

4/29/2019

Students Policies Committee
[Draft] Report to the Senate, May 2019

Standing Charges

The Student Policies Committee shall review and recommend policies to achieve and maintain a high quality of intellectual life for students at the University.

The Committee shall review policies that affect the academic life of students beyond the classroom and influence the academic atmosphere of the University toward the goals of strengthening the intellectual growth of students, and integrating the social and academic aspects of student life. This shall include but not be limited to policies and programs of the Office of Residence Life and Housing, the Foreign Student Advisor's Office, and other administrative units.

Committee members

Sreekumar Bhaskaran (Cox), Dennis Foster, Chair (Dedman I), Brett Story (Lyle), Khaled Abdelghany (Lyle), Beth Newman (Dedman I), Adriana Aceves (Dedman III), Jill Kelly (Dedman I)

Actions

1. Service on search committees. V. P. Mmeje asked to have a member of the committee on each major search this year. This service led to productive interactions between faculty and Student Life staff, giving each insight to the workings of the other.
 - a. Jill Kelly: new Faculty in Residence. Outcome: Andrew Graybill and Jennifer Ebinger
 - b. Adriana Aceves: new Dean of Residence Life and Student Housing. Outcome: Melinda Carlson.
 - c. Dennis Foster: new Associate Vice President and Dean of Students. Outcome: Melinda Sutton Noss.
2. DASS: Testing accommodations. There is an ongoing problem with providing for the testing needs of students with disabilities. Cox has solved the problem by devoting a considerable amount of time, space, and money to administer several hundred DASS exams each semester. The rest of the campus has not solved the problem. The obvious, but not cheap solution to fulfilling our legal and ethical obligations would be to run a testing center with adequate facilities and staff trained to deal with a range of disabilities. K. C. Mmeje has not considered this to be part of his portfolio. Perhaps he should. Discussions included:
 - a. Aceves and Foster with Alexa Taylor
 - b. Foster with Renee McDonald
 - c. Foster with K.C. Mmeje.
 - d. Foster with Jill McGinnis

3. Counseling. The upsurge in numbers of students requesting counseling for mental health problems has put the Counseling Center under great pressure. As reported in the Senate, there have been a number of significant changes in the service to accommodate this need, which we applaud. We note that the Center remains (we think) down one clinical Ph.D. (needed to provide graduate supervision); and that students are limited to eight appointments at the Center, with the possibility of petitioning for the occasional extension.
 - a. Newman and Foster with representative of counseling services
 - b. Foster follow-up with Mmeje
4. Lactation Rooms. In short, there are few. A student was sent out to find and photograph all rooms on campus and she managed to find one, in the Women's Center. We are told that the Law School has an adequate room. The campus "Accessibility" map indicates that there are many lactation rooms on campus, but there are no room numbers and no signage. Some rooms designated as lactation rooms have little privacy and no electricity for pumps. K. C. Mmeje is aware of the problem and notes that new rooms will be built into some new buildings or renovations. In the meantime, students and staff without private offices are disadvantaged.
 - a. Foster met with President's Commission on the Status of Women in the University.
 - b. Foster follow-up with Mmeje
5. Retention. Sheri Kunovich is on the job.
 - a. Foster met with Sheri Kunovich on Rotunda Scholars program and other topics
 - b. Foster met with chair of Athletics Policy Committee to explore possible areas of action
6. Monthly standing meetings with Vice President for Student Affairs, K. C. Mmeje.

Non actions

Given the turnover in the offices of Dean of Students and Dean of Residence Live, and the hiring of a new FIR, we did not address the question of the role of Faculty Affiliates or, more generally the role of academics in residence life. We will take that up in the Fall with the new leadership.

Recommendations

1. Continue to serve on search committees with student life to maintain contact between faculty and Student Life.
2. Push to provide adequate testing facilities and staffing, both as a practical matter and to ensure ethical treatment of persons with disabilities. In addition, the committee should monitor "DASS Link," a new program set up to improve the interaction of DASS with student.
3. 1) Understanding that the counseling center has one fewer Ph.D.s in Clinical, we recommend returning to the previous level. 2) Retain provision for students to enter into longer term counseling on petition by counselor

4. Improve signage and mapping of facilities. Provide appropriate (privacy, cleanliness, electrical outlet) areas in convenient proximity to all areas of campus.
5. 1) Meet with Residence affiliates to enhance academic life, including FIRs, Dean Carlson, Associate V.P and Dean of Students Mindy Sutton Noss, Matt Robinson. 2) Work with Athletics Policy to enhance academic lives of students.