

Centennial Student Feedback Report Update 2012-2013 Student Representatives to the SMU Board of Trustees (SRBOT)

I. Project Overview

In order to be better informed regarding the student perspective, the 2011 – 2012 Student Representatives to the SMU Board of Trustees spoke with and surveyed the SMU student body. The student perspectives represented in the report included the following students and student groups:

- Student Representatives to the SMU Board of Trustees (SRBOT);
- Student-Athletes (in SAAC meeting);
- Student Leaders (Student Senate, Student Body Officers, major student organizations);
- SMU Scholars (Scholar groups, i.e. President’s Scholars, Hunt Scholars, BBA Scholars, Hilltop Scholars, etc.);
- Graduate Students (through graduate level SRBOT); and
- Student Body (through Student Senate’s Fall 2011 online survey of 1,253 students).

Each of these groups was asked:

- (1) *What current policies at SMU they support and consider successful.*
- (2) *What their concerns or recommendations may be from their experience at SMU.*

In addition to acquiring their feedback, this forum served to increase the visibility and awareness of the SRBOT group. The SRBOTs answered questions regarding student participation on the SMU Board of Trustees and its standing committees. The subsequent sections (II, III, and IV) are comprised of the feedback acquired from the meetings with the various student groups, comments included in student applications to ‘Dining with Decision Makers’ and the SRBOT selection process, and the broad range of experiences of the 2011 – 2012 SRBOT.

Following the presentation of the 2011-2012 SRBOT report to the Student Affairs Committee of the Board of Trustees, campus offices cited in the report were asked to provide information regarding the feasibility of implementing the recommendations offered. This 2012-13 report, at the request of the Student Affairs Committee, provides an update regarding the recommendations made in the 2011-2012 report.

II. Positive Feedback

SMU students shared their support for various campus initiatives. The sense of change and growth at SMU is palpable, and students articulated their excitement in favor of such endeavors. In particular, students listed the following:

A.) Campus developments and renovations that include, but are not limited to:

- the renovations in Moody Coliseum and Crum Basketball Center;
- the training room in Lloyd All-sports Center;
- the Turner Quadrennial;
- the Scholars’ Den;

- Annette Caldwell Simmons School of Education and Human Development;
- the George W. Bush Presidential Center;
- the growth of the Bobby B. Lyle School of Engineering.

B.) Innovative centers and programs.

Centers and programs that promote research and professional development were noted as particularly beneficial. These centers and programs include, but are not limited to:

- the Richter Fellowship Program;
- the Big ideas Grant Program;
- the Kitt Investment and Trading Center;
- the Hunt Institute for Engineering and Humanity;
- the Alternative Assets Management program;
- the Maguire Center for Ethics and Public Responsibility;
- the creation of “Unbridled Learning”;
- the John Goodwin Tower Center for Political Studies;
- the Embrey Human Rights Program, and
- the Tate Lecture Series.

C.) Student Engagement

Those interviewed emphasized their appreciation for student incorporation in all levels of decision-making at the University. No decision-making body or process at SMU operates without student participation. This includes, but is not limited to the highest governing body of the university, the SMU Board of Trustees and its standing committees.

III. Student Concerns

The responses to “Student Concerns” can be divided into two categories: long-term and short-term. The former are more complex in nature, while the latter are basic requests and ideas that would qualitatively improve the day-to-day student experience.

Long-Term Concerns

1.) Scholarships for upperclassmen.

- Students seek increased scholarships for upperclassmen. In response, SMU’s Student Senate has created an Endowment Committee. In regards to the long-term concern of scholarships for upperclassmen, Marc Peterson, Director of Financial Aid, offered the following response.

Response (Marc Peterson):

There are several factors to note in response to the issue of Scholarships for upperclassmen.

- In the last three academic years the spending on scholarships for upperclassmen has ranged from \$412,000 to \$528,000 with most of these awards being funded by earnings from endowment or from designated gifts.
- The University also awards merit and need-based aid/scholarships for undergraduate students that are funded by the tuition revenue of the institution. These funds are “unrestricted”.

- Unrestricted financial aid, however, is limited. In 1989 the Board of Trustees resolved that unrestricted financial aid cannot exceed 20% of tuition and fee revenue. This reality dictates that new scholarship initiatives for upperclassmen from unrestricted sources are not feasible at this time.
- The Second Century Campaign may also provide scholarships.

2.) Financial aid information and interpretation

Students requested increased information and support in the financial aid process at SMU. They cited challenges in contacting financial aid officers if and when questions arose. In regard to financial aid information and interpretation, Marc Peterson was asked to respond.

Response (Marc Peterson):

To address these issues the Division of Enrollment Services is currently revising the financial aid website to allow students to readily be able to access their financial aid advisor's contact information. The new website was launched in mid-September (2013). In conjunction with the new website enhancements, a topic-specific Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) addresses topics such as:

- “My financial aid is lower this year, what’s happening..”
- “What is Verification all about and what does it mean to me..”

There is also a plan to identify and notify students that may be experiencing changes in their need based aid. We have identified several situations and conditions that may cause financial aid awards to fluctuate, which include:

- Changes in living arrangements (On campus to off campus);
- Significant changes to the Expected Family Contribution (EFC) as determined by the submission of the aid application(s);
- Changes in aid as the result of the verification process;
- Errors by family/student when completing the FAFSA and or CSS Profile®
- The loss of institutional merit-based aid or outside aid.

Another initiative is to partner with the Resident Life and Student Housing Office to offer guidance on financial aid to students before they make a decision on their living arrangements. This initiative should be in place before the February/March housing application process.

3.) On-Campus Living

Some students fear that the cost of a second year of on-campus living will be a challenge. Living in nearby apartments can be less expensive. As a result, the prospect of living on campus for two years would incur an additional cost that should be offset with scholarship and financial aid opportunities. In regards to on-campus living, Marc Peterson was asked to respond to these questions.

Response (Marc Peterson):

Undergraduate students who are most impacted by significant changes in their cost of attendance are those who are receiving need-based aid. The Financial Aid department adjusts students' cost of attendance budget to reflect their actual living arrangements so that students who are awarded need-based assistance receive that aid based on the appropriate living arrangement. The financial aid department will continue this policy with the advent of the Residential Commons, and those students who receive need-based aid will not be adversely impacted by the new two-year requirement.

4.) Standard Pricing Model

When housing prices are determined, students strongly prefer a standard pricing model to a differential pricing model. All Residential Commons at SMU should be equitably priced, without distinctions. In regard to the standard pricing model for on-campus living, Steve Logan, Sr. Executive Director of Residence Life and Student Housing was asked to respond.

Response (Steve Logan):

By fall 2014, it is Resident Life and Student Housing's goal to have one room rate for all Residential Commons, so that each Commons will represent the diversity of the student community. The rates for current residence halls continue to be evaluated to align with