STUDENT RELATIONS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING OF NOVEMBER 21, 2008
Minutes


Guests: Phil Larson, Transition Specialist- Office of New Student Programs;
        Ann Hower, Director- Office of New Student Programs
        Sam Goodin, Interim Assistant Dean of Students
        Sharon Vaughters, Senior Assistant to the Dean of Students

Chair Koopmann called the meeting to order at 12:15pm

Chair Remarks

Chair Koopmann asked for approval of minutes from October 31st; approval granted. Chair Koopmann introduced guest speakers Phil Larson and Ann Hower, who will give an update on the progress towards addressing the student veteran concerns which were previously identified.

Update on Veterans Issues
Transition Specialist Phil Larson and Director Ann Hower from the Office of New Student Programs

The mission of the Office of New Student Programs is to develop programs and services to help new students transition to U of M.

Student veterans, whether or not having faced combat, face a major life transition when entering college. The transition may leave individuals feeling isolated, finding it hard to relate to peers, feeling a loss of comradery, and facing physical and/or mental health issues. Services for many of these needs are already offered on campus; the challenge is to connect the veterans to these services by providing them with easier access to the services as well as informing them of the services.

A University of Michigan council on student veterans was formed. In each division of services, a primary contact person was established to serve the student veteran population. This primary contact would provide answers to veterans’ complex questions and lead these students directly to the needed services. This council is chaired by Phil Larson, transition specialist, who is a veteran himself, and also has experience in student services.

Student veteran assistance program (soon to be named Student Veterans Of America) also serves active duty military, reserve and guardsmen, and military family dependents. If students are deployed mid-semester, they are provided with assistance for working with the financial aid office to minimize losses financially. Students and their families also can obtain counseling in dealing with the deployment.
Does the program also assist graduate and professional degree students? - Yes.

Veterans bring unique world views and experiences to campus with them; services are offered to help these students relate to the often younger student population, to connect veterans with other military students, and work to educate the student body as to what issues student veterans face in an effort to alleviate military stigmas that may exist.

The Future: preparing for the post 9/11 GI bill which pays for undergraduate tuition in full, as well as $1100-$1200 per month in living expenses and $500-$1000 in books.

In state covered for veterans who have served 3 years or more.

Period of 3 years active duty? - Yes

The benefits are scaled down for less time served as long as service was at least 90 days, for example if a veteran served only a year or two, they might receive half-tuition.

Discussion about specifics for tuition waiver:

Ohio State gives in state tuition waiver to active duty but also in state tuition waiver for veterans. Has there been talk of this for Michigan? Not yet, and seems to be bad timing due to Michigan’s current economic state.

Clarifications as to how many students the proposal would affect; currently 56 out of state veterans; the policy is written to include spouses and dependents of these individuals to also receive the tuition waiver. Active duty there are 15 individuals. Active duty individuals stationed in Michigan are receiving tuition waiver but not the out of state veterans.

→ all military positions deserve benefits, not to be distinguished as combat or non-combat veterans/active duty. The out-of state veterans would be granted waiver for in-state tuition and would be responsible for covering the rest of the cost.

→ motion to grant tuition waiver to out of state veterans.

- Concerns about the costs of such an effort. (About 2 million dollars).

→ friendly amendment to the motion: exclude spouses and dependents from the tuition waiver, but still provide the tuition waiver to out of state veterans themselves.

→ Motion as amended is seconded. Unanimously approved.

Critical Incidents Response

Royster Harper introduced Sam Good, Interim Dean of Students, and Sharon Vaughters, Senior Assistant to the Dean of Students.

Sam Good introduces national model of critical incident response: some incidents need resources for different areas- differences in need for physical health and mental health for example.

The principles of practice from the division of student affairs:

Address student as academic being but also as the complexity beyond; the whole student. This would include community, family, national origin, age of student, urban vs. rural background, etc.

Case examples were given illustrating the variations in critical incidents.
To define an incident as “critical” – disruptive to the student’s ability to be healthy and resourceful.

How do we hear about critical incidents?
Through the media, hear from CAPS- trends of cases; hear from academic units, as well as the critical incidents phone line which has been built to be system central, not person central. A critical response team member is on call at all times to meet with students after an incident occurs. Communication between all the departments that deal with critical incidents is important. Efforts to keep data and coordinate language around data- categories established to look for campus trends- and utilize an integrated system to receive input from different divisions.

Who is involved?
Again, to look at the whole student is important. Financial aid can be involved to address those issues, DOS/CAPS can work together to tease out behavioral concerns versus mental concerns.
The Health Advisory Team (HAT) decides whether the student is disruptive or dangerous to himself/herself or others in order to require them to withdraw from the university.

→How to address the issue of identifying an individual as a student needing services or if the individual is not a student? example from a library bathroom with an ill individual; no procedures to follow to obtain assistance.

→Create a protocol for the library to facilitate handling such incidents and to understand the problem and safety hazard of non-students taking shelter in these buildings.

How to deal with a student who informs a professor about a medical problem or condition which may require further assistance?

Refer the student to support services but it is up to the student to follow up. It may be beneficial for the student to be referred from multiple sources to have stronger impact on their decision to seek assistance.
The support service can make contacts to help notify financial aid and academic departments to alleviate the burden placed on the student.

The term “critical incident”: Economic crisis? Is that a critical incident? To address problems such as parents’ job loss, divorce or death of a parent; students can go directly to financial aid or can start with critical incident team

Ideally would like to change the name “critical incident” to something more descriptive; to get the point across that it is something in the way of students’ academic abilities.

Chair Koopmann thanked the guests for their presentation.

Unfinished Business
Vice President of Student Affairs Royster Harper
1) Provost made video about finances, the changing economy, and parents’ financial situation; students going home for thanksgiving is a great time to distribute video to all students. Message: If you are in a difficult financial situation come to the finance aid office
2) some students, given the poor economy at this time, are giving aid money to family, and some families taking the money; what to do about students giving away their financial aid to their family in need? - this is a legal issue.

3) Currently in the process of searching for a dean- hoping for mid-February to bring 3 or 4 candidates on campus

Finally, Chair Koopmann will not be here the 12th of December; originally planned GSI language skill, conversation, and residency requirement and transfer student update - has now been switched for January 9th meeting, and:

12th of December will look at religiously involved students and update on LGBT students, students with disability and student parents.

Some dates still open; please submit topics of interest or topics you would like to hear about.

Schedule of topics for the remaining meetings will be e-mail to committee members.

Send message to MSA: please get student representative who will attend the SRAC meetings.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:36pm.

Submitted by,

Karin Teske
SACUA Support