

Minutes of the Student Life Committee October 15, 2003

Present: Kris Bartanen, Barry Bauska, Cara Evans, Betsy Gast, Mark Harpring, Duane Hulbert (chair), David Scheinfeld, Kurt Walls, Carrie Washburn

The meeting was called to order at 8:10 a.m. The minutes of October 1 were approved.

The meeting was devoted to preparing a list of questions for Craig Benjamin, Associate Vice President for Facilities Services, who will be visiting the committee's meeting on October 29. Duane Hulbert noted that there were no specific complaints with Facilities Services but that the purpose of Craig's visit is to help students better connect with the department and its employees.

The committee first discussed the process by which employees of Facilities Services may enter students' rooms. Cara Evans mentioned that there must be two employees, and Kris Bartanen added that they must give 24 hours notice before entering, except for an emergency situation. Evans explained that work orders were handled through the Resident Assistants and, although students are able to submit an order via the Internet, Resident Assistants must ultimately approve them.

Barry Bauska mentioned that it would be helpful to have a list of Facilities Services' responsibilities and the range of services available to *students*, resulting in the following question:

1. What is the range of areas that comprise Facilities Services?

Kurt Walls suggested that we ask Benjamin what he would want students to know if he could address every student and, additionally, what he would change if he could, indeed, make any changes. Kris Bartanen added that this discussion resulted from a comment from last year by Keith Ferguson that most students don't respect Facilities Services employees. There was considerable discussion regarding the relationship between students and Facilities Services employees, and the following questions resulted from this conversation:

2. Through the Facilities Services employees, have you heard any comments on their relationships with students? Does your staff have concerns about those relationships?
3. In general, is it your impression that the students respect Facilities Services staff?

Cara Evans mentioned that students, in general, try to make a connection with custodians. In the past, she added, it was easier because students saw the employees more often, while at present they have less contact with them. The following questions arose from the committee's discussion on the relationship between students and staff in the residences halls:

4. How are staff members rotated with respect to their assignments? Are members of the custodial staff assigned to specific buildings? During employee illness or vacations, how are the vacancies covered?

Kurt Walls asked about the relationship of Facilities Services with campus houses. Kris Bartanen noted that there are concerns on the students' part about the length of time it takes to have work orders completed and added that maintaining a single-family home in which students are residing presents some difficulties. She added that there is some tension coming from students about the amount of financial charges for damages to residences on Union Avenue. Dave Scheinfeld recommended that the committee ask Benjamin to explain which jobs are completed by Facilities Services and which require outside assistance. He wondered whether there is a delay when someone must be contracted to complete a work order, leading to the following questions:

5. How are the challenges of maintaining university houses (Lawrence and Union Ave.) different than maintaining the residence halls?

6. In maintaining the residences, do you find difficulties in arranging work done by outside contractors?

Duane Hulbert recommended that we ask whether or not the staff has increased to reflect the growing number of buildings on campus, leading to the following question:

7. Do you find your staff to be “spread thin” in the work that needs to be done given the additional buildings on campus?

Betsy Gast reminded the committee that when Keith Ferguson initially expressed his concern with the relationship between students and Facilities Services, he was referring to grounds workers, and suggested that this be part of our discussion with Craig Benjamin. The discussion then turned to outside work disrupting classes. Carrie Washburn noted that she has provided class schedules to Facilities Services so that they can plan outside work, such as mowing the lawn. The following question was proposed:

8. How does the Facilities Services staff work with the campus community with scheduling work that might be disruptive to classes or other activities on campus (spraying plants, leaf blowing, mowing, etc.)?

Duane Hulbert ended the meeting, noting that we could narrow down the list of questions via e-mail, and Carrie Washburn reiterated that Benjamin should be aware that there was no specific complaint against Facilities Services; rather, the purpose of our discussion with him is to discuss the relationship between Facilities Services and students in order to improve this relationship.

Hulbert suggested that the committee focus on sophomore programs at its meeting on Nov. 12.

The meeting adjourned at 8:55.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Harpring