



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

Student Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes – November 10, 2005
SCHEV Office, James Monroe Building

Members Present: Brittney Mullins (UVA at Wise), Mario Lorello (George Mason University), Jonathan Pippin (Virginia Highlands Community College), Gina Greco (Richard Bland College), Joseph Vilga (Piedmont Virginia Community College), JR Slosson (University of Virginia), Kira DeNoble (Old Dominion University), Edward O'Leary (Virginia Commonwealth University), Ammee Smith (Virginia State University), Stephanie Harmon (Radford University), Summeet Bagai (Virginia Tech), Thomas Melton (Hampden-Sydney), Pierce Blue (The College of William & Mary), John Mundt (Virginia Military Institute), and Wesli Spencer (James Madison University).

SCHEV Staff Present: Kathleen Kincheloe, Daniel LaVista, Monica Osei, Jennifer Spraggins, Elizabeth Wallace (For brevity, after first reference, first names may be used below)

- Kathleen Kincheloe opened the meeting, welcomed members and SCHEV staff, and introduced Dr. Daniel LaVista. Dr. LaVista welcomed SAC representatives and thanked members for their membership and participation. Dr. LaVista reminded students of their power to affect legislation and other policies. Dr. LaVista specifically asked to students to consider the issue of persistence and what is affecting students completing a bachelor's degree in four years. Kathleen noted the issues that Dr. LaVista mentioned were on the agenda for discussion, and then introduced Elizabeth Wallace to discuss legislative issues.
- Elizabeth Wallace explained that the General Assembly session will start January 11, 2006. SCHEV will make lists of all pending legislation affecting students available. A 'Hot List' of important issues will be posted on the SCHEV's web site, followed by a Long List. Elizabeth also introduced the idea of SAC members forming a Legislation subcommittee. Subcommittee members could travel to Richmond in January to express student's opinions on the state of higher education in Virginia to state legislators. Elizabeth noted she would arrange a meeting.
- Dr. Osei spoke to issue of student persistence to graduation. She noted the purpose and role of the Impacting Student Persistence Committee (ISPC), an Ad hoc committee of Council's Academic Affairs Committee that she leads. The ISPC seeks to study and address the factors impacting student persistence to graduation. Dr. Osei asked interested SAC members to form an Impacting Student Persistence subcommittee.
 - Factors in Persistence. The subcommittee will evaluate factors that have been submitted by the ISPC and will help define or clarify factors impacting student persistence to graduation. Deadline to pull information together: May 1, 2005.
 - 'Poor Institutional Fit'. The subcommittee will evaluate the definition of 'Poor Institutional Fit' for accuracy. Deadline to address definition: May 1, 2005.
 - Subcommittee members may be asked to discuss their college-going experiences at Council meetings so that members of the Council can hear directly from students how

factors are impacting their enrollment in higher education.

- March 14th Council meeting: ISPC will focus on explaining persistence through the perspective of the "non traditional student." Meeting will be held at Northern VA Community College.
- May 9th Council meeting: ISPC will focus on explaining persistence through the perspective of the "traditional student." Meeting will be held at a private institution to be determined.
- Kathleen Kincheloe introduced the first document from the packet entitled, "2006-08 Operating Budget Recommendations." She noted that this report is available on the SCHEV web site. Next, she introduced SCHEV's 50th Anniversary packet. SCHEV is celebrating 50th years of serving the public through promoting higher education. The celebration will include a marketing endeavor (i.e., creating a new logo), and hosting a Kick-off celebratory event. Kathleen requested that representatives serve as liaison to find people who are interested in participating in ongoing academic events throughout the year. Kathleen also described the possibility of student participation in the Outstanding Faculty Awards. Every institution has been invited to nominate staff members who have done outstanding work for their institution. There is a possibility that the committee will have a student liaison to assist in the nomination process. The Award Ceremony will be Feb. 23, 2006.
- Kathleen discussed the Textbook Study. SCHEV has been asked to investigate the high cost of textbooks. More than 12,000 students have responded to an online survey, and a second survey was administered to bookstore owners and teachers. There was a meeting held in October at SCHEV to discuss issues with the cost of textbooks. Kathleen asked representatives Joseph Vilga and Pierce Blue to discuss what they gathered from the meeting.
- Joseph Vilga: Upper executives, faculty, etc., discussed how textbooks costs were high, but publishers and bookstore owners seemed content to blame each other instead of solving the problem. Kathleen: Students and faculty had a unified voice in expressing the effects of the textbook prices. Blue: There was no real consensus (from the publishers, staff, and students) on this issue, although students and faculty did come together.
- Kathleen and Jennifer proposed that subcommittees be organized to help with both the legislative aspect of higher education and the issues regarding student persistence. Sign-up sheets entitled, "Legislation Action Subcommittee" and "Student Persistence Subcommittee" were sent around the room so students could have the opportunity to choose which subcommittee they would like to be involved with. Subcommittee membership lists are attached.
- Kathleen explained the process for the election. She discussed the possibility of introducing new legislation that would make provisions for electing new members as Chair of SAC. Stephanie Harmon also questioned reason for only having two meeting. Kathleen reiterated that SAC must meet *at least* twice a year. Members voted to strike the sentence that would require a returning member serve as Chair of the committee.
- Sumeet Bagai, a returning member, ran for Chair. Following a brief question and answer period, SAC members formally elected Sumeet Bagai as **Chairman** of the Student Advisory Committee (SAC).
- Kathleen posed the following questions to the committee regarding to the position of Vice-Chair: Would you like to have Vice-Chair? What would the Vice-Chair's responsibilities be? Discussion revealed that committee members felt that the co-chair could fill in for the chair if he or she was unavailable.

- Four candidates self-nominated to run for Vice-Chair: Mario Lorello, Jonathan Pippin, Gina Greco, and JR Slosson. After ballot votes were tallied, JR Slosson was announced as **Vice-Chairman** of the Student Advisory Committee (SAC).
- Jennifer Spraggins opened the floor to discuss ways that SAC representatives could keep in contact with each other during the year and in between committee meetings. Jennifer noted that communication was a big issue last year, and that many students were unable to bring back information that was presented to their institution. Jennifer discussed the possibility of creating an Internet-based group where representatives would have the ability to communicate issues and concerns within their institution.
- Members presented ideas, such as instant messaging group, email group, or creating a Facebook group. One issue presented was the concern about creating a Facebook group without the ability to control who could join. Members, however, said that Facebook does have a way to restrict the group to only certain individuals. Another issue was accessibility. There were a few representatives who did not have access to instant messaging while every representative had access to an email account.
- The committee agreed that the best solution was to start an email group. Kathleen asked all members to submit contact information to be compiled in a listing for SAC representatives. These groups will also be used to help subcommittee members stay in contact with one another.
- Kathleen opened the floor for members to comment on issues occurring at their institutions.

Textbooks

Representative Eddie O'Leary brought up the prices of textbooks and VCU's attempt to solve that problem. He said that VCU students created an independent outlet where students could sell their used books for a cheaper price, but Follett and the VCU bookstore tried to stop the project.

Other representatives also shared their issues with textbooks including limited return policies, unnecessary shrink-wrapped packaging, and ISBN numbers that do not match.

Representatives also expressed concern that financial aid monies do not arrive in time for students who need to buy books. Representative Stephanie Harmon suggests that other schools could work to institute a book voucher as Radford has. Representative JR Slosson says that UV A provides honor loans to students to buy books. Representative Wesli Spencer mentioned that college libraries could make shared textbooks available to students.

Persistence

Representative Stephanie Harmon suggested that persistence issues of students taking longer than four years to graduate might be related to students double majoring or studying abroad. She also mentioned that Radford has very demanding general education requirements.

Other representatives mentioned limited course offerings that force students to stay for an extra semester or year in order to complete a necessary course.

Advising issues, specifically a lack of well-informed advisors, came up as an additional hindrance to persistence. Representatives agreed that it is difficult to find advisors who can answer academic and financial questions.

And finally, financial problems were discussed as they relate to persistence. Of the 13 representatives present, four support themselves completely. Others mentioned that they depend on loans and TAG grants. Additionally, gas prices were an issue for students who did not live on campus.

Additional Topics of Discussion

Representative Wesli Spencer asked if there are formulas for base adequacy in other states that might work well in Virginia.

SAC representative Thomas Melton raised the issue of competition at private institutions in Virginia driving students to attend private institutions outside of Virginia.

Representative Ammee Smith commented on the problems of overcrowding, saying that Virginia State University dorms have been filled to capacity and more students are expected to enroll next year. Additionally, Virginia State signed a contract saying that no dormitories would be able to be built for the next three years in order for the company to build the apartments.

Representatives also expressed concern about health insurance being accepted at student health centers.

Stephanie Harmon suggested that the SAC meet more than the scheduled twice a year. She noted the topics of concern, student voice, and impact on issues were too important and the group should meet more frequently to address issues and attempt to find solutions that can be presented to members of the General Assembly and the State Council. SAC plans to meet before the General Assembly session to discuss what issues will be presented to the General Assembly; afterwards, the legislation subcommittee will work together to prepare a message on behalf of the committee.

Next Meeting Date: TBD

With no other business, the meeting adjourned 1: 22 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:
Jennifer Spraggins, SCHEV Liaison