STUDENTS RELATIONS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
FEBRUARY 18, 2011

Present: Fred Askari, Bonnie Fauman, Rachel Goldman, Leo McAfee, David Potter; Paula Pawlowski.


Guests: Mary Jo Desprez, Alcohol and Other Drugs Policy and Prevention Administrator

Chair Potter convened the meeting at 12:05.

AOD Policy
The Committee welcomed guest Mary Jo Desprez, who came to discuss developments in the U's approach to dealing with AOD issues.

Strategic areas of intervention have worked well in the past and investigating this ensures that resources are used wisely and effectively. For example, some Us display smashed cars from drunk driving on their campuses; this is not that effective in our residential campus.

The committee discussed the culture behind drinking holidays, such as Halloween, St. Patrick’s Day and Cinco de Mayo. These holidays are now comparable to spring break, as an image is presented to students and reinforced by the beverage industry and local vendors who want to generate revenue. These types of holidays, and similar activities, tend to attract undergrads, especially those involved in the Greek system. The U has tried to counter these attractions at several levels. Some professors schedule important exams on St. Patty’s day. Last year, “Kiss Me, I’m Sober” T-shirts were given out, which were very popular, especially with Muslim and recovering students.

AOD’s approach needs to have a multifaceted approach because of the variety of influences students face. Parents can be particularly difficult, as some parents want the U to have a strict policy on AOD, while other parents feel that drinking is part of the college experience. Our job is to meet students where they are, which ranges from incoming addicts to incoming students who have never drank, and to make sure they focus on academic success.

The U faces particular challenges in being a Big 10 school with a successful sports team and a stadium on the outskirts of campus. Currently, the AOD is focusing on the Fall 2011 night game with Notre Dame. Night games allow students more time to drink, but the late end time may create a public safety problem when students are walking back to campus drunkenly and in the dark. Some sort of entertaining distraction, like a sober tailgate, may be useful. We are studying universities that have had disasters and ones where they have had success with night games in order to create an effective strategy.

It was suggested that the extra revenue from the night games can be given back to the students in the form of AOD education and recovery support. Chair Potter noted that he will present the idea at the February ABIA meeting.

The Committee continued to discuss how the U deals with transgressions. Currently, a student receives support from the Office of Student Conflict Resolution after they are hospitalized for drinking. The approach is educational and not a punishment. DPS and U Housing notify the U of hospitalization, but there is no way for students with multiple transports to be specially noticed. It was suggested to have a social worker who deals with student drinking issues so students who come in more than once are...
noticed. The U has the right to call parents, but they usually do not. For most students, one hospital trip is enough, but for the others a “You call or we call” policy should be in place.

It was suggested that the U’s approach should emphasize the secondary effects of drinking. Students need to be aware of the effect their dangerous drinking has on other students (cleaning up vomit, interrupting their friends’ night, disrupting bus lines). Students may have a difficult time finding the right person to discuss these issues with, as DPS does not have training to deal with students and RAs cannot be found sometimes. Some campuses have community circles where students tell other students how they are affected by their drinking.

AOD is working on creating a new database. Because the U is so decentralized, capturing information in one database will be important for federal reporting. The U has an abundance of anecdotal evidence, but needs the Greek system and Housing to report so the database can be a concrete reflection of drinking on the UM campus. Greek houses are independent from the U so we cannot sanction them, but the Greeks have to be nationally recognized so there is incentive for them to work with the U on AOD matters.

Data is important, but it is important for the U to act directly on AOD matters and to change campus climate. Excessive drinking is also present in the grad and professional schools and these students need to see how drinking affects them professionally. It is also important to give a voice to U faculty and students in recovery. Students for Recovery is a new club that seeks to support students who are trying to be sober on campus. More students are increasingly willing to be open about their sobriety and the campus must support them. Faculty involvement in the group and its AA meetings can be motivating in changing the campus climate on all levels.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:16.

Respectfully submitted,

Paula Pawlowski
SACUA Student Support