Student Relations Advisory Committee

December 6 2002
12:00-1:30

Bates Room
Michigan Union
Approved: January 31, 2003

Present: Pierce Beckham, Al Burdi, Frank Cianciola, Martin Gold, Royster Harper, Patricia King, Chair Barbara MacAdam, Melissa Mercer, Karen Reiman-Sendi, Simone Himbealt Taylor, Ed Willis, Beth Powell (Staff)

Absent: Gary Faerber, Dana Fair, Damon Fairfield, Marita Inglehart, Kathy Irwin, Jong-Jin Kim, Phil Savage, Ian Scott

Guests: Rodolfo Altamirano

Approval of Agenda and Amendment Proposal Review Schedule

Chair MacAdam called the meeting to order at 12:06. Approval of the minutes was postponed until January. The discussion over the amendments will also be delayed until the January meeting, which will be solely devoted to the amendments.

Due to the timing of Spring Break the February meeting needs to be rescheduled. No other Fridays in February are available so the two dates proposed are Monday February 10 and Wednesday February 12. The exact date will be decided over email.

SACUA has not been notified of any amendments coming forward. Any amendments that come soon will be looked over in January. As a result of the amount of information we will have to go over, the January meeting may be longer than an hour and a half. Our primary role in the meeting will be to listen and ask questions.

Strategic Planning Board for Greek Life
The DSA is putting together a group looking at Greek Life and is looking for one or two faculty willing to serve. This group will look at different implications and impacts of the Greek experience. Two ideas that have been brought forth are; to delay rush, and to transform the Greek houses into more of a living learning experience. SRAC will read and review the report and give input. The desire is to target a problem and to come up
with a solution and implement it.

SEVIS Briefing
The University of Michigan has the seventh highest number of international students and the third highest number of scholars. Therefore, the new Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) will have a major impact on the University.

SEVIS is an Internet based tracking system to monitor international student scholars and their dependants. The international students will fall into several categories and must be certified to be eligible for a visa. UM have about 3000 category F international students. These are students who are not necessarily sponsored by the government. All of the undergraduates fall into category F. The J category student or scholar is sponsored by a UM school or Department. J persons will get a different but similar certificate. SEVIS is fully operational from today until Jan 30, 2003. SEVIS will link all University’s across the United States to all embassy’s and consulates and exchange visitors programs.

Privacy issues: The information required of the students is the same information that has required since 1929. There are about 17 items requested, no additional information will be provided. Examples of information requested are addresses, number of credits taken, and enrollment status. Students need to report to SEVIS if they are changing their major, address, or change the institution at which they are studying.

Gold asked about the possibility of challenging these policies and introducing the program to the Civil Liberties Board (CLB) to see what their reaction is. Access to the SEVIS data is through a software system. Only five people at the U of M have access to the data. Of concern is the situation in Nuclear Engineering. All of the international students were denied Visa’s this year. Four students that had been accepted to this program were denied this year in contrast to the three that were enrolled in the program last year without a problem. It appears that the government is mandating which academic programs the international students can be involved in.

UM applied for reaccredidation on November 14, and is waiting for a site visit. If UM does not pass the inspection we will not be able to enroll international students or scholars until Jan 2003. All of the international students will probably be in SEVIS by October 2003. All new students will be in SEVIS by Jan 30, 2003. UM is already registered for F category students and the conditions for J category students have just arrived and will be ready by the deadline. Students will pay a $54 fee as early as spring 2003 and the money will go directly to the government. There are currently no provisions for helping students in financial need.

Housing Director Zeller has given international students first priority to stay in Oxford Housing for $17 a day. All international students are informed that this option is available. The International Center is keeping track of the human context of this situation as well as focusing on issues of liability and responsibility.

One of the new rules is that most cases students need to physically show up at the Detroit
INS Office in order to be registered. UM is providing a bus to help assist with transportation. American students studying abroad do not face similar constraints but there are concerns about safety. We are losing a lot of our international students to many European Countries, Australia and New Zealand.

An international student who changes majors from English to Nuclear Engineering will have problems getting back into country if they leave. They may even have problems if they stay. Vice President Royster expressed a concern that the SEVIS system could be used to silence oppositional voices and thus limit international student involvement in groups and programs.

Only a Designated School Official and the INS will have access to the data stored in the SEVIS program but all the records will be maintained indefinitely until they are deleted. Chair MacAdam asked if international students would have the ability to see their own record. They have a right to see their own information to make sure that their information is correct. There is now a time period where the students can go to the office to check over their information before it is sent.

Gold brought up the issue of questioning the government’s actions with all respect to security. Chair MacAdam commented that we bring it to SACUA to introduce this and make sure that people are informed. Burdi commented that this issue is working against the building of community. Gold suggested informing the newspapers to cover this as a story so that members across the University will learn about this. Altamirano is trying to get SEVIS on the University website.

Chair MacAdam brought up the concern of rights for international students and what can we, as members of the University, do to protect the supportive and viable international climate at UM. She suggested that we need to think about this more and a working subgroup would be important to look more deeply into this. She asked Altamirano what could SRAC do to help the International Center. Altamirano commented that intangible support is important; xenophobia is a big problem so lending support to all international students would be most helpful.

Burdi brought up the issue that the international center has been viewed as a place for students to congregate but with the introduction of SEVIS it might be seen as an agent of a repressive government. To counter this impression the center is promoting what they do beyond the technical job of SEVIS. Vice President Harper commented this is the time for faculty and students to get more involved with international students and their families and to be sensitive to what their concerns.

Taylor commented that maybe it would be helpful for SRAC to be able to work to identify a faculty and student perspective of what issues will be key to assisting the international students. MacAdam suggested that after the 1st of the year we will have the group discuss this issue and Chair MacAdam will contact SACUA Chair Charles Koopmann, the chair of AAAC, and other key individuals.
**Student Issues**

Mercer brought up the issue of how funding cuts at the state levels are affecting graduate students, such as financial aid program cuts. Vice President Harper noted the change in prescription drugs benefits for graduate students. Beckham added that the issues that he has heard of are also related to tuition and budget cuts.

Chair MacAdam adjourned the meeting at 1:43 pm

Minutes Respectfully Submitted
Beth Powell
SACUA Support Staff