in the SCSA charge that would validate the Committee<sup>1</sup>'s role in providing input on regental policies that fall under the purview of the Office of Student Affairs. A suggestion was made to make the statement fairly broad e.g. The chief student affairs officer will consult with the Senate Committee on Student Affairs on matters pertaining to Regent<sup>1</sup>'s policy that falls within this Committee<sup>1</sup>'s purview. Adam VanWagner volunteered to draft language for the Committee<sup>1</sup>'s charge to this effect and distribute via email for members input.

Shawn Lavelle indicated he is still interested in pursuing the Joint Statement on the Rights and Freedoms of Students. He will discuss this matter further with Vice Provost Jerry Rinehart.

V). Hearing no further business, Adam VanWagner adjourned the meeting.

Renee Dempsey  
University Senate