THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN  
Office of the Vice President  
for Student Services  
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MINUTES  
Student Relations Committee Meeting  
Friday, September 13, 1991

Present: Harvey Bertcher (Social Work), Chair; Anna Babbitt (VP Guest); Alan Billings (Music); Walter Debler (Engineering, SACUA Rep.); Mark DeCamp (UM-Dearborn); Elizabeth Douvan (Psychology/Women's Studies); Roy Glover (Anatomy); James Green (MSA Pres.); Eunice Royster Harper (Assoc. VP); Roman Hryciw (Civil Engineering); Murray Jackson (Education); Don Kewman (Medical School); Mary Ann Swain (VP).

Soup and salad lunch followed by a business meeting.

Introductions:

Harvey Bertcher, SRC Chair, introduced himself and welcomed the two new SRC members (Elizabeth Douvan and Roman Hryciw) and had all those around the table introduce themselves.

Purpose of Student Relations Committee (SRC):

Harvey stated that the purpose of the SRC is to serve as an advisory committee to the Vice President for Student Services and secondly, to help facilitate interaction between the student government and SACUA. Walter Debler, as the SACUA representative, facilitates the "flow of information" between SACUA and the SRC. Harvey also said he is looking forward to an exciting year as we look toward hiring the new Vice President for Student Services.

Vice President for Student Services Search Update:

The External Review Team who visited here for two days, late last May, was mostly comprised of individuals who are Mary Ann's counterparts at other colleges or universities, and who are outstanding leaders in the field. They were selected primarily for their individual talents from colleges and universities roughly comparable in size and intended mission. A list of the committee is attached (Attachment A). In these two days, they interviewed 80-90 people, including Student Services personnel, students, faculty, deans, and executive officers. No written report was requested by the President. Their findings were reported at an exit interview with the President, Provost, Chief Financial Officer, and Vice President for Student Services. Mary Ann shared the following findings from this interview:

- Student Services at UM does not meet the quality a university of this stature should have.
- Student Services has "no heart and center", that is, there is no shared mission or vision for the division as a whole.

- There is no voice to advance student concerns in a way everyone understands.

- There is no conceptual framework in which Student Services operates.

- Student Services personnel/staff are well trained, hard working, and dedicated.

- Student Services is not prepared to deal with emergencies (and have been lucky to have "muddled" through since there is no plan).

- There is a lack of a staff development plan and no plan for upgrading of staff.

- Student Services is too isolated from the academic mission of the university.

- The Student Services Vice President should report directly to the President, not to the Provost.

- The Vice President for Student Services needs to be a voice for student issues among the Executive Officers.

- The "interim" title has created problems for the organization.

Mary Ann feels the findings of the External Review Team create a positive momentum for Student Services. The President got to hear first-hand about the importance of the position and the difficulties it entails from the leaders in the field. We are now in the process of actively recruiting candidates. An outside search company has been employed to recruit highly qualified individuals. There is now a pool of candidates being considered. These names are being kept in the strictest confidence for the time being so as not to jeopardize their current positions in any way. Some candidates are not willing to announce their interest in this position until they are sure that they are being considered seriously for the position. It is possible that we will know who the next Vice President will be before the end of the calendar year and conceivable that s/he may begin in January of 1992.

Mary Ann was asked what kind of a link there will be between the new Vice President and the Flint/Dearborn campuses. She replied that she has had conversations with President about this issue. It will probably be part of the negotiations with the candidate. Flint and Dearborn both have codes of conduct in place and have a different way of relating to their students than we do here on the Ann Arbor campus.

The New Mentoring Program:

Sunday, September 15, 1991, was the big kickoff "intimate" dinner for 1,800, scheduled in 6 different dining halls. The original goal of the program was to provide mentors (1 faculty or staff and 1 upper class student) to 1,000 new incoming students. There are now 1,350 new students participating. A group of "mentees" consists of 5 freshpersons from the same residence hall (whenever possible). There have been a few glitches with software development and not quite enough faculty mentors so there are a few groups that consist of one upper class student mentoring three freshpersons. Mortar Board thinks this is such a good idea that they have offered to staff the mentoring office during the normal work week. The handbook has been completed and distributed, and a very nice video
about the mentoring program has been produced and was shown at the kickoff dinner. It was suggested that we think about using some recently retired faculty to be mentors next year. It was agreed that the program must have one person to spearhead the program, to keep the enthusiasm up, and the program going. Stanford had done this for the past 23 years.

Interactions Between Student Government and the UM Decision-Making Process:

As a way of introducing our new members to SRC, Harvey recapped the fall/winter meetings that Mary Ann had with the students when deputization was the big issue on campus. He described the SRC telephone call to MSU's student leader (using a speaker phone so all could hear) to discuss security on that campus. The MSU student government leader reported that this was no issue for them as they have had campus police on their campus for over 50 years. Harvey described the students' concern that they are not consulted or involved in the decision-making process. He used the SRC as an example, stating how hard it is to get MSA attendance at our meetings and when we did get a consistent attender he didn't feel anyone really wanted his feedback! He reported that when we heard students were having many problems with Financial Aid, we had the Director and Assistant Director of Financial Aid attend one of our meetings and after we had questioned and discussed, we sent him a letter with some suggestions. One of these was to have a suggestion box for student use there. Has this happened? Should we follow up? He stated that this was his second 3-year term on SRC and during that time the SRC had never really been asked for advice, except in this last year, when the mentoring program was discussed. He reported that SRC had begun to focus on ways to involve students, especially student government, in decision-making that affects them, and had tentatively planned (last spring) to make this issue a major focus for this year's committee.

A discussion then began around the question of what should the priorities of the SRC be for this coming year? The consensus of opinion seemed to be that we need to put a major focus on more student governance involvement in university problem-solving and decision-making. Jamie felt that the vast majority of students would be satisfied to know they have the chance for some input in the decision-making process before decisions are made; even if they don't agree with the decision they could, at least, understand the reasons behind the decisions. Not very many students vote in MSA elections. This should be an educational experience for our students, teaching them civic responsibility, and helping them become better members of society. It was stated that our students get most of their information from the Daily and, perhaps, Student Services should run informational articles in the Daily. Student Services did print and distribute Issues Updates last year, but have not decided whether to continue this, as yet. Mary Ann commented that she felt the Daily was being quite responsible in their reporting this year. She also told us of the Student Leadership lunches that began this past year where she and several other administrators meet monthly with different groups of student leaders to engage in a dialog with them and to start them having dialogs with each other. It was stated that students here do not have easy access to staff to find out how to raise money, organize, and run events.

Other Activities:

Mary Ann talked about the Student Services Mission Statement that is being developed, and the process she has used by involving her top three levels in the Student Services organization (150+ people). A draft of this statement is attached (Attachment B). It was mentioned that we need to get more students to attend SRC meetings with their concerns. Since MSA representatives
may not have been designated by the date of our next meeting, committee members may bring students they know with them to add a student point of view to the committee’s discussion. If you plan to bring a student, please notify Anna Babbitt by Monday, October 7, 1991. A copy of the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators that was mentioned is also attached for your information (Attachment C).

Harvey will work on developing an agenda that will help us further our goal of increased student governance involvement in the UM's decision-making process. Anyone who has specific ideas should forward these to Harvey via MTS@UB.

Next meeting:

The next SRC meeting will be on Friday, October 11, 1991, noon-2:00 p.m., Michigan Union, Wolverine Room. A light lunch will be served.