

## **Student Life Committee Minutes January 28, 2010**

Attending: Bruce Mann, Lisa Ferrari, Debbie Chee, Geoff Proehl, Jan Leuchtenberger

The minutes for the December 2 and December 9 meetings of the Student Life Committee (SLC) were amended and approved by the committee members.

A member announced that in an upcoming Wednesday at 4 she would chair and another committee member would participate in a panel to discuss how to integrate returning study-abroad students into classes.

Another member commented on a survey sent out by the International Education Committee that asked departments to comment on how they integrate returning study-abroad students in their curricula. Lisa Ferrari explained that the survey grew out of the work of the IEC last year to pare down the number of study abroad programs, and also addresses concerns that some departments might be underserved by the remaining programs. The questions may serve to guide discussions about the role of study abroad in different departments, and help Jannie Meisberger guide students in certain majors as they research different programs.

The Chair announced that he had met with Rich Anderson-Connolly and that there were now plans for them to meet with Nick Kontogeorgopoulos and a member of the IEC to discuss which committee should take over the surveys on returning study abroad students that originated in the SLC.

The members discussed an appropriate meeting time for the semester but tabled the discussion for a time when more information on schedules was available.

Debbie Chee attended the meeting to continue the discussion of the Retention Task Force and its recommendations. The Chair asked her to talk about some of the issues that related to Student Life, where the Task Force stands right now, and how the SLC might help:

- Debbie reviewed some of the findings and discussed how the Task Force broke down some of the issues for further study, asking if ethnicity, living on campus, or other factors mattered. They are still working on defining those areas.
- Some questions that still remain are:
  - Whether there are specific things that can be done, or whether it is worth putting the resources into potential fixes that might not have a high rate of return.
  - The Committee members also asked about the advantages and disadvantages to tracking down students who might be thinking of leaving and trying to convince them to stay. Shouldn't we just let them go?

- One reason to pursue them is that every time Puget Sound loses a student this way, it loses about \$25,000 in terms of funds spent on recruitment, orientation, advising, etc.
- Some data showed:
  - Students with GPSs in the 3.0-3.4 range with low unmet need are one target group for retention. They often leave because they have no connection. They are good enough to go elsewhere, and because they are relatively high achievers, they don't show up on the Student Alert radar.
  - The third and sixth weeks of the semester are important moments in retention decisions among students.
- In response, the Task Force has implemented a third-week check-in, asking advisors and peer advisors to check back with their advisees in the third week to see how they are doing. Peer advisors, in particular, have been asked to speak with every student and specifically ask if they are planning to come back.
  - Committee members were ambivalent about asking these questions and wondered if they should be involved in this. Would asking the question not plant the idea?
  - Also thought it was a question best asked by a peer, rather than a professor.
- The Task Force has also realized that Residence Life is most in touch with all of the freshmen, so they are investigating what they can do to reach out to those who seem not to be engaged (which was the most common reason for students to leave).
- Faculty members asked Debbie about what they should do to help in retention:
  - Should students who cite financial issues be sent to the Financial Aid Office? One member said he had done that often, but usually students don't get any help so wondered if that was not the right thing to do. Debbie said it was – there's no telling what all of the student's circumstances are, so they should always check.
  - Debbie also suggested that faculty who hear of a student who is considering leaving should do a Student Alert so that someone in Student Affairs learns of it.
  - Faculty pointed out that they were unaware that this was a suggestion, and perhaps some kind of information sheet or training on how to best deal with students showing interest in leaving would be helpful.
- Ultimately, Debbie noted that there are so many different student needs and reasons for leaving that finding strategies to increase retention is very difficult.

The meeting was adjourned at 4 pm.  
 Respectfully submitted,  
 Jan Leuchtenberger