STUDENT RELATIONS COMMITTEE MINUTES

April 27, 1990

Minutes of the March 30, 1990 meeting were approved, and Thursday, May 24, 1990 12:00-2:00 pm was agreed upon as the most convenient time for the final 1989-90 meeting of the SRC.

The main item on the agenda was discussion of the quality of student experiences at The University of Michigan campus. Three guests addressed this topic from their respective vantage points.

Dr. Archie Andrews, Associate Director of Student Housing, Residence Operations and Student Residences introduced the topic of student experiences while living in university housing. Dr. Andrews listed the concerns expressed by students in a survey conducted in 1989 or formulated by housing administrators. The main student concerns were: 1) Substance abuse, mainly alcohol abuse. There appears to be less abuse on campus than off campus, as alcoholic beverages are confiscated when found according to the policy prohibiting them in public places. Of the 2000 security reports between September 1989 and the present, only about 5% are alcohol related, involve trespassing under the influence of alcohol. Of these incidents, 80 to 96% are committed by visitors or off-campus students.

In the 1989 survey of students housed on campus, 28% indicated that substance abuse interferes with their studies. When individuals with substance abuse problems are identified, they are referred by the Building Director to a Health Service Screen. The last resort is lease termination.

Abuse of marijuana, cocaine and heroin occurs to a lesser extent and are harder to detect. Identification of abusers relies on student reports. In 1989 about one eighth to one tenth of all rooms have been designated to be substance free (1076). As of now, over 600 students have already signed up for these rooms for next year.

2) Ethics and values is another area of concern in student housing. The attitude of some students and their parents is to engage in legal confrontation when conflicts arise rather than to deal with issues of ethical conduct. Rules of housing are contractual and give housing administration legal rights to act to protect the safety of students. The University in general does not act in loco parents. In instances where serious offenses are committed, civil courts are used for sanctions. Within the university residence system, offenses bring three warnings before termination of the lease. A 24 hour notice (rather than a 30-day notice in the courts) is a sufficient warning before eviction.

3) Code of Conduct, or the lack of it at The University, has been a source of continued concern.
4) **Safety and Security Concerns:** A report to the President by a Security Task Force, indicated a need for a larger number of deputized officers by the city is identified. Arms are not needed on campus. Having a separate police force on campus is expensive. Since support facilities such as Crime lab cannot be maintained on campus, the best option is to rely on the City and State police force, but campus deputies need to have power to detain and arrest suspects.

5) **Special interest group:** Afro-American students find that the U of M facilitates their admission, but does not provide sufficient material support, and positive treatment in classrooms to encourage retention. Gay couples meet with lack of support when applying for married student housing. Current law ensuring housing for married excludes single parents and is thus discriminatory.

6) **Cost concerns.** Due to political pressures to hold the U of M tuition cost increases down, residence hall rates have tended to increase to compensate for the revenue shortfall. This results in dissatisfaction among campus residents who feel that one third of them are subsidizing the education cost of the other two-thirds of the student community.

7) The final concern was the sense of **alienation** that students experience when they become part of a very large and impersonal campus. There is a need to down-size the organizational units within which students function to allow for better and more meaningful interpersonal interactions.

**Dr. John Heidke**, Associate Director for Housing Education, Residence Operations and Student Residences was the next speaker. He provided some statistics showing how much time students spend in university residences. Ninety-eight percent of freshman live in dorms. Seventy percent of their time is spent in dorms, and only 8% in the classroom. Sixty-seven percent of these students did not share rooms with siblings at home. At the U of M most of them share a room with one to two roommates. This creates stress. Schedule, rapid pace, and adjustments to campus life prevent 38% of these students from reading for pleasure during their first year on campus.

The housing staff and the students living on campus have approximately 14 million interactions in the course of the year. These stem from services provided by staff for academic advising, by the 300 resident staff (advisors, directors), counsellors.

Dr. Heidke emphasized the "other curriculum" brought to students in university residence. There are about 210 classes for credit taught by faculty and teaching assistants to students in residence halls, and there is continued effort to increase the number and quality of these classes. Some classes complement formal campus courses, others are in socialization or address life style concerns (health, nutrition, weight loss, stress). Students are engaged in community outreach projects: recycling activities or can collection, the proceeds from which is used to help needy individuals or service organizations in the city.

Dorms have a larger proportion of students of color (43%) and of minority staff (33%) than campus at large.
Administrators strive to help students develop a sense of competence and to educate them to act as enlightened consumers.

The final presentation was by Dr. Harry McLaughlin, Director of Academic Services in the Division of Physical Education on student experience with the administration.

Dr. McLaughlin outlined some cumbersome administrative procedures which create logistical problems and frustration for students on campus. If one examines 18 different academic units, one finds 15 different course drop/add policies. Students trying to drop and add courses offered by different units often get caught by conflicting policies. Units have different policies regarding dishonorable conduct. Transferability of course credit varies among units. Different criteria and policies govern registration in individual units. A student trying to transfer from School of Literature, Arts and Science to Division of Physical Education or from Natural Resources to LSA must perform 7 steps in 5 different offices. Many application forms are old and incomprehensible. Residency rules require students to first pay to find out their status. Different units interpret Michigan Family Education Rights Act and Privacy Acts differently.

Students experience alienation and frustration confronted with cumbersome procedures designed to serve the faculty, the schools, or to be legally defensible, rather than to serve the student.

SRC members discussed some of the issues raised. An area of concern regarding the quality of student experience on campus is the poor quality of counselling repeatedly reported by students.

SRC members entertained the idea that an ongoing survey of student assessment of the quality of their life would be desirable. Administrative concerns at times are to assess the impact of such information on the prospective student and their families and to avoid dissemination of information which would deter enrollment.