

Student Life Committee Minutes
March 2, 2010

Attending: Mike Segawa, Bruce Mann, Aislinn Melchior, Lisa Ferrari, Christian Brink, Jordan Greiner (new student member), Alison Tracy Hale, Geoff Proehl, Jan Leuchtenberger.

The meeting convened at 4 pm.

The Chair updated the Committee on his participation in the Exclusive Use Ad-hoc Committee, which recommended three groups for the three available houses. Unlike in recent years, when Greek organizations and others have sometimes had difficulty fulfilling their obligation to maintain an average occupancy of 90%, the successful applicants were able to offer guarantees of “100 + 2,” or 100% plus two potential occupants in case those signed up have to leave for some reason.

Segawa noted that the university is putting together a process to bring a fourth fraternity to campus – possible in May.

A Committee member asked what the impetus for that move was, and Segawa answered that it came from:

- A policy that calls for a review team to comment to the Dean whether or not to pursue expansion of the Greek community. Last year the team did peer comparisons and found that Puget Sound has a smaller Greek community than its peers so the team recommended expansion.
- Interest from the Greek community on campus.
- Interest from a group of men in a fraternity different from the existing three.
- A traditional preference for Greek houses on Union Ave. (one is now occupied by the Humanities House but the preference is for all Greeks on Union).

A Committee member asked about the origin of the preference for Greek houses on Union. If the process unfolding results in moving the Humanities House it might be useful to understand the origins of the preference. Segawa said he thinks the preference may date to when the houses were renovated about a dozen years ago, but he was not sure and offered to find out more.

Other members also wondered why, if the Humanities House was successful, similar houses would not be pursued, perhaps ones built around majors. Segawa noted that, traditionally, Puget Sound students have not shown an interest in major floors or houses on campus. He also noted that the success of the Humanities House is largely due to the enthusiasm of George Erving and the efforts of faculty to recruit upperclassmen.

A Committee member asked if outside fraternities are asking to have a presence on campus. Segawa said they are always asking but that they are generally kept at arm's length. We are not yet ready to contact a particular fraternity.

Segawa said that Randy Nelson was asked to do a breakdown of student success in the Greek community, and he found that they seem to do the same as the rest of the community, though women perform a little better. It is not clear if that is because they are already pre-disposed to do well, or if the influence of living on Union has an effect. They are looking into this. Proximity to campus is clearly important to participation in campus activities.

The Committee moved on to a related topic in the Retention Task Force – a comparison of the success of students who live on and off campus.

The statistics show that:

- There are benefits to living on campus – even at the national level this is consistently clear.
- Among freshmen, those on campus usually met predicted GPA but those off campus fell below the predicted GPA.
- Sophomores living off campus tend to have greater unmet need (food and rent are cheaper off campus, so they seem to be moving off to save money).

The RTF has not done more work on this information but will soon.

The Chair noted that there is clearly a benefit to living on campus but we are also hearing that we need more room on campus. What is the solution?

Segawa said that the next phase of the campus master plan could have some residential component, and this is a conversation that is just beginning with the Board of Trustees. Issues under discussion include:

- Are we housing the right students in the rooms we already have?
- Should we privilege sophomores over seniors?
- Should we move new residences up in the overall master plan?
- What is the role of our residential component? For many traditional liberal arts colleges that is an important part of building loyalty and traditions for the student body.
- We need a coherent residential plan that folds in Greek life, retention and who we are as an institution.

A Committee member asked if we ask students' opinions about housing. Segawa said that yes, every year the students are surveyed on Ras, bathrooms, food, etc. Mostly they give UPS high marks. There are no real issues according to the survey results. The school also has consortium data on the different pieces of student life. Those surveys ask about overall data every year and then one specific issue each year. This year they will ask about recreation.

Segawa said he would continue to update the Committee on this issue and ask for its comments.

Another new topic of discussion was the issue of information literacy. Recently a recommendation was made to build it into the curriculum. One recommendation was that the component of academic integrity be inserted into the seminar curriculum. Another option is to insert information literacy training into classes or into the residential component. Something about it may also be added to orientation.

Members asked for clarification of the term “information literacy.” Ferrari said it includes:

- Good scholarship
- Distinguishing what is good information and what is not.
- The ability to find information for scholarly work as opposed to information for general knowledge.
- Being able to document sources.

The reason the issue has been brought to the Student Life Committee is so that it can be addressed from the perspective of a campus mentality or mindset (rather than the Committee concerning itself with how and where it should be added to the curriculum). Segawa pointed out that there is great potential to influence the students on this topic through the peer advisors, RA’s and writing advisors.

The Chair suggested that this issue be discussed further at the next meeting and that some people knowledgeable about the issue might be invited to that meeting.

The next meeting of the SLC will take place on Tuesday, March 23 at 4 pm.

The meeting adjourned at 5 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Jan Leuchtenberger