

Minutes of the Student Life Committee February 17, 1999

Present: Chair Carol Smith, Barry Anton, Jim Jasinski, Judith Kay, Terry Mace and Carrie Washburn.

1. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved with one modification, insertion of the word "already," so that the last sentence of the first paragraph now reads: "The focus of inquiry and discussion, she suggested, should be on ways to improve or enhance the *already* significant level of faculty involvement in the co-curricular program."

2. Old Business

a. Co-Curricular Development of Citizenship

There was discussion about the e-mail sent from this Committee to all student groups on campus, which asked "Does participation in your organization build citizenship skills and/or provide opportunities to experience democratic citizenship?" No responses have been received to date. The Committee requested Kay to send out a hard copy of the inquiry to each organization as a follow-up to the e-mail of February 4.

The question of whether the Committee was obligated to make the same inquiry of academic departments was discussed and rejected, noting that the purview of the committee is student life outside the classroom.

b. Faculty Involvement in the Co-Curriculum

Discussion focused first on a student recommendation that faculty in core classes be asked to announce co-curricular events. Members do not believe that faculty should be required to make such announcements nor that faculty were to serve as advertisers of events. The focus on core classes did not appear to be a relevant distinction.

The Committee then discussed the idea presented last week to hold focus groups with non-leader students to ascertain their perceptions of the faculty involvement in the co-curriculum. It was noted that the Division of Student Affairs Open House for student representatives did not focus per se on the co-curriculum and therefore any focus groups on that topic could be opened to both leaders and non-leaders. Since engagement of faculty with the co-curriculum is not a problem, ascertaining student perceptions of this fact was not thought to yield useful information.

The Committee entertained and ultimately rejected the idea that asking worthy questions such as the following would fulfill the Senate charge: "Is the co-curriculum rich and varied enough so that students feel engaged with campus life?" and "How do students spend their time?" and "How many events do students attend and how frequently?" These questions did not address the crucial question of improving faculty involvement. Mace noted that there are more events than students or faculty can possibly attend and that students are free to attend or not. Volunteerism, he observed, cannot be mandated. Washburn wondered if the Committee might ask students if they had unmet desires and expectations for contact with faculty outside of class. Anton wondered if the Office of Admission might have data about the prospective students interest in the co-curriculum. Kay mentioned the freshmen survey which asks about students' prospective involvement in the co-curriculum. Discussion returned to the Senate charge: how to improve faculty and student involvement, not to assess interest or actual involvement.

The Committee decided that it would recommend the following:

" Many students report having attended particular events because faculty encouraged such attendance by announcing events in class. Because this voluntary faculty practice is appreciated by students, faculty are encouraged to announce relevant co-curricular programs in their classes, as time permits."

Discussion then focused on new pilot efforts being initiated. Kay and Washburn mentioned the proposal made to the Hewlett Foundation and the good ideas therein. Kay mentioned new initiatives involving campus residences such as language theme floors (Michel Rocchi) and humanities seminars (Rob Garratt). Washburn mentioned Arts Venture, a new effort to make cultural events in the Puget Sound region more accessible to students and faculty. Mace proposed that we monitor the progress of these excellent initiatives.

The next meeting will be March 31 in the Thompson Tower. The meeting was adjourned at 10:55 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith W. Kay