



State Council of
Higher Education for Virginia
Advancing Virginia through Higher Education

Student Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes — October 3, 2006
SCHEV Office, James Monroe Building

Members Present: Nathan Alleman (College of William and Mary), Toney Gates (John Tyler Community College), Stephanie Mancuso (Longwood University), Nicole May (Norfolk State University), Amanda Cole (Northern Virginia Community College), Anshita Kumar (Old Dominion University), Farisa Cooper (Paul D. Camp Community College), Martin Mash (Radford University), Kyle Sexton (Richard Bland College), Maggie O'Brien (Virginia Commonwealth University), Yuris Rios (Virginia State University), and Greg Sagstetter (Virginia Tech).

SCHEV Staff Present: Kathleen Kincheloe, Jennifer Spraggins, Elizabeth Kersey, and Monica Osei (For brevity, after first reference, only first names are used below)

- The Student Advisory Committee met on October 3, 2006 to discuss the goals of SAC and to update students on current projects at SCHEV. Kathleen Kincheloe opened the meeting, welcomed members, and asked Dr. Monica Osei to introduce herself and explain the role of Academic Affairs in SCHEV. Monica explained the various functions of Academic Affairs. Kathleen explained the role of SCHEV for the state of Virginia.
- Monica then explained the role of Impacting Student Persistence Committee (ISPC) in helping to improve the student experience. Depending on the response from Council, Monica stated that interested Student Advisory Committee members may be asked to work with the Impacting Student Persistence Committee to poll students on the reasons why they leave an institution (whether it's to go to another institution or to join the workforce). Nicole May, representative for Norfolk State University, mentioned that members of SAC should circulate surveys throughout their institution's clubs and organizations in order to increase responses.
- Monica explained some of the findings of ISPC. One finding was that many public institutions have some form of a first year program, but that these programs are mandatory in few institutions; also, there is no second year program to help students persist to the third year of education.
- Members shared information about their first year programs. Nicole stated that Norfolk State University is one of the few institutions that have a mandatory first year program entitled "Freshmen Seminar 101." Nicole stated that at the end of this

program students go through a convocation ceremony together. Yuris Rios stated that Virginia State has adopted a first year program that is similar to Norfolk State's. The program teaches students about the history of Virginia State University as well as invites the SGA and other important organizations to speak with the students. Monica mentioned that Virginia State University's first year program is nationally renowned for increasing persistence. Stephanie Mancuso stated that Longwood University changed its first year program recently. Longwood's first year program allows the orientation instructor to become your peer advisor during the student's undergraduate education. Stephanie says that so far the program is a success. Maggie O'Brien, representative for Virginia Commonwealth University, believed that although first year programs are important, that advising is more important. Nathan agreed but mentioned that setting up a good advising system was difficult. Monica mentioned that Virginia Commonwealth University's Fine Arts advising system was one of the best in the state. Martin Mash stated that Radford University's first year program was similar to Longwood's program. Monica mentioned that Radford University has the longest running first year program in Virginia. Greg Sagstetter mentioned that very few institutions have a campus-wide first year program. Monica agreed and noted that Virginia Tech had a very successful first year program but had to stop it after a short time. Amanda Cole mentioned that most people view two-year institutions as a last resort in education and that there are no first year programs at Northern Virginia Community College. Monica made note that community colleges were first created for adults returning to finish their education and that two-year institutions are beginning to develop first year programs in response to volume of first year students entering the community college system.

- Kyle Sexton, representative for Richard Bland College, mentioned that one possible obstacle to graduation is the frustration of not being able to work in the area that one has studied. Kyle mentioned a statistic that suggests that only 20% of graduates get jobs in their study area. Monica noted that over the years the bachelor's degree has replaced the high school diploma as the launch pad for successful jobs. Anshita Kumar, representative for Old Dominion University, mentioned that until recently, there was a greater possibility of getting a job on a high school diploma, but that now more jobs require experience of some kind. Toney Gates, representative for John Tyler Community College, shared that many students have a distorted view of college, and that many choose a major based on their lifestyle and interests. He believes that research should be done to guide students with the different choices students can make regarding their future careers and education goals. Kathleen mentioned that students discovering who they are is an important part of the college experience.
- Nathan asked Monica what other assumptions were made by ISPC regarding the lack of persistence in Virginia. Monica mentioned that ISPC found that institutional fit was an issue affecting persistence. She also mentioned that the burdens of students working full-time jobs while getting an undergraduate education was another issue affecting persistence. She stated that many students working full-time jobs become overwhelmed and with the combination of failing grades, the morale and self-esteem

of students are often lower. Nathan mentioned that life changes also affect persistence; Monica pointed out that this makes institutional fit extremely important.

- During lunch break, Kathleen then introduced Elizabeth Kersey to update representatives on some issues that might impact the upcoming General Assembly session. Elizabeth reported the following:
 - A bill was passed during the last session designed to track sex offenders attending Virginia higher education institutions. When a student is accepted to an institution in Virginia, the student's social security number will be checked against a list of sex offenders before the student is enrolled at the institution. SCHEV is working with the institutions and the state police to determine a safe way to transmit data and carry out this process.
 - Elizabeth also discussed a current issue with the interpretation of the Virginia War Orphans Act involving whether the scholarship entitles students to tuition and fees or to room & board and textbook costs, as well.

Additional Topics of Discussion

Kathleen explained that the next SAC meeting would be held in November and members would discuss what issues should be presented to General Assembly members during a visit in January. After discussion, members agreed that November 29th would be a good day to meet.

Next Meeting Date: Wednesday, November 29, 2006, from 11:00 am - 1:00 pm

With no other business, the meeting adjourned 2:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:
Jennifer Spraggins, SCHEV Liaison