Meeting commenced at 11:48 AM.

Chair Potter welcomed everyone to the first SRAC meeting of the semester.

Chair Potter motioned to adjust the agenda so that the football ticketing and student seating discussion occurred before discussion of future topics. He mentions that the new football ticketing policy affects the student experience and there are safety and welfare issues (i.e. standing in line for hours as the weather gets colder) that must be considered. The safety of the student population is paramount. He introduced Hunter Lochmann, from Athletics, to outline the athletic ticketing policy.

The committee first heard a presentation on why Athletics moved to general admission. A major reason this occurred was to curb the student no-show rate at kick-off. In 2011 there was a 79% no-show rate. In 2012 there was a 75% no-show rate. The goal of the general admission policy was to get students in the stadium for kick-off to create a different atmosphere. They have used benchmarks from other universities to create the general admission seating process. The change in admission process was announced in April and has been altered throughout the season. Athletics is aware that 7:00 AM is way too early to ask students to start queuing up for a football game and is willing to brainstorm other ideas. Hunter explained that Athletics is spending significant amounts of money on DJs, food, charging stations for line entertainment and there has only been about 20-70 students in line for all of the home games. They will be re-evaluating the queue system for the Indiana, Nebraska and OSU game. Since these are bigger games they believe the queue will be busy. Athletics realizes that this is a learning process and they are
willing to work with students to best determine how to queue while also working towards their goal of a full student section at kick-off. They have already tried various methods at each game. At the first game, there were 2500 no-shows but no empty seats because it was true general admission. At the Notre Dame (night game), they used ropes and tickets to fill each row and seat because they needed every single seat. This game had a lot of incident and students filled the concourse. At the Akron game, they used tickets given out at gate 10. This received a lot of negative feedback because no-one followed the ticket policy. At the Minnesota game, they went back to the pure model of general admission. Even with 5000 no-shows this policy caused it to look like every seat was full. Athletics is aware that students are angry with this new model, but the goal is for more students to be present to support student athletes at the beginning of the game. They do believe that so far they have achieved their goal. They have improved attendance at kick-off. They are also using a new metric by scanning tickets and section cards which allows them to better obtain no-show information. Hunter wanted the committee to know that the Athletic department is listening and have already implemented changes to the basketball seating policy. They realize that this general admission policy isn’t perfect but they are going to assess it at the end of the season.

Chair Potter opened the floor to the committee and guests for questions and feedback on Hunter’s presentation about General Admission Seating. They questioned the effectiveness of general admission since holes could still be seen in the student section. Hunter explained that general admission causes holes at the top of the section and that cannot be avoided. The committee also questioned if the boxes are also empty. Hunter did not have an answer to that particular question but highlighted that tickets and boxes can be transferred electronically for free and they are in the process of trying to educate season ticket holders. A final question for Hunter asked for clarification about the no-show rates. Hunter said that it is on average at 24%, which is a touch better than last year. Minnesota had higher rates, but they attribute this to weather and mid-terms.

Chair Potter introduced the student representatives from CSG and LSA Student Government for a student presentation on the general admission seating policy. The students shared a PowerPoint with the committee that included student feedback from a survey.

Chair Potter thanked the students for an excellent presentation. He commented on the striking survey, numbers and comments from the students and athletics. He highlighted that a consultation with the community did not occur before the April decision to change to a general admission policy. He also commented that the issues that were expressed by students are not just a PR problem but a whole series of problems for the university. He explained that the stadium is a place where people come together, a place where community is developed. He posed the following question before opening the floor for committee members’ comments. How does athletics work towards building community?

The committee responded with questions about what caused this change in seating policy. What is new that made the policy change in such a dramatic way? Hunter again explained that it was a push towards wanting a more dramatic home field advantage and wanting a full student section at kick-off. The committee responded to this by stating that athletics only used a two year window of data to make such a drastic change. Hunter responded that this is a trend in collegiate athletics in general, and in fact, Michigan is the last school to move to general admission. They
have seen how having a full-student section affects players’ morale for the better. Athletics did learn a lesson from not seeking out input from the community and hopes to change that from here on out. They are working with CSG for basketball and hope to be more flexible in the future.

Chair Potter asked since we are potentially facing crowding issues with the Nebraska and OSU games, is it worth keeping the system in place? Hunter responded by saying yes. The past two years show OSU having 2000 no-shows. It is over Thanksgiving break. They have learned their lesson from Notre Dame and will not let over-crowding happen again.

Student representative Corey Walsh commented that with no predetermined seating location safety concerns arise because students panic when they get split-up from friends. Another student representative, JoHanna, commented that while she understands the goals of the Athletic department and wants to support her fellow UM students, this process is in turn also hurting community building. Football games are singular things that bring students together and when you challenge how the student community is being developed by making them more unattainable you are hindering the relationships that can be formed between students. She also commented on how athletics should be concerned about also building a relationship between students and student athletes outside of game day.

Ed Rothman indicated that safety should be the first priority and that needs to be addressed. He also commented that athletics should figure out the number of students who buy tickets and NEVER show. He is troubled that student ticket holders are not treated like other season ticket holders. He suggested that students who buy tickets and never use them should not be able to buy tickets the next year. Enthusiastic students should get higher priority in ticket purchasing and possibly a discount. By encouraging enthusiastic students you are guaranteeing that they will show up to the game. It would also be far less disruptive to maintain the previous system. The athletic department should try other options to increase home field advantage instead of penalizing all students.

Chair Potter suggested tickets should be treated like anything else at the university (i.e. access to classes). Athletics should track those at the rest of the university and ask for other ideas. Hunter responded to these ideas by stating that athletics will be looking at the data starting December 1.

