Student Relations Advisory Committee

Minutes for December 8, 2000 Meeting

Members in Attendance: Alphonse Burdi, Marty Gold, Gary Faerber, Margaret Terpenning, Richard Mayk, Taryn O'Leary, Bruce Krnopp, Robert Simpson, Donald Heller, Royster Harper

Guests: David Scobey, Linda Gillum

Meeting called to order at 12:10 by Chair Burdi.

I. Opening Remarks: Chair Burdi:

Exciting things are happening at the University with the new Life Sciences Initiative. Since October, SRAC has had the opportunity to hear about the living learning experience. Several interesting questions have come out of the living learning issue, particularly in regard to faculty/student interaction in these areas as well as others.

II. Approval of Minutes:

Discussion of this Deferred to later in the meeting. Chair Burdi suggested providing David Scobey with a copy of the minutes.

III. Updates/Discussions

A. The Undergraduate Education Commission - David Scobey, Ph.D.

The Commission is seeking to build on Michigan's strengths as a research and public University, not to completely restructure it. What kind of problems come from a school like this? There is a large divorce between student life and academic life. Michigan lacks rich three dimensional contact between undergraduate students and faculty. The Commission is seeking to create opportunities for boundary crossing, to encourage and consolidate this school's commitment to a solid experience. This includes encouraging new residence hall culture and creating new space in the geography of the campus to give spatial form to a more permeable less isolated environment. It also includes trying to find a way to create a structure for students that would enable them to take advantage of all the opportunities on campus.

Committee session opens to questions for Mr. Scobey. Bruce Krnopp feels there is an enormous amount of pressure felt by the faculty not to do these initiatives because they must focus on their careers. Perhaps the UGEC could focus on providing some
recognition for faculty participation. Chair Burdi feels that sustainable faculty participation is extremely important. The rewards felt by faculty who participate in these programs are largely intangible. Marty Gold feels that perhaps the UGEC should focus on creating small environments for those who desire to participate in them, as such activities may not be of interest to everyone.

How can we address the marginalization of students who do not live in the residence halls? Royster suggests that perhaps a solution to this is not limiting living/learning communities to just residence halls. Linda Gillum feels that it might be important to discuss ways of encouraging living learning in other environments. Gary Faerber feels that the UGEC should look into ways of offering concrete rewards to faculty for participation, because without such incentives faculty interaction is unlikely. Further discussion on this issue centered around how to encourage faculty to interact. Several members of SRAC expressed concern that the commitment to such initiatives would be shouldered by junior faculty, with little reward for their efforts.

B. Living Learning Initiatives: Perspectives from the Office of the Provost, Linda Gillum, Ph.D

Dr. Gillum stated that at no time has the discussion of living/learning communities reached the focus that all students and all faculty would participate. This assumption is very unrealistic for a campus like Michigan.

**Presentation of a video on Living Learning Communities, by Dr. Gillum**

Dr. Gillum stated that Michigan has a wealth of experiences. No one particular model is appropriate for all students. It was also said that it is typical for any student interested in a living learning community to be placed into one. Students may not be placed into their first choice community, but generally they are placed in one of their choices. Richard Mayk acknowledged the importance of such communities, but asserted that there may be students who feel as if they do not fit into any of the current available options. Chair Burdi stated that this University has a poor record of telling students what they have to do. Students may not always be content with one way of life. Dr. Gillum informed SRAC that living/learning communities support the retention effort and ease the transition to college life. Robert Simpson expressed that this is an important topic for this University and to other institutions across the U.S. How can this University encourage and facilitate real life experience and interaction for students, without losing the focus of this school.

IV. VPSA Issues: Royster Harper

The issue of how to get faculty who are interested in being with students, and students who are interested in interacting with faculty is very important. The role that this committee and the faculty in general will play has not been completely sorted out by the UGEC. How can we remove barriers so that enriching faculty/student interaction can take place? Originally the Commission thought it would be done at the close of last semester. At this time it is further from closure than originally expected.
Chair Burdi wonders how SRAC can play a more meaningful role in the enhancing the work of the UGEC. He suggested that perhaps SRAC could generate a list of concerns, possible barriers, and/or positives about the issues. It was agreed that individual responses would be better than a report coming from SRAC as a whole. This was in response to Marty Gold's concern that SRAC might duplicate the work of the UGEC. It was decided that once the Commission's report is complete, SRAC could review it and provide its perspective.

V. Ideas for the January 19th Meeting:

Ms. Harper expressed a desire to continue to conversation on Housing. Perhaps it would be beneficial to invite faculty from the Ginsburg Center, the Conflict Communication Program and other programs to gather thoughts on the incentives from these individual's perspective. Chair Burdi felt that generating critical questions on this issue for the OVSPA. Residence halls and the re-creation of them is important. This could improve the lives of current student and be used in the future as a recruiting device.

Finally, Donald Heller felt it might be beneficial to get faculty who teach undergraduates to serve on SRAC.

Meeting called to close by Chair Al Burdi at 1:50.