

SENATE COMMITTEE ON STUDENT AFFAIRS
MINUTES OF MEETING
SEPTEMBER 8, 2004

[In these minutes: Report on Spring 2004 HRL Exit Survey, Subcommittee Housing Report, Campus Life Benchmarking Project]

[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: Kristen Denzer, chair, Jennifer Wagner, Christina Trok, Gerald Rinehart, Kendre Turonie, Yasemin Kaygisiz, Carolyn Nayematsu, Kim Roufs, Janet Schottel, Christine Ascherman, Divya Raman

REGRETS: Iraj Bashiri, Jean-Marie Del-Santo, Matt Painschab

ABSENT: Shannon Carry

OTHER(S): Gabriele Schmiegel, Tina Falkner

GUEST: Laurie McLaughlin, Director of Housing and Residential Life

I). Kristen Denzer called the meeting to order and asked those present to introduce themselves.

II). Laurie McLaughlin, Director of Housing and Residential Life (HRL), provided members with the results of the spring 2004 exit survey conducted by HRL. Ms. McLaughlin highlighted the following:

- The exit survey was sent as an email link to all residence hall/apartment students who did not reapply for student housing by the end of the application deadline.
- Of the 3,669 students that received the survey, 1,251 responded (34% response rate).
- Survey results indicated that the four major reasons students decided to move off-campus were:

- Preference to live off-campus, which students perceived to mean more independence, less structure, no University staff and fewer rules and regulations.
- Financial - a number of students perceived living off-campus to be less expensive than living on-campus.
- Meal Plan - several students indicated they did not want to participate in a mandatory meal plan.
- Unable to secure the type of room requested during the room application process.
- One third of the University's on-campus population are returning students and the remaining two thirds are first year students.
- The University has not yet been put in a position to limit returning students to accommodate first year students.
- The two most difficult populations for HRL to serve are transfer and graduate students.
- A work group has been formed as part of the Academic Health Center's (AHC) long-term capital plan for merging clinical sciences on the Minneapolis campus. Among other things, the work group will look at the current and expected demand for on-campus undergraduate housing. Currently, in Ms. McLaughlin's opinion, there is no need for additional undergraduate student housing.
- Especially over the past year, there have been high vacancy rates for housing within close proximity to the University.
- HRL makes every attempt to stabilize its rate increases. This year, for example, although HRL's fixed costs increased by 7%, it only raised its student housing rates by 4%.

Members spent time discussing this information. Comments/questions from members included:

- Oftentimes students attempt to make off-campus housing more affordable by overloading the capacity of the unit they are renting.
- To what extent are parents purchasing housing in close proximity to the University for their child/children to use while attending school? Ms. McLaughlin is not aware of this being an issue for the University like it is in the Highland Park area near the College of St. Catherine and the University of St. Thomas.
- Has the University considered not requiring a meal plan? Currently, this has not been a consideration for the University for four primary reasons:

- Most of the University's student housing is comprised of traditional residence halls with no kitchen facilities in students' rooms.
- Philosophically, the University believes students residing in on-campus housing should be focusing on their academics, working on becoming part of the larger University community, life skills etc. rather than preparing meals.
- It is the goal of HRL to provide nutritious meals to its residents.
- The University needs a financial base of a specified number of students participating in the meal plan to cover the cost of running its dining operations. The University of Minnesota Twin Cities campus has eight residence facilities with six dining centers, which cost a lot of money to operate. Most institutions have far fewer dining centers.

A UDS (University Dining Services) Student Advisory Committee has recently been formed to address issues around residential dining concerns, retail operations, catering, etc. Several alternatives to a mandatory meal plan are being considered e.g. 'declining balance program', which many students perceive to be less expensive.