The committee asked Hunter to expound more on the phenomenon in collegiate athletics. Hunter discussed that they are working to attract more people to the stadium. Athletics is working on improving connectivity in the stadium (which is a natural trend). They are working to put Wi-Fi in the stadium and focus this on the student section. They are also working on providing different entertainment so it is more appealing to attend the games.

Vice President Harper thanked athletics and the students for the seriousness with which they took this presentation. She commented that she was sad she didn’t help students advocate more. Many around campus felt juniors and seniors should have been grandfathered in to the ticketing. She says this experience supports a culture of a lack of student involvement in important decision making. She asked where we went from here. She does not want this situation to be forgotten about and wants to work together to fix things for the future. She says that students make us better and how do we go forward in a communal way. We should use these last few games to
show students that we have heard their feedback and we want their help to come up with a better quality experience. Donna Hayward thanked Vice President Harper for her insightful comments. She went on to say that the separation between athletes and students is huge. She commented that the missions of the athletic department and academics do not match.

Chair Potter commented that tennis seems to work differently than any other sport. The team and the general public seem to have a closer connection. He suggested that maybe athletics could use non-revenue sports to build the connection with the community. Hunter responded to this by saying that they do want to create this sense of community and will continue to monitor song choices that play in the stadium.

Ed Rothman suggested that athletics use a scheduling process like airline companies use to sell more tickets. They can over-sell since they expect no-shows. He asked what the student representatives had to say about this idea.

Michael Proppe commented that they have surveyed students regarding questions about ticket packages, but they have not had time to go through the data.

Bobby Dishell asked if the season ticket price would be the same next year. Hunter responded yes. The committee inquired if student tickets were transferable and Hunter responded yes. Students can even validate the ticket and transfer the ticket online.

Johanna commented that it is essential that students feel the process is transparent. They are currently upset because they did not feel they were considered at all in this decision process. Students spend their hard earned money for tickets and they get to a game and do not understand the process or why it is changing. Students need to have all the information before they make the decision to buy tickets and want to be included in these decisions.

Sagar echoed this by stating transparency is key. Students feel like decisions are set in stone and will not be changed. They need to be made aware that athletics is willing to hear them out. Hunter responded by asking how they do that? Sagar commented that CSG and different student governments are great places to start. Athletics should also consider forming focus groups.

Vice President Harper asked for clarification. Would athletics be re-thinking this general admission policy change? Hunter assured the committee that they would be re-visiting everything. Vice President Harper encouraged the student representatives to make a statement to the student body that highlighted the meeting. She encouraged them to tell the students that they met with athletics, they issued concerns and the conversation will continue and will continue as a community.

The committee echoed these sentiments by encouraging athletics to continue to be responsive, use student liaisons and be more transparent.

Simone Himbeault Taylor thanked the students for the excellent survey work. She added that the committee will continue to create ways for students to weigh in on important issues and that this meeting was a step in the right direction for transparency.
Chair Potter commented that this issue is about more than football but is about the overall sense of community feel in U of M students. Since the stadium is a place where we all come together we need to ensure that the community is developed.

The committee thanked the student representatives from CSG and LSA student government and Hunter Lochmann from athletics and they left.

Chair Potter opened up discussion about future topics covered by SRAC this year. He commented that at the end of the year he would like to see an update of the policy put into effect last year and what it looks like now. He then opened up the floor for future topics of discussion.

Chair Potter suggested off-campus life and student living patterns. What issues are present in these living situations and how has it changed? Another topic is students who are parents and their needs and how the housing market affects them. What is the impact of development of student housing. He reminded the committee that November 15th we will be meeting in East Quad to see renovations and March 14th we will be meeting in Hill.

Vice President Harper thanked David for pushing the conversation with athletics about football and for including students in the discussion. She commented how it was very affirming to see students in this light since so often we see them because of bad behavior.

Ed Rothman commented that he also sits on the committee for general admission change but that faculty have very little leverage on those committees. He suggested that we as a committee be more pro-active on obtaining student input on issues like the general admission policy. We need to be proactive not reactive.

The committee engaged in conversation about how athletics needs to address this problem and not just shuffle students around. They need to be more cognizant of the fact that students cannot give 5 hours just to wait in line before the game even begins.

Vice President Harper asked how the committee reframes their work in order to get ahead of problems like this. She is worried about a trend of not involving students, which is counter to the culture of UM. She wants to think about ways to interrupt this trend.

Donna commented that another area students have a lot to say is scheduling of classes, specifically Friday classes. The Provost is going in one direction and students another way. We should consider scheduling issues and solutions to these issues. She suggested getting student input on this issue at a January meeting.

Lisa commented that the distribution of classes and quotas are becoming a policy and that effects participation by schedule choice.

Vice President Harper discussed the freeze out on diversity student group that wants to come and have a conversation. They want to have a strong unified voice around the issue.

Chair Potter moved to schedule this into the November meeting since it is a current issue.
The committee commented that we are in a position to change our work. We are at the nexus of faculty and student voice to come together for a stronger voice. We will need to work on where we go once we facilitate these conversations. They suggested using Vice President Harper’s advisory board, website, SACUA. The committee would like to be a place where students can come help find solutions to problems. They want to help support students to help them formulate other plans and facilitate student engagement.

Chair Potter re-iterated that the Freeze Out student group on November 15. January 17th would discuss teaching times. February 14th would discuss off-campus life. He re-iterated that November 15 tours start at 11 and business starts at 11:50.

The committee moved to adjourn the meeting.

Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 1:46 PM.

Submitted by:
Allie DeFries, SACUA Student Support