

To: The Faculty Senate
From: Bruce Mann, Chair of the Student Life Committee
Re: Report for the year 2012-2013
Date: April 16, 2013

The Student Life Committee (SLC) met throughout the fall and spring terms, most often on a bi-weekly schedule. The members of the committee this year were: Katy Appleby (student), Ryan Del Rosario (student), Lisa Ferrari (Associate Academic Dean, staff), Ian Latimer (student), Bruce Mann (faculty, chair), Jennifer Neighbors (faculty, fall term) Mike Segawa (Dean of Students, staff), Ben Tucker (Library liaison), John Wesley (faculty), and Lisa Wood (faculty). Amanda Mifflin and Amy Odegard were the Senate liaisons during the year.

The committee operated this year with a full complement of faculty appointments during the fall, but had less than a full complement during the spring term. The Senate was notified, and permission was given to proceed. Ben Tucker, upon the advice of the Library Director, accepted the position of library liaison, following the tradition of having a representative from the library staff attend and participate (but not vote) in committee affairs. We recommend this continue as the library, through a number of programs, is strongly tied to student life and the campus intellectual climate.

The Senate provided the SLC with the following charges for the 2012-13 year:

1. Continue to assess issues and programs regarding campus diversity.
2. Review plans for the two year residential requirement and the new residential facility.
3. Review plans for the renovation of the Wheelock Student Center.
4. Review the Student Affairs ad hoc committee role of committee members.

As the charges suggest the primary purpose of the committee is to provide guidance, counsel, and advice to the Dean of Students. Hence, other items considered by SLC were at the request of the Dean.

This year an additional assignment was placed on the committee by Dean Bartanen and the Senate. Each member of the committee would serve (on a rotating basis) for Integrity Board, Honor Court, and Sexual Misconduct Board hearings. The assignment of committee members to panels and the administration of the hearings was under the direction of Krystle Cobian (Conduct Coordinator, Dean of Students Office). The process, while cumbersome, appeared to work fairly well. Not many hearing board/panels were needed, so the burden on individual committee members was minimal. This may not be the case in subsequent years. The Senate, in consultation with appropriate offices, should review whether this is an appropriate way to staff hearing boards/panels.

The committee reviewed the construction and program plans for the new residential facility. The committee was impressed with the inclusion of many “open” spaces and public facilities in the hall. Student members of the committee noted that one continuing problem for students was an inadequate amount of “private, quiet, cohesive” study spaces on campus. The hope is that some of the rooms in the new facility can ameliorate, to some extent, this problem. In addition, the allocation of the “suite living” design to affiliate groups (interest groups and academic programs) was applauded. At the last meeting of the year, the committee toured the facility and discussed the design and timing of completion with facilities staff.

Czarina Ramsay, Director of Multicultural Student Services, explained the current plans and operations regarding multicultural services and engagement for the campus. She reported on the Logger Diversity Summit with students, faculty, and staff. Based on the positive responses, a second summit was conducted in the fall term. As noted in last year’s report, Ms. Ramsay continues her outreach efforts, with a particular focus on coordinating activities and information across students groups involved in diversity issues. The prevailing sense of the committee is that addressing diversity issues and multicultural programming remains important for the campus, and the plans that are in place seem appropriate.

Linda Everson, director of the Counseling, Health, and Wellness office, presented a report on activities. She noted that the office had not seen any unusual increase in activity due to flu or upper respiratory illnesses. Most likely, the availability of flu shots contributed to preventive action by students. In response to student concerns, she noted that there was only a small reduction in the number of appointments since the inception of the twenty dollar co-pay fee for the provision of health services (no fee for just a nurse visit) initiated this year. The rationale for the fee was purely budgetary, with a waiver for financial considerations. Also new this year, the university, due to escalating costs, did not renew its student insurance program. It is the student’s responsibility to provide health insurance coverage. The hope is that an institutional sponsored program can be re-established.

Everson discussed the way in which CHWS will be restructured due to her retirement. Her administrative responsibilities will be divided among the current staff and a new consulting nurse will be hired. Service continuation should be seamless. Student committee members did express the concern that the office do a better job of a) informing residential students of the programs and services that are available and b) reducing wait times (a continuing source of complaint). The ability to treat mental health problems continues to be scrutinized.

Gayle McIntosh, Executive Director of Communications, discussed the university’s plans for branding and visibility. The plan has been designed to complement, and be part of, the 125th anniversary of Puget Sound. She reported that research by her office and consultants provided a coherent theme for the university’s purpose,

mission, and campus life. This “positive branding” will also help the university reach the “next tier” level for prospective students and university supporters.

The committee spent considerable time reviewing the results of the 2012 Campus Climate Survey with Dean Segawa and University Chaplin David Wright. The analysis considered the responses by faculty, students, and staff regarding the current state of diversity, inclusion, understanding, and acceptance of differences. The presentation also allowed the committee to see how these results compared to the last Campus Climate Survey (2006).

Committee members agreed that, by and large, the climate on campus had improved from 2006. However, not unexpectedly, there are still some issues for consideration. The campus remains predominantly white, upper income, and Protestant. Minority community members reported some incidents of “lack of understanding,” “dismissive” attitudes, or “insensitive” comments. The committee expressed some concern about the lack of economic diversity impacts campus life, and if this created a feeling of entitlement by some community members and exclusion by others. Student committee members noted that while the Student Affairs staff has increased programming to encourage removing barriers, students still tend to socialize and form groups homogeneously. The committee felt that the university was moving in the right direction, but more needs to be done.

The committee discussed issues about, and surrounding, the use of social media. Sarah Stall reported that the university’s Office of Communication does monitor web sites that present information about the university. The most problematic site, currently, is the UPS Confessions page (many other colleges also have pages in this domain). The university works to protect its intellectual property, since the site is not affiliated with Puget Sound. Rachel Borsini and Santiago Rodriguez (ASUPS) reported that they also monitor the content of the Confessions page. The issue is that comments on the page are sometimes offensive, incorrect, or present personal problems. The university cannot intercede on this page, it has no official monitoring status, and it can only remain aware of the content. A second issue is whether individual comments really do raise a safety issue for the individual (“calling for help”) or for the campus community. At this point the only response is to monitor and provide any pre-emptory aid possible.

One theme that did emerge from the discussions of regarding diversity issues and social media is the question of “free speech” on campus and within the community. While this is not a significant current issue, the committee did consider how limitations (if any) on speech could impact campus life.

During its deliberations this year the committee identified the following issues that should be put on next year’s Charges to the Committee:

- A. Evaluate the way in which the university addresses the issue of work-life balance for students. Do we have adequate support for students in making these decisions?
- B. Review the amount and availability of private, cohesive study spaces on campus. What spaces are available, especially during the evening, for student use – outside of residential facilities and the library?
- C. Evaluate the efficacy of Counseling, Health, and Wellness Services, including ways by which the university promotes good health practices. Issues to consider are a) the impact on access due to the co-pay fee, b) the provision of university sponsored health insurance, and c) the adequacy of staffing for mental health services.
- D. Begin a discussion regarding economic diversity on campus. Are there issues that need to be addressed?
- E. Explore the question of how to address the issues related to appropriate speech and social media message. Is a university policy needed?

In addition to these specific suggestions, the committee should continue its role in advising and providing counsel to the Dean of Students at his discretion.