MINUTES
Student Relations Committee Meeting
Friday, March 8, 1991

Present: Linda Lee Daniel (Nursing), Chair; Anna Babbitt (VP Guest); Ken Bartlett (MSA); Robert Beyer (Biology); Alan Billings (Music); Walter Debler (Engineering, SACUA Rep.); Mark DeCamp (UM-Dearborn); Cathy DiMercurio (VP Guest); Corey Dolgon (MSA guest); Roy Glover (Anatomy); James Green (MSA guest); Eunice Royster Harper (Assoc. VP); Andrew Kanfer (MSA guest); Don Kewman (Medical School); Jonathan Line (MSA); Todd Ochoa (MSA guest); Lester Spence (BGA); Cindy Straub (Director, SODC and guest); Mary Ann Swain (VP); Jennifer Van Valey (MSA President and guest).

Soup and salad lunch followed by a business meeting.

Minutes:

The minutes of the last meeting were approved.

Introductions:

Linda Lee Daniel, Acting SRC Chair, introduced herself and had all SRC members and guests around the table introduce themselves.

The Role of the Michigan Student Assembly (MSA):

Ken Bartlett began the discussion by stating two issues the MSA representatives had identified as topics of discussion: 1) the 3-payment tuition plan going to the 2-payment plan beginning fall of 1991, and 2) the new tuition increase (even taking inflation into consideration). Linda Daniel interjected that as we discuss these we should also be looking at how the SRC can contribute/help with these issues. Jennifer Van Valey shared the contents of a letter from a parent about the 2-payment tuition plan that was recently forwarded to her. Jonathan Line said that the problems of being an out-of-state student with high tuition costs and slow financial aid payments were compounded by collapsing three payments into two. Mary Ann Swain stated a couple of reasons for changing the payment plan are the cost of processing three times a year vs. two times, and the opportunity for additional investments interest. Todd Ochoa stated that there are really two issues to be considered: 1) the larger tuition payments in two payments instead of three, and 2) the process question.

At this point, Jon commented that the main issue continues to be increased student input and the need for a "channel" from the students to the administration; that students just want the opportunity to be heard, to sit down with the administration and discuss the issues. Jennifer then talked about a meeting she had attended the day before with the President, other administrators, and
student leaders on student representation. She feels MSA is being circumvented and sees a pattern developing (i.e., MSA president not being allowed to speak at formal gatherings). She stated "MSA is a representative body elected by students for students". Mark DeCamp said that he didn't feel the administration should take the "whole wrap" as he has heard from numerous students that MSA is not representative of the student body. Jon said he also had felt MSA was "a joke" and that is why he joined the group, not to criticize, but to aid, as he had "never seen the administration embrace MSA". Corey Dolgon said he felt it is the responsibility of the administration to embrace MSA as they run the UM.

Questions arose as to how many students actually vote in the MSA elections. Jennifer said usually 18% vote; that this year 6,500 had voted, the largest group ever (out of 36,000+ students on campus). Don Kewman asked if there were other models of student governance on other campuses that do a better job and wondered if we should investigate this and, if they exist, study them. Jennifer said she is not willing to concede the credibility of MSA and listed numbers of participants in a rally, a sit-in, and a Daily survey of students that proves MSA is still credible to many students.

Jennifer expressed a desire for a student to hold a permanent position on the Board of Regents. Corey stated this would have to happen through the State legislature and feels there is room to lobby for this. Roy Glover said as he listens to all of this he tends to see the student/administration as a black/white issue with no room for compromise. Corey, after being a MSA representative for 3 1/2 years, felt there is a lot of compromise, all on the side of the students; and cited the University Council as an example. Jamie Green disagreed with Corey, stating there is room for compromise and that MSA has a credibility problem. Jennifer said there can't be compromise when one side has all the power and that she feels there is a complete communication breakdown between MSA and the administration now.

Jon pointedly asked how we (SRC) are going to address this. Linda explained the SRC is not a policy making committee, but plays an advisory role to the Vice President for Student Services, that this is a place for students to meet with faculty members and voice their concerns. Recommendations from the SRC to the Vice President can be moved forward by the Vice President as she thinks appropriate. Roy explained that the medical students run the Medical School, that they might not always be happy with decisions but they provide a lot of input and have a huge impact, and their percentage of voters in elections is much higher than the 18% Jennifer had mentioned earlier. He also stated we should expedite stronger relations between students and administration.

Jennifer went back to the question of MSA credibility, explaining that 75% of events sponsored by students are funded through MSA (speakers, etc.); that MSA has a $40,000 yearly budget for these events. She said some school don't feel they benefit from their MSA dues, but they do benefits from the events MSA sponsors plus the benefit programs and information tables they provide through MSA. She shared an incident in the Law School when a racist flyer was distributed there and the MSA VP, Angie Burke, met with the Dean about this problem; proving there are indirect benefits provided to students from MSA.

Jennifer said she feels that students are perceived as always "reacting to" instead of being allowed to have constructive input on issues. She said she feels there is a lack of commitment to having students represented on committees, especially student governance students. But then went on to say that there are more students serving on committees this year than in any past years. She feels if the
administration needs student representatives on committees, other than MSA representatives, MSA should be informed and MSA will find the kind of students needed for these committees. Jon stated that they, as elected officials, just want the opportunity to express their views and to have someone listen.

Lester Spence asked the questions "What is the purpose of the UM"? and "If students' problems don't mean anything, why are we wasting these two hours?" He then offered a brief description of the South Quad incident. In his view, Mace had never before been used in the 173 year history of UM, and that no formal explanation has yet been submitted. Mary Ann responded that this has been taken very seriously, that a lot has been going on, that two meetings were scheduled in January for students, that she has just received the AAPD report, and that she will respond directly to the students involved before she shares information with other committees. Jennifer stated that if the Michigan Union had been available, this incident would not have happened. Corey brought up an issue of a DPS guard making a statement some time ago, and that no formal response has been issued as yet.

Jon suggested that the students and faculty need to work together, that they have common interests. Cindy Straub, a 7 year SODC employee, stated that she feels sad for the students as she doesn't see them having a lot of success in their endeavors. They experience a lot of bitterness, anger, and frustration as they try to work through the system. She stated MSA has a hard task to try to operate in a centralized manner when the UM is so decentralized, but that she has seen more students involved this year than in any other year. She also feels it may be time to look at other models of student governance and said there needs to be mutual respect and responsibility on both sides, students and administration. This can begin in something as small as returning phone calls in a timely manner. Jennifer listed some of the ideas she had taken to the Regents in July. She feels these were all denied because she has spoken out so loudly against deputation.

As a summation, Linda Daniel asked Jennifer to pull together information on how student governance operates on other campuses for us to review. Jon moved that Jennifer generate a statement on how to better communications between MSA representatives and the administration and to distribute this statement for SRC to review and discuss in April. The motion was seconded and passed.

Next meeting:

The next SRC meeting will be on Friday, April 12, 1991, noon-2:00 p.m., Michigan Union, Baits Room. A light lunch will be served.