

MINUTES OF STUDENT LIFE COMMITTEE: September 24, 2004

Members Present: Barry Bauska, Mark Harpring, Chris McKim, Jac Royce, Kurt Walls

Ex-Officio: Carrie Washburn, Houston Dougharty

Students: Cara Evans, Pat Moyle

Visitor: Bill Barry, Kathleen Holmes

The meeting convened at 8:00am. Minutes from the September 10, 2004 meeting were approved.

The meeting focused on sophomore programs and the effort to retain both first and second-year students. Houston Dougharty and Bill Barry shared information concerning the university's effort to retain first and second-year students. Dougharty explained that 70-80% of first-year students will graduate from the university and noted that retention has improved dramatically over the years. Students tend to leave in equal numbers after their first or second year at UPS, while most students who enroll for their junior year will graduate from the university. Dougharty introduced "Y2i – the Year 2 Initiative" as a program designed to increase retention at the university. He explained that the university never had a structure in place for second year students and that these students often feel left out. As a result, a retention committee was formed during the 2003-2004 academic year to address the relative lack of identity at the university for this group of students.

Bill Barry added that the retention committee initially focused on four areas: 1) identifying or naming problems and issues related to the sophomore experience; 2) academic advising; 3) academic initiatives; and 4) the social/extracurricular experience. The committee formulated the Year 2 Initiative, which targets students halfway through their first year until their arrival for their third year at the university.

President Thomas asked the group to focus on five or six initiatives that resulted from the committee's work, and Dougharty noted that many of the initiatives have already been implemented. Barry explained that the FreshFest program, for example, was designed to celebrate academic achievement and to allow students to communicate in an intellectual fashion through their first-year seminars. He added that the program, which provides students with a broader audience (2-3 seminars joined together) for presenting their work, has thus far been successful. Carrie Washburn added that FreshFest provides students with the opportunity to practice their oral communication skills, while it also gives them an alternative way to work on class materials.

Kathleen Holmes, who worked on the Y2i or "Explore & Navigate" program during the summer of 2004 with Dougharty, Barry, and former student Czarina Ramsay, presented additional components of this program, which includes the following:

- a brochure (FLASH card) listing important dates and events to assist students in academic planning; a website for sophomore students (also linked to the parent page on the university's website); class banners hanging in Marshal Hall

- a late summer faculty and staff gathering to reinforce faculty and staff's responsibility as mentors to students. A staff mentor program will also create a one-on-one relationship for at-risk students
- a Life Planning Advisory Group will help students to think about larger decisions they must make during their undergraduate years.

Bill Barry explained that the initiative's aim is to aid students in their thinking about graduate school, fellowships, study abroad, etc. An academic career fair in late February will help students to think about a major in a larger context. He added that this initiative also focuses on more systematic changes. Houston Dougharty explained that the longer students live on campus, the more likely they are to graduate from the university. To help increase the number of students who live on campus, Residential Life will institute a more simplified system for arranging on-campus housing.

- Conspiracy of Hope fair to focus on student involvement in university activities
- proposing a Campus Leadership activity course (.5 units)
- November outreach to "doubting" first-year students
- Fall Barbecue for sophomores

Kathleen Holmes noted that 152 students RSVP'd for the barbecue at the President's home, and over 240 attended (40% of the sophomore class). A small gift was given to all students who attended. Alumnus Mark Olsen, who works for Microsoft, spoke at the barbecue. In the future, an attempt will be made to hold the barbecue on the day of the fall lecture. Carrie Washburn suggested that advisors be invited to the barbecue to strengthen the tie between advisors and their students.

Barry Bauska reminded the committee that UPS was a national leader in freshman orientation programs, and he asked if there is attention given to sophomore programs on a national level. Dougharty responded that, to his knowledge, Beloit College is the only other institution with a formalized sophomore program. Bauska also expressed interest in knowing how many students leave UPS after their freshman or sophomore year without having declared a major. Kurt Walls asked how UPS compares with other schools in the area of retention. Dougharty responded that UPS compares very well with other schools from the Northwest, while we lag behind nationally. Mark Harpring wondered if there was some relationship between retention and students involved in the Greek community. Kathleen Holmes explained that any type of campus involvement helps retention and that one of the goals of Explore & Navigate is to help students connect to the campus community more effectively.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:55. The next meeting is scheduled for October 8 at 8:00am in Wyatt 226.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Harpring