Minutes of April 19, 2013
Approved: May 3, 2013 (electronic approval)

Student Relations Advisory Committee

Minutes of Friday, April 19, 2013
11:30 to 1:00 PM
Crofoot Room – Michigan Union

Members Present: David Potter (Chair), Vice President Harper, Donna Hayward, Beverly Fauman, Fred Askari, Jean Krisch, Nallasivam Palanisamy

Absent: Simone Himbeault Taylor, Stacy Peterson, Lisa Low, Ed Rothman
Charles Koopman* (room change prevented from attending)

Guests: Laura Blake Jones (Associate Vice President for Student Affairs); Josh Simister (President, Student Veterans); Phil Larson (Student Veterans); Travis Nack (Vice President & Treasurer, Student Veterans); Stephanie Karaa (Beyond the Diag); Jennifer Mulligan (Beyond the Diag); Emily Ho (Beyond the Diag)

Materials Distributed:
Agenda
Minutes of February 2013
Minutes of March 2013

Meeting commenced at 12:05 PM.

Chair Potter motioned to approve the minutes of February 22, 2013 and March 22, 2013; unanimous vote approved.

Chair Potter began the meeting by welcoming the two student groups, Student Veterans and Beyond the Diag, followed by a brief introduction by Sarah Blake Jones, Associate Vice President of Student Affairs.

Vice President Harper discussed the recent donation to the University, and its impact on graduate programs, specifically through graduate student housing and scholarships that will further strengthen and provide support for prospective and current students. These improvements will improve both the quality of life for graduate students and also add value to graduate programs at the University. Additionally, Vice President Harper announced the success of the Recreation Sports and University Unions’ student fee for facility renewal, a draft presented to the Regents on April 18, 2013. Vice President Harper provided the Committee with a copy of the draft presented and walked members through the proposed renewal. She enthusiastically thanked everyone for their support throughout the years, especially the students who rallied and were a huge influence on the decision to fund these projects. She acknowledged both SRAC and SACUA for their work, dedication and commitment to make these renovations for recreation sports and Union Facilities a reality.
The committee then heard from the two student groups, starting with Student Veterans and followed by Beyond the Diag.

Phil Larson, Transition Specialist for Student Veterans, introduced Student Veterans to the committee. They were established nearly five years ago as a support and service program for veterans returning to school. Currently, they support around 200 to 250 students, half of which are graduate students. Mr. Larson highlighted the important goals that Student Veterans strives to achieve and provide for their students. First, he discussed the role that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) plays in providing student veterans with both educational and health benefits. Many student veterans are unaware of the benefits they are entitled too, especially their health benefits. Additionally, he discussed how Student Veterans would like to enhance the current housing community on campus for undergraduates, graduates and families. Mr. Larson also suggested future leadership goals for Student Veterans through regional collaborations with other schools, including high schools, and veteran educators to recruit students to attend the University of Michigan. Other prospective goals include further support for career services, such as undergraduate and graduate advising for career advancement.

Josh Simister, President of Student Veterans, further explained that Student Veterans provides an informal space to reach veterans through a peer-to-peer format. Student veterans are on a different level – mentally, physically and in life experiences- than the typical college student. This organization provides student veterans with a resource to find others who have similar life experiences and are facing parallel challenges; it gives them a support network and improves their quality of life. Mr. Simister would like to see Student Veterans expand their reach and raise awareness of veterans on campus by connecting with students, faculty and staff at the University. Travis Nack, Vice President and Treasurer of Student Veterans, discussed the importance of peer panels to reduce assumptions typically made regarding veterans’ knowledge, attitudes and beliefs, suggesting that Student Veterans views are often politically diverse.

Chair Potter thanked them for sharing their personal stories and opened the floor to questions/comments from the committee. Laura Blake Jones commented on that importance of Student Veterans at the University and commended them on their leadership and mentorship qualities for all University students, faculty and staff. The committee also shared similar feelings of gratitude and appreciation for student veterans at the University. Upon Chair Potter asking Student Veterans what SRAC could provide for them, Student Veterans indicated concerns of residency and priority registration as pressing issues. The committee unanimously agreed to sponsor a proposal to make priority registration available for all student veterans at the University.

The committee then heard from Beyond the Diag, a student group represented by Laura Blake Jones, Associate Vice President for Student Affairs. She introduced Beyond the Diag as a group of students who focus on improving the transition to off-campus housing and issues surrounding housing and safe transportation. They also focus on student life, and ensuring students still feel involved in the University even when living off-campus.

Representative members from Beyond the Diag discussed issues associated with moving off-campus, particularly the idea that off-campus students often feel less supported and involved in the University student life. The students provided SRAC with an “Off-Campus Living Guide 212-2013” brochure and provided the committee with an overview of their accomplishments and
future goals. They discussed the importance of neighborhood events, disseminating resources, raising awareness, and connecting students in their respective neighborhoods to other students and permanent residents. Beyond the Diag also provides students with monthly professional development workshops, monthly newsletters and work with OSCR (Office of Student Conflict Resolution at the University) to develop strategies to work in partnership with the City of Ann Arbor.

Chair Potter thanked them and opened the floor to the committee for questions/comments. The committee agreed that Beyond the Diag provides students with an abundant and diverse amount of resources regarding off-campus housing and transportation. They also commented on the ability of this organization to improve public safety and connect students with the City.

Chair Potter and SRAC thanked both student groups for attending and sharing their organization’s mission and personal stories.

Chair Potter thanked SRAC for a successful year, and concluded the meeting.

Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 1:05 PM.

Submitted by:
Kari L. Woloszyk, SACUA Student Support