

9/27/10

Student Life Committee

Monday, Sept. 27, 2010, 3 p.m., Trimble Forum

In attendance: Bruce Mann, chair; Peter Bittner, Bill Dasher, Lisa Ferrari, Cameron Ford, Rebecca Kuglitsch, Aislinn Melchior, Geoff Proehl, Alyssa Raymond, Mike Segawa, Nila Wiese, Stephanie Wood

Bruce Mann introduced and welcomed first time attendees, Rebecca Kuglitsch and Cameron Ford.

Bruce called the meeting to order  
Minutes approved as distributed

Dean of Students, Mike Segawa, talked to us about possible work of the committee in the coming year, building on the work of Debbie Chee who addressed the committee at its last meeting.

Mike began by distributing a document titled "Recommendation for a Fourth Fraternity."

He reported that the Board approved the return of Sigma Alpha Epsilon (SAE) to campus, chosen from among three fraternities that made presentations on campus this past summer. We will begin to see this fraternity's presence later this semester, more so second semester. If recruitment goes as planned, SAE will re-occupy their former house in the fall of 2011: Unit B on Union Avenue. Mike reported that SAE did a strong job in making the case for coming back to campus and was the consensus choice among those who heard the presentations from the three finalists.

There followed a discussion about why SAE had been asked to leave campus (behavior issues) and what they will do to be sure that these do not re-occur. According to Mike, the strengths that the fraternity brings to campus are a strong national organization that includes approaches to behavior and alcohol use that parallel campus models. SAE's bid to return to campus was also advanced by a strong and active group of alumni, but what was most decisive was the sense that of those who made presentations, SAE seemed most in line of where we now are as an institution.

Cameron Ford asked about the future of the Humanities group that is currently housed in Unit B. Mike explained that Humanities has understood that this placement was temporary pending the return to campus of a fourth fraternity. It is likely that Humanities may be moving to Smith in the future, since they have public spaces similar to chapter rooms, not unlike what they have now.

Discussion followed about the status of sororities on campus (there are four sororities and four fraternities), about the presence of upper classmen in the fraternity houses (most have expectations that the men will live in the house, although there are exceptions, being a residential advisor for example), about whether SAE is expected to meet their housing quota (they have 18 months to do so and interest seems high), about what it takes to meet the quota (there are about 30 beds in a house), and about the potential for expanding from 4 sororities and 4 fraternities (the historical high was 8 and 8).

In response to the latter, Mike noted that we currently have enough women to merit a fifth sorority, but would want to add a fifth fraternity as well, and that this prospect is a few years down the road. It may arrive sooner if a fraternity offers the university a different model of governance (i.e. - pledges having full voting rights, programs on diversity topics in which members are required to participate in). Lambda Chi Alpha (LCI), based on its presentation last summer, would be a leading contender if expansion comes sooner rather than later.

Mike next distributed a memo on "Residential Planning" by Sherry Mondou that was presented to the Board at its recent fall meeting. In discussing the handout, Mike noted most national residential liberal arts colleges require students to live on campus two or more years. In order for us to house first and second years, we have to force upper classmen off campus. The handout addressed this issue and set forth a process for considering how the university might move toward its next new housing facility and its programming.

Mike noted that our master plan, now seven years old, includes a planned expansion of residential facilities, but this has been seen as coming ten or twenty years out. The Board, however, is now considering adding another residence sooner. We are, therefore, in a study phase between now and the next Board meeting (May 2011). The Student Life Community will serve as a sounding board. A big issue is programmatically, what would this facility be like and how that programming might guide design and construction.

The discussion that followed touched on several issues: the impetus for a new facility (it aligns with our identity as a national residential liberal arts campus; our retention rate is higher with students who live on campus; living on campus creates a

stronger connection between a campus and its alums); will dorms cause a shift in the campus culture (ideally, but it may not come easily given the amount of available off-campus housing).

Mike planned on meeting with six to eight faculty over the summer who had been involved in residential initiatives; he invited eight and twelve came, showing significant faculty interest in these issues.

Peter Bittner spoke to the role programming can play in making housing desirable. He offered to establish hours in Diversions for students to offer feedback to the committee. Bruce suggested that Peter could use the document we'd been given as a place from which to work in those conversations.

Discussion brought out the additional information: a future facility would be predominantly single rooms. It would have more food prep options than Trimble, but not a full kitchen facility. (Even off-campus students tend to use campus meal plans.) It would probably include a range of first years through seniors, probably by floor with possible locations for the building itself on the other side of Kittredge or where OT/PT was located. It would probably include a central common space, such as an entry area, to encourage interaction among students or some form of outdoor space that would accomplish the same purpose.

Bruce raised the question about the risk of building another dorm and then students declining to utilize it. To that end, it might be important consider asking students to live on campus during their first two years so as to be sure to fill the new beds (100 to 150 in a new facility).

Conversation returned to the role of on campus housing in retention. Mike noted that what we know about retention is that sophomores living off campus have higher financial need and then graduate at a lower rate. These are the students with whom we are most concerned, although, of course, several factors are involved, only one of which is housing.

Mike gave us a third and final handout: "Student Affairs Priority Projects 2010-2011."

We talked briefly about some of the items on this list in addition to "Residence Life Initiatives."

For example, Wheelock Student Center is in need of upgrade, which will include taking a look at the second floor and the use of that space.

As we were running out of time, Bruce encouraged us to look through this document for possible future agenda items

At our next meeting, Mike will do a PowerPoint presentation on residence life.

Concluding comments: Bill Dasher noted that we can move forward more quickly with residential hall construction because it will, over time, pay for itself; Nila Wiese endorsed Peter's proposal to gather student feedback; what input, Bruce asked, might the committee have on plans for a new athletic facility.

Meeting adjourned at 4:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted: Geoff Proehl; [gproehl@pugetsound.edu](mailto:gproehl@pugetsound.edu); 253-879-3101