Student Relations Advisory Committee

13 November 1998

I. CALL TO ORDER/ATTENDANCE


ABSENT: Arvind Grover, Royster Harper, Bruce Karnopp, Yvonne Tsai

GUESTS: Trent Thomson, MSA president; Bram Elias, MSA treasurer; Ann Reeves, RSG president

II. OPENING REMARKS

Burdi called the meeting to order at noon. He thanked all committee members for their attendance. Burdi explained the agenda and introduced today's guest speakers. He also announced that the next meeting will be on December 11, 1998. December meeting's discussion topic will be living & learning communities.

III. GENERAL COMMENTS ARISING FROM COMMITTEE

Hartford began by discussing the student need arising from the tragic death of Courtney Cantor that occurred earlier this term. Recently, the University has taken several measures to crack down on underage student drinking. Hartford announced that the OVPSA has sent letters to all first-year students addressing the Cantor death. Also, fraternity and other student parties where minors are often served alcohol have been under close surveillance by the police. The committee agreed that the subject of deferring Greek Rush as well as substance abuse, should be discussed at future meetings. Gold proposed creating a sub-committee to discuss the issues revolving around a delayed Greek Rush.

IV. FOCUS TOPIC: THE "CODE"

Throughout this term, there have been several groups and committees responsible for reviewing the current Student Code of Conduct. The External Review Board held their review the first week of November. MSA has reviewed the Code and has sent informational packets to various student groups. The SRAC-CLB joint sub-committee has also conducted a review of the Code. Hartford explained that her greatest concern arising from these Code reviews is how to reflect the values of the University community in the Student Code.
The SRAC-CLB Sub-committee on the Code began the discussion of the Code. Heitzmann presented the sub-committee's report. The report addressed the following recommendations/concerns:

* Redefining the category of "sexual harassment" as it is expressed in the Code.
* Formulating more effective ways to educate the student body on the Code.
* Addressing the issue of 'double jeopardy' (i.e. Students can be found guilty under the Code but innocent in the eyes of the judicial system).
* Should the law come before the Code?
* Should Code violators be named in press?

Hartford then commented on the sub-committee report. She mentioned that one large problem with the Code is its weakness in addressing student rights. Specifically, Hartford addressed the conflict that arises when the rights of an accused Code offender infringe upon the rights of the victim of the crime or offense. She used the example of a crime victim who feels threatened by the presence of his/her alleged assailant on campus. Hartford said that these situations are generally dealt with by mediation except in physical assault cases.

The committee discussed ways to address campus ignorance of the Code. One idea was to inform students of Code violations and the punishments which they entail. This could be done by drafting a series of vignettes of Code violations for publication in the Michigan Daily. However, members agreed that offenders' names must be kept anonymous. Also, the committee agreed that students have the responsibility to educate themselves about the Code since every student receives a personal copy of the Code during their first year at the University.

The committee also addressed the issue of the judicial system and the Student Code. Under the Code, students are allowed a delay of legal proceedings. Members discussed whether or not the Code should offer this right to students.

V. STUDENT GOVERNANCE

Trent Thompson, president of MSA, and Ann Reeves, president of RSG were invited to the meeting to offer their perspectives on the Code. Trent announced that MSA was currently reviewing the Code, with a focus on the student rights/campus safety issue. MSA has sponsored an educational forum on the Code and has made a report on their review process. Thompson also announced that MSA is creating monthly forums on student issues and has established a binge drinking task force. Speaking on behalf of graduate students, Reeves said that, in general, the Code is regarded as intrusive and potentially abusive rather than helpful. She added that graduate students have a problem with only students being singled out in the Code and not faculty and staff members.

Bram Elias, treasurer of MSA, gave a brief overview of the potential Student Coursepack Store. This student-run, non-profit store, would be able to sell coursepacks without the exorbitant royalty fee found in commercial coursepack stores. MSA is currently seeking confirmation from faculty and SACUA as to whether or not they will support this quest
to reduce the costs of course materials for students. Faculty could help by participating in this business venture or with the use of computer technology (i.e. putting course materials on-line). Elias distributed a handout on the project to faculty committee members.

Meeting was dismissed at 2:00 p.m.