

Student Life Committee Minutes February 12, 2009

Attending: Nick Kontogeorgopoulos, Mike Segawa, Lisa Ferrari, Aislinn Melchior, Tiffany Aldrich MacBain, Duane Hulbert, Charlie Guiguet, and guests Dave Wright, Ruth Marston, and Zach.

The Chair opened the meeting with introductions and by thanking Dave Wright and staff from the Office of Spirituality, Service & Social Justice (Ruth and Zach) for attending. He then provided the following updates and announcements:

- The Chair and Mita Mahato attended an Exclusive Use meeting the previous evening involving the housing that has traditionally been used by the Greek system. They heard “Beta” provide their case for continuing on in the house. The committee approved Beta’s housing request on condition that 1. They show improving recruitment numbers, and 2. They continue to demonstrate proper conduct.
- The Chair had attended the “Welcome Back” gathering for students who had been studying abroad last semester. There, he was able to recruit students interested in serving on Student Life Committee.
- Jannie Meisberger recommends that the Committee change the Study Abroad survey titles, currently titles “Pre-trip” and “Post-trip,” since the word “trip” reads to casually. The committee responded and agreed to retitle them, “Pre-departure” and “Post-Study Abroad.”
- The Chair will contact Ross at ASUPS to ask for a change in the by-laws regarding Student Life Committee.
- Marta Palmquist Cady will attend the next SLC meeting to discuss the Leadership Development Program.
- Yoshiko Matsui and Kim Bobbie will the following meeting to discuss diversity issues from their respective offices.
- Debbie Chee will attend the meeting after that to discuss Residential Life Seminars.

The Chair turned the meeting over to Dave Wright, University Chaplain and head of the Office of Spirituality, Service, and Social Justice. The Chair explained that the committee has been discussing how to develop an “Alternative Spring Break” activity for students and Dave has been working on “Alternative Breaks” through his office.

Dave explained that his office had begun to think about “Alternative Breaks” two years ago as a means of bringing the notions of “spirituality” and “social justice” together. A pilot program was implemented last spring. The focus of the pilot was juniors and seniors and designed to allow them to participate in volunteer service beyond college and to expose them to the non-prof sector. They participated in daytime service projects and attended panels and discussions during the evenings to allow for reflection. Twelve students signed up for the pilot program, and all but one participated.

Dave explained that the pilot program was effectively billed as a “partial week” to allow students to also have some “break” within Spring Break—but that having a Friday to Tuesday Schedule limited the volunteer opportunities. This year, the program is scheduled to take place from

Sunday to Thursday (Sunday for orientation, and the weekdays for the volunteer work). Twenty-eight students have expressed interest in this upcoming program, most of them from the sophomore class. The budget for this trip is largely being funded for by the Office of Spirituality, Service, and Social Justice; students are asked to contribute \$30 to participate.

Dave then talked about the financial difficulties the program has encountered due to the general state of the economy. They had attempted to offer a service break trip to New Orleans for upwards of nine interested students; several of the students, however, had to drop out of the trip due to financial obstacles. Dave emphasized, though, that there are other national programs that are well-funded and that allow students more freedom of choice (Habitat for Humanity and Lighthouse, which this year is organizing a trip to bring volunteers to Houston to help with Hurricane Ike recovery).

Dave then discussed the feasibility of making San Francisco a destination for the Alternative Break next year. San Francisco is more manageable (it has the infrastructure in place to support a group of volunteers) and the costs can be kept relatively low in terms of travel and housing for students. Dave emphasized the program's focus on balancing service mornings with evening programming designed for reflection.

Mike provided some greater university context for the Alternative Break program. He explained how they wanted to provide students with the opportunity for community service beyond Urban Plunge (which is part of the freshman orientation). He also wanted to emphasize the reflection component of the experience. Finally, as Urban Plunge is designed for freshmen, he wanted to find ways to involve upper-classmen as well.

Mike asked Dave to talk about the "Peer Minister Positions" available to students, two of which Ruth and Zach were holding. The Peer Minister positions are part of a scholarship mentorship program created through Student Financial Services. When the program began, there were three awards involving 1. social justice, 2. worship, and 3. community service. Since then, diversity theme year, and theological inquiry were also added. The current application involved 10 different positions and the office will choose the 5 best applications in order to maximize flexibility and student interest,

The Chair returned to a discussion of Alternative Breaks by asking why there may have been more student interest in this upcoming program. Dave explained that this one was better advertised and they intentionally advertised smaller for the pilot program. One committee member asked about the possibility of using the Volunteer Fair as an opportunity for advertising; Dave explained that that Fair usually caters to off-campus programming. The committee discussed the various places that resources that students can draw on to exercise their volunteering and service interests. The committee mentioned CES for internship opportunities CIAS for other volunteering opportunities.

Dave and the committee members agreed that it would be ideal to see the Alternative Spring Break program grow and recognized that funding could become an issue. Dave returned to his plans for San Francisco and why that trip makes good sense.

The Chair asked Mike whether there was any progress made on an idea that Carrie Washburn had had while she served on SLC for a “Senior Reflection.” This reflection would be a senior version of Prelude (a “Postlude”) and would take place just before the Spring semester began. Carrie had floated the possibility of doing focus groups or use some other format to help re-engage seniors.

Mike provided an update and explained that the idea has not died and explained that it is on Marta’s agenda. Mike reiterated that the reflection would give seniors a connection to place, an opportunity to cement bonds with their fellow seniors, and some help in transitioning out of college and into the “real world.” One student committee member shared that she had recently received a letter she had written to herself during the Passages portion of orientation and she appreciated the reflection. She suggested the possibility of a “senior evening”—and a formal opportunity to be inducted into being alumni. Mike agreed that some kind of senior event would allow the opportunity to develop class identity.

The committee asked about the possibility of expanding service learning on campus—and to address diversity issues that way. A committee member asked for clarification about whether that would entail academic credit. Mike clarified that the pedagogy on our campus does not include service learning and that allows us to do other things on campus. As for the diversity piece, Mike emphasized that it is linked to the volunteering we had been discussing and reflected in the connections between service and social justice.

The Chair thanked Dave, Ruth, and Zach for attending and for informing SLC on a topic that has been on our agenda to discuss. The committee echoed those thanks.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:50 pm
Respectfully submitted,
Mita Mahato

The next meeting of the Student Life Committee will be Thursday, February 26.