



State Council of
Higher Education for Virginia

SAC MINUTES

Student Advisory Committee Minutes October 10, 2008 Meeting

Members Present: Fajir Amin (VCU), Travis Brannon (UVA-Wise), Tara Coney (Longwood), Ellin Early-McFord (ESCC), Jason Elliott (TCC), Rob Fendley (VMI), Matt Fifer (UVA), Thomas Fitzpatrick (W&M), Ben Heath (CNU), Jeremy Hollenbeck (ODU), Byron Morgan (SVCC), Sean O'Brien (UMW), and Whitney Petticolos (RBC).

SCHEV Staff Present: Kathleen Kincheloe and Kirsten Nelson.

(For brevity, after first reference, only first names may be used.)

- Kathleen Kincheloe (SCHEV) opened the meeting by explaining the Council's responsibility for coordinating the statewide system of public higher education. She touched on specific duties of Council members and staff and discussed the agency's interaction with individual institutions.
- Kathleen (SCHEV) specifically spoke about the role of the Student Advisory Committee in informing Council decisions, and told members they would be asked to share ideas that come out of the SAC meetings with members of their student body at their home institutions when appropriate.
- Kirsten Nelson (SCHEV) provided a legislative overview via PowerPoint. She touched on important higher education bills and topics for 2009, including the higher education budget, campus safety, and SCHEV-sponsored legislation that will invite two students from private, accredited, non-profit colleges in Virginia sit on the Student Advisory Committee.
- Kirsten and Kathleen (SCHEV) stated that members will be invited to visit with legislators in Richmond during the 2009 General Assembly session. Talking points will be provided for those members who wish to participate in the legislative visit based on issues selected and agreed upon by the group. Selecting appropriate legislative issues and developing talking points for those issues will be the focus of the **second SAC meeting, which will take place Wednesday, December 3 from 1:00 – 3:00 p.m.**
- Following the legislative update, the SAC members held nominations and elected a Chair and Vice Chair. Congratulations to our new Chair, Jason Elliott of Tidewater Community College (jme2074@email.vccs.edu), and our new Vice Chair, Matt Fifer of UVA (msfifer@gmail.com).
- The floor was then opened for committee-led discussion. Travis Brannon (UVA-Wise) mentioned his concern that budget cuts would affect his institution's student-teacher ratio and extremely low debt burden for graduating students.
- As the comments turned to the impact of budget cuts on new construction projects, Kirsten mentioned that the Governor views the 2008 Bond Issue to be a much-needed "economic stimulus" during these tight times.
- Ben Heath (CNU) voiced a concern on his campus that student jobs would be affected by the budget if on-campus buildings or offices decreased their hours of operation.
- Tara Coney (Longwood) mentioned that course availability is now a concern for students who are used to an institution where TAs and adjunct faculty members don't teach many classes. She added that reduction in course availability could affect graduation rates as students find it harder to get into the classes they need.
- Ben (CNU) agreed, adding that class-size capacity could increase on his campus.

- Faculty retention was a concern for Sean O'Brien (UMW), who said students were worried that professors would look elsewhere for jobs if pay raises were curtailed and workloads increased.
- Jeremy Hollenbeck (ODU) asked how these issues would affect the quality of education at Virginia institutions, while Ellin Early-McFord (ESCC) questioned the impact on student and faculty morale.
- Matt Fifer (UVA) added that some professors worry that an increased teaching load would result in less time for research. He mentioned that sometimes it's intangibles like lab space or time for research that faculty find just as important as salary levels.
- Kirsten (SCHEV) remarked that all personnel decisions at higher education institutions, including faculty salaries, are made by the boards of visitors.
- Matt (UVA) and Thomas Fitzpatrick (W&M) discussed the emerging role of the college/university president as a fundraiser for the institution, while Ellin (ESCC) voiced a concern that departmental leadership roles on smaller campuses might rest on the shoulders of a single individual.
- Ellin (ESCC) ended the discussion by adding that professors on her campus were concerned about a freeze of the Higher Education Equipment Trust Fund (ETF).
- Kirsten and Kathleen (SCHEV) ended the meeting by asking that all representatives consider which of these topics was timely, universal, and important enough to discuss at the December 3rd meeting as a possible topic for the January legislative visits. The meeting was adjourned at 4:02 p.m.