Present: Fred Askari, Royster Harper, Donna Hayward, Leo McAfee, David Potter; student reps Talley & Matthew Woods; Paula Pawlowski.


Guests: Greg Merritt, Senior Associate Director, U Housing & Director, Residence Education; Rachel Maki, Dean of Students office & support for the Blavin Scholars program; Blavin Scholars Camille & David.

North Quad Tour
Led by Greg Merritt, the Committee toured the North Quad facilities and discussed the emphasis on community and its balance with students’ privacy.

Chair Remarks
Chair Potter convened the meeting. The Committee to the Secretary of the U is considering the SPG on harassment, which does not necessarily cover bullying but covers other harassment well. SACUA has asked to provide comments in one week on the SPG. This is short notice, but very important. The revision is not active yet, so the Committee will continue to discuss this at December’s meeting. Greg Merritt will also be joining us to give the presentation that he could not present at today’s meeting due to time constraints.

Blavin Scholars Presentation
Rachel Maki presented the Blavin Scholars program. The program was designed to support foster care youth in college who are faced with unique challenges. Eligible students must be Michigan residents and have been in foster care after the age of thirteen (students in foster care before the age of 13 are considered, but not given priority). The screening process happens through financial aid, where the student’s level of need is determined.

The program has three main goals: to provide foster care youth with pre-college experiences, to ensure students’ success (support), and to plan their transition out of the U. The program pays for tuition and provides financial means for additional expenses (books, laptops). The program is also connected with academic units, Division of Student Affairs, and CAPS so that the scholars receive wide-range support.

Camille, a junior in Political Sciences, shared her experiences. She said the program helped curb her fear that she would be alone at the U, without any resources and support. Camille attributed much of her success and achievements at the U to her relationships with her professors. Bonding with professors made her realize that she was not just a number and that professors are there for the students. The program has provided her with support that would otherwise be unavailable. She noted that this support should be extended year-round, since there is a possibility of being homeless after the academic year is over. There should be a storage solution for foster students who go abroad or intern. Likewise, transportation to go to court or talk to case workers is difficult to obtain. Having a case worker on campus who is familiar with the students and their cases could eliminate some of these difficulties.

David, a junior in Kinesiology, shared that he was intimidated by the U before enrolling. The Blavin Scholarship and the Bridge Program helped him get comfortable and eased the transition into his first semester. He was most surprised by the U’s diversity and acceptance and by the fact that there were
other students like him. The program’s weekly meetings, along with access to tutors, have continued to help him succeed.

Both students shared that other schools did compete for them, but UM was the only school to personally convince them. Camille shared that an individual from DSA drove her to Michigan Weekend when she could not find a ride and showed her the support she could expect at the U. The students said that the financial support is essential, but the relationships and attention are key to helping them grow.

Rachel Maki added that the Blavin Scholars’ administrative support in the DSA also helps them with unique challenges. Although the students are good at reaching out, sometimes they do not feel comfortable telling professors why they have to go to court or miss class. Admin support helps by contacting professors instead.

Plans to expand the program include developing a mentoring program that connects former Blavin Scholars with potential students. The support will also be extended to middle school and high school students to make students aware that these programs exist and to encourage students academically.

Closing Remarks
The Committee thanked the students for their time and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Paula Pawlowski
SACUA Student Support