Minutes of November 30, 2012
Approved December 14, 2012

Student Relations Advisory Committee

Minutes of Friday, November 30, 2012
11:30 to 1:30 PM
Bates Room – Michigan Union

Members Present: David Potter (Chair), Vice President Harper, Simone Himbeault Taylor, Jean Krisch, Ed Rothman, Donna Hayward, Beverly Fauman, Fred Askari

Absent: Charles Koopman, Lisa Low, Stacy Peterson, Nallasivam Palanisamy

Guests: Aniesha Mitchell (Program Manager, FCR); Katie Fleming (Conflict Resolution Facilitator, OSCR); Nick Zettell, Todd Siegal, Aditya Sathi (Students for Sensible Drug Policy); Melissa Burns (VP, LSA Student Government); Patrick O’Mahen (Central Student Government); Michael Dalton (Central Student Government)

Materials Distributed:
Agenda
Minutes of November 9, 2012
Proposals to Amend the Statement
  Proposal 1: Central Student Government
  Proposal 2: Information and Technology Services
  Proposal 3: Student Relations Advisory Committee

Meeting commenced at 11:55 AM.

Chair Potter motioned to approve the minutes from November 30, 2012; unanimous vote approved.

Chair Potter motioned to accept the Consent Agenda Revisions to the Statement (Proposal 1: Central Student Government, Proposal 2: Information and Technology Services, and Proposal 3: Student Relations Advisory Committee); unanimous vote approved.

The committee first heard a student presentation on the Inclusion of Medical Amnesty in the Statement from the contributing authors - Nick Zettell, Todd Siegal, and Aditya Sathi, student representatives for Students for Sensible Drug Policy (SSDP). They discussed their personal experiences at the University, and the significance of Medical Amnesty at the University. Many students are not aware of Medical Amnesty, but a student petition indicated that most agree with adding Medical Amnesty to the Statement. SSDP stressed that the issue is not that the Law exists but the lack of student awareness, and the need for the University and student body to advocate for Medical Amnesty. SSDP believes that adding Medical Amnesty to the Statement will provide an opportunity for students to become aware of the policy. The student representatives stated that overall an increased awareness of Medical Amnesty at the University is more of a health concern than a legal implication.
Before Chair Potter opened the floor to the committee and guests for questions and feedback on the SSDP’s presentation on Medical Amnesty, he commented that language discussing Medical Amnesty might belong in Section VIII – Related Procedures of the Statement.

The committee suggested that an educational component should be added to the Statement to increase awareness of Medical Amnesty with students. They questioned how many students actually read the Statement, which elicited a conversation about introducing the Statement, specifically Medical Amnesty, during student orientation. Beverly Fauman commented that transfer, graduate and international students miss orientation and therefore may not be aware nor understand the policy. The committee discussed the obvious ‘grey area’ of Medical Amnesty in reference to ‘providing for minors’, questioning issues of where the law starts and ends at the University. It was agreed that in the Statement, it would be viewed as a University problem and handled internally rather than within the state legal system.

The SSDP responded with future ideas to promote the Statement and Medical Amnesty at the University through speaking engagements with various clubs and events throughout the year. They would like to create educational videos, panel discussions, and professional lectures to encourage responsible alcohol and drug choices at the University.

Ed Rothman indicated that to create behavior change within this population, we must tailor messages directed at students. More importantly, we must understand those who oppose Medical Amnesty at the University and focus on why those students are resistant to the law.

Fred Askari questioned if the limited scope of the Medical Amnesty Law (i.e., inclusion of only alcohol-related offenses) and not other drug substances, would prevent people from seeking help. He suggested the possible inclusion of other substances to have a more inclusive Medical Amnesty Law at the University. Chair Potter responded that the University does not have the authority to make independent laws regarding controlled substances outside of the existing state and national laws. However, the issue of students not seeking help for medical emergencies related to other drug substances based on the inclusion criteria of Medical Amnesty might be a possible barrier related to the Law.

The committee concluded that all students, regardless of the University entity should be treated equally with the Medical Amnesty Law. Speaking on behalf of the entire committee, Chair Potter clearly stated that they do support the inclusion of Medical Amnesty in the Statement.

The committee thanked the student representatives from Students for Sensible Drug Policy, and they left.

The committee then heard from the second student presentation on the Inclusion of Bullying as a Violation of the Statement, represented by Melissa Burns – Vice President for the LSA Student Government and author of the proposed amendment. Ms. Burns discussed the underlying issue of the University’s exclusion of an existing bullying policy, explaining that bullying extends beyond grade school and is a relevant concern at the University level.

Aniesha Mitchell indicated that OSCR usually only has one case of bullying reported each year, misrepresenting the actual amount of bullying that occurs due to unreported incidences. Students may not report bullying because there is no University policy to protect them. Chair Potter
expressed the hope that the Provost’s office would act on the proposed SPG about Faculty and Staff bullying, noting that this policy contained a definition of bullying, distinguishing it from other forms of harassment based on the latest research on the subject.

Chair Potter mentioned hazing within the University entities, particularly in the Greek system, athletics, student organizations and within certain academic programs. There was some discussion about workplace and academic bullying, specifically bullying between students and their faculty/employer. Questions were asked regarding the current student protocol for filing a complaint. Existing University policies cover the entire University community, but we are aware that some groups have adopted practices that might be seen to be in conflict with University guidelines. The committee further addressed the bullying issue and the possible implications of filing a complaint such as backlash, retaliation and isolation from students and faculty.

Ms. Burns then addressed the issue of cyberbullying, characterizing it as “dehumanizing” and “alone”, and can be a single occurrence. Ed Rothman questioned how you interpret acts of bullying from acts of disrespect, shunning and disagreement. He concluded that the language used to constitute ‘bullying’ in the Statement needs to be exact definitive language.

Mr. Burns responded, explaining that the research for the bullying proposal drafted, defines bullying as a “repeated behavior pattern”, but agreed that there needs to be an operational definition of bullying. It was noted that bullying might be a subcategory of harassment.

Chair Potter suggested that the University create a webpage that clearly defines the bullying research and associated language. Further, The Office of Student Affairs should include an appendix with definitions of the language used in the Statement and for all student policies. Aniesha Mitchell noted that OSCR has the Statement on their webpage linked to definitions, suggesting that students view the Statement mostly online.

The committee thanked Ms. Burns for her extensive research and contribution to the inclusion of bullying as a violation to the Statement, and she left.

The committee then discussed the need for more language in the Statement to clarify violations of making a false statement, specifically the provision of lying about offenses in the Statement. Simone Himbeault Taylor indicated that the proposed language might effect vulnerable populations. She commented that there is a concern for those involved with sexual misconduct offenses, specifically actions of retaliation.

Vice President Harper mentioned that historically, complaints filed by victims of sexual misconduct are believed to be true. However, if a victim claims to have been sexually assaulted but it is disputed, how does that affect the accuser and the accused? Vice President Harper stressed that where and how the language for false allegations is placed in the Statement is critical, especially for sexual misconduct offenses.

Chair Potter commented on the negative consequences of being falsely accused, and was supported by Simone Himbeault Taylor who indicated the ‘chilling effects’ of this language with sexual misconduct. There was also the concern for the burden on the Title IX Coordinator at the University, and how the inclusion of this language has good intent but a damaging impact for vulnerable populations.
Fred Askari noted that inclusion of the proposed language might diffuse the situation, indicating that they are 1) not guilty, or 2) guilty for lying, which results in acts of defending the lies. The Sexual Misconduct Policy handles different gradients that fall under sexual misconduct (i.e., rape, assault, etc.) and are all covered by the policy. There is no single course of action, which leaves room for Title IX Coordinator (or other investigator in place) to make a subjective judgment on the appropriate resolution.

Again, the conversation regarding the “chilling effects” of the language inclusion for provisions of lying about offenses should be evidence-based to ensure fairness and social justice for both the accuser and the accused. The committee agreed that there has been a history of victims not being believed as well as a history for victims not telling the truth, and both need to recognized and protected.

The committee agreed that the language in the Statement IV T covered the issue of dishonesty and that there was no need to include further language, especially as it could have a chilling effect on victim’s willingness to come forward, given the long history of victims not being believed or being implicitly blamed for an incident.

Vice President Harper and Aniesha Mitchell discussed the due diligence for all complaints to ensure support and protective measures for all parties involved before moving forward with all cases at large, with a direct obligation to students. There needs to be a balance between support for the accuser and support for the accused that is forthright and fair.

Chair Potter motioned the following proposal: The committee resolves that Statement IV T provides sufficient protection against students facing false allegations but reserves the right to revise the issue in a subsequent amendment process.

The committee unanimously voted to approve.

Notes for Follow-up/Upcoming Meetings
- December 14, 2012 meeting to discuss Medical Amnesty and bullying to include additional information as needed.
- January 2013 meeting to discuss the Sexual Assault policy, possibly completing the process by February 2013.

Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 1:15 PM.

Submitted by:
Kari L. Woloszyk, SACUA Student Support