



State Council of
Higher Education for Virginia

SAC MINUTES

Student Advisory Committee Minutes December 3, 2008 Meeting

Members Present: Fajir Amin (VCU), Tara Coney (LU), Jordan Draper (RU), Ellin Early-McFord (ESCC), Jason Elliott (TCC), Matt Fifer (UVA), Benjamin Heath (CNU), Jeremy Hollenbeck (ODU), Nicole Kukuruda (GMU), Byron Morgan (SVCC), and Whitney Petticolos (RBC).

SCHEV Staff Present: Beverly Covington, Dan Hix, Kathleen Kincheloe, Kirsten Nelson, and Angela Patterson.

- Kathleen Kincheloe (SCHEV) began the meeting at 1:00 p.m. with the approval of the October minutes.
- Kirsten Nelson (SCHEV) led the legislative discussion, pointing out the four higher education-related bills and showing SAC members where they can find more information about pre-filed bills on the SCHEV website.
- HB1599 and HB1606 both modify the eligibility of students in foster care to receive grant monies to attend two-year institutions. HB1608 proposes that students be automatically accepted by the public institution of choice if they previously served in the military and graduated in the top 10% of their Virginia high school class. HB1612 establishes the Community College Scholarship Match Program to provide matching funds to community college foundations and the Virginia Foundation for Community College Education.
- Kirsten warns that the number of introduced bills will increase substantially between now and January. She anticipates that the main legislative focus this year will be finances.
- Dan Hix (SCHEV) began his presentation by pointing out that higher education can often feel discretionary to legislators who believe that institutions can simply increase tuition to make up for lost state support. In fact, we may see tuition increases mid-year. "Roller coaster" funding changes such as these make it difficult for students and parents to plan and save for college.
- Dan went on to explain that there will be additional revenue considerations if bills are passed limiting the number of out-of-state students at public institutions since they pay a significantly larger portion of their costs than in-state students. The number of out-of-state students at each institution is currently capped.
- Dan explained that higher education will likely have its budget cut again -- the question is how much. There was a 5% General Fund cut last fall and a 5-7% General Fund cut this fall. K-12 is usually spared from budget cuts, but it will most likely get cut this year, which could minimize cuts in other budget areas, including higher education.
- Specifically, financial aid will be affected as there is no increase budgeted for state scholarship and grant programs.
- Students expressed concerns about the possible results of these budget cuts. Jordan Draper (RU) was specifically worried about faculty layoffs. Dan explained that an institution's ability to raise tuition mitigates layoffs to some extent.
- State-of-the-art labs and equipment help attract and retain faculty even when faculties' salaries cannot be increased, which is why the higher education community is grateful that the Higher Education Equipment Trust Fund (HEETF) was recently approved for this year. However, there is no guarantee that the funding will be supported for 2009-10.

- Tara Coney (LU) pointed out that while faculty positions weren't being cut at Longwood, other items, such as library purchases, were already being scaled back.
- Ellin Early-McFord (ESCC) said it appeared to her that cuts seem to be across the board, though campuses are expanding security measures.
- Dan explained that there is no line item in the budget for campus security, but that is a high profile issue in Virginia right now, so one wouldn't think compromises would be made there.
- Kirsten pointed out that the Governor is endorsing what he terms "surgical cuts," whereby each institution decides where and how to make cuts on its particular campus.
- In addition to the other possible topics raised, Fajir Amin (VCU) was concerned about the high cost of textbooks and its impact on students' ability to have the necessary resources in class.
- Kathleen pointed out that textbook selection is not overseen by state. Beverly Covington (SCHEV) mentioned the Textbook Study that SCHEV recently conducted and said that best practices are available.
- Nicole Kukuruda (GMU) offered tips on reducing textbook costs, including using library copies and having professors select textbooks in advance so that used books are worth more.
- The meeting concluded with SAC representatives deciding that the following topics should be considered as messages to take to legislators:

1. Affordability

Support an increase in 2009-10 appropriations for student financial aid so that Virginia students can afford college costs, including tuition and textbooks

Request that additional budget cuts be kept to a minimum, allowing campuses to continue addressing student safety and other important issues on campus

2. Faculty Retention

Retain the currently budgeted 2% faculty salary increase

Support the Higher Education Equipment Trust Fund (HEETF)

- Kirsten ended the meeting with pointers for those students who are planning to attend the Legislative Visit: Know what you are going to say, be brief, and leave behind information about SAC's requests and messages.
- Chair Jason Elliott (TCC) and Vice Chair Matt Fifer (UVA) will follow up with SAC members to decide on the date of the Legislative Visit. Proposed dates are: January 12, 22, or 28. Kathleen will send out further instructions and possibly schedule a phone conference meeting with those who plan to participate.
- The meeting adjourned at 3:05 p.m.