- Is it possible for students that have purchased the mandatory meal plan to share their meals with family and/or friends? No, this is not an option. Although it is quite a complex calculation, the reason this is not possible has to do with the missed meal factor.
- Besides the meal plan issue, is the type of food that is served, especially for students of color. Unfortunately, no matter what UDS does the type of food that is served will never be ethnic enough and what students are accustomed to from home.
- At the request of a member, Ms. McLaughlin shared information on the Academic Health Center's (AHC) long term capital plan for merging clinical sciences on the Minneapolis campus and how this could potentially impact current student housing on the 'super block'. She noted that Vice President of University Services Kathleen O'Brien formed a work group this summer to look at this issue. The work group's analysis will take into account current demand for on-campus housing as well as anticipated needs. The work group, which includes student leadership, plans to issue a final report based on their findings to Vice President O'Brien by October 15, 2004. At this point, it appears that the AHC plans to bring their final plan to the Board of Regents at either the November or December meeting.

III). Kendre Turonie, one of the subcommittee members investigating the types of

housing offered by various institutions as well as the demand for graduate/professional student housing and family/partnered housing, reported the subcommittee's preliminary findings to the full Committee. She distributed a handout, which compared the University to the Big 10, Big 12 and other large institutions in general. It was noted that based on the subcommittee's analysis, the University houses 17.25% of its students based on its total capacity. (The formula used to calculate housing capacity was housing units divided by total enrollment). While the 17.25% may seem low compared to other Big 10 schools, it was noted that the University is a very urban institution.

Members requested the following additional information:

- Separate out the percentage of undergraduate students housed in student housing from graduate/professional students.
- Compare the University's available housing with other urban institutions. In theory, total enrollment would likely be larger for urban institutions than for rural institutions, and, therefore, less student housing may be needed for urban institutions for a variety of reasons.
- What percentage of the University's students are from the metro area, and, as a result, do not need on-campus housing?
- Are there schools like the University, which are located in an urban environment that have quality reputations in terms of providing student housing? If so, please identify and share information about their housing programs.

Ms. McLaughlin recommended that the subcommittee work in collaboration with HRL to try to best serve the University's graduate, professional and transfer students' housing needs. She cautioned that the data is very confusing to work with and stressed the importance of comparing 'apples to apples' when collecting data from other institutions.

IV). Kristen Denzer shared with the Committee information collected by former chair Adam VanWagner on cooperative housing. The recommendation from this report was that the University should sponsor additional coops and make students aware of the cooperative housing option.

Members were confused by what was meant by recommending that the University "sponsor" additional cooperative housing developments. Ms. Denzer agreed to

contact Mr. VanWagner for clarification.

V). Ms. Denzer noted that a member has requested that the Committee's meeting time be changed. She asked for members input regarding this request. Members requested that the meeting time remain the same, first Wednesday of the month from 2:30 - 4:00, as was decided last spring.

VI). Stemming from conversations with this Committee and others last spring, Jerry Rinehart, noted that a Campus Life Benchmarking Project is being launched. This initiative will explore student experiences at two other Big 10 universities, Michigan State and University of Wisconsin at Madison. Vice Provost Rinehart requested Ms. Denzer, as chair of the Student Affairs Committee, participate in this project. He noted that there will also be student representation in this project from MSA, GAPSA, the Greek and Panhellenic organizations, the Residential Hall Advisory Group and the Twin Cities Student Union Governing Board. TCF is funding this project so student representatives will not be required to pay their own way.

As part of this project, Vice Provost Rinehart distributed a set of questions that need to be developed. He requested that members review these question areas and let him know if there are additional questions that should be asked during the visits to these two institutions. Examples of topics that will be discussed during these visits include:

- Student government
- Student organizations
- Greek and Panhellenic organizations
- Student fees
- Lobbying/legislative affairs
- Late night programming
- Dining services
- Housing
- Recreational sports
- Stadium

Vice Provost Rinehart again welcomed additional suggestions for topics that should be covered during their visit. The purpose behind this initiative is to uncover where the University excels and where it needs to improve. As this initiative evolves there may be an opportunity to bring Michigan State and University of Wisconsin

students to the University next year as well as include other institutions in this benchmarking project.

Why were Michigan State and University of Wisconsin Madison chosen? According to Vice Provost Rinehart a variety of factors went into choosing these two schools, but by in large it came down to logistics.

VII). Hearing no further business, Kristen Denzer adjourned the meeting.

Renee Dempsey
University Senate