

Student Life Committee Minutes

Date: March 11, 2020

Attendees: Alan Krause (chair), Uchenna Baker, Mike Valentine, Kate Gladhart-Hayes, Adriana Flores (minutes-taker), Moe Stephens.

Alan called to order at 1:00pm.

Minutes of the February 19, 2020 meeting approved with minor revisions.

No Announcements.

Discussion items for meeting:

1. Greek houses recruiting first year students in the fall.
2. Identify themes for living learning communities.
3. Explore Puget Sound

Greek House Recruitment during Fall Semester:

- **Clarification:** recruitment would happen in the fall, but students would not have to move into Greek houses until sophomore year.
- **Presentation by Moe Stephens, Director of Student Involvement.**
 - Introduction:
 - Student Affairs and Greek Life leadership have been discussing this potential change for about a year. IFC and Panhellenic have both approved the change. Three Greek chapters voted against the proposal (their arguments can be found in the report Uchenna sent before the meeting). The driving force behind the change is the housing situation.
 - Housing situation
 - The houses are controlled by the Greek organization. The university is not allowed to control too much.
 - Houses need to be filled to 90% capacity. Smaller class sizes are impacting the number of students going through recruitment, which mean fewer students in Greek Life and living in the houses. Landlords in Tacoma are getting very aggressive about how they recruit students to live in their houses. Students are now signing contracts as early as October for the following academic year.
 - The university does not want to make Greek leadership have to force ultimatums onto their members about living in the house (for example, if you don't live in the house as a senior, you'll be kicked out of the Greek organization).
 - Retention is also a factor
 - Involvement in a Greek house seems to increase retention. Moe cited a study done on retention with sororities at another university. The study can be found in the appendices of the report we received.
 - Alumni engagement

continue to recruit students from across campus because students spend their entire first semester getting to know what Greek Life is like at Puget Sound. Additionally, Adriana feels that the switch to fall recruitment is a band aid for some of the bigger issues, such as housing. She recommended the potential for lighter meal plans or no meal plans required for students living in Greek houses or seeking other ways to off-set costs for juniors and seniors living-in.

- On perceptions of Greek life, Moe shared:
 - He's worried about rumors and innuendos about Greek Life spreading on campus before students join. It's easier to control the message in a month, vs. the whole semester.
 - First year students can go on Greek house tours during orientation, which is the primary way students first experience Greek Life.
- When asked for her opinion as a student, Kate agreed with Adriana. She never would have considered joining a Greek organization if recruitment had been in the fall.
- Alan feels strongly in support of Greek Life as a positive influence on our community. His main concern is the time lost to the recruitment week. He's willing to support those students during that time, but if that week changes he'll need to be well-informed (as well as all the faculty) to make sure they can make necessary accommodations.
- Regarding recruitment week, Kate said it's easier to catch up during the first week of classes (during the spring semester). If it's in the middle of the fall semester, it would be more difficult to accommodate classes/catching up.
- Mike shared that there has been lots of corporate language around the university in general.
- Moe shared that there are concern from Residence Life about the campus dividing more, potentially as a result of the move to fall recruitment. However, he says that the Student Affairs leadership team is generally supportive of this proposed change.
- Q: Do students and families receive messaging about what Greek Life is like before they arrive on campus?
 - A: Not very much right now. There is some messaging during homecoming.
- **In summary:**
 - Members of our committee do express concerns about the proposal.
 - More valuable information can be garnered from alumni and current students-- faculty do not have a large perspective on the issue.
 - Our committee will support any change, we just need accurate information ahead of time and support in implementing the changes.
 - Historically, members of Greek life are going to be wealthier and whiter, which needs to be acknowledged when talking about alumni support and involvement.

Learning-Living communities

- Ideas for potential communities:
 - Environmental/sustainability
 - Social change/activism

- Potential worry it may overlap with community of color
 - Could include GQS, AFAM, COMM, ENGL
 - Science and society (STEM)
 - Suzanne Holland, Siddarth Ramakrishnan, etc.
 - Narrative? (Kate)
 - Emphasis on narrative. Brining in peoples own lived experience.
- We definitely support the Students of Color Living Community
- PLU program: Appealing to have a community beyond freshmen year.
- **Next steps:**
 - Ask colleagues if they'd be willing to invest in these types of communities if they were created
 - Mike can talk to the admin at Bio and see if faculty are interested in participating in a Science & Society committee
 - Adriana can work on the social change one
 - Kate will reach out to STS/Suzanne

Mike moved to adjourn at 2:16pm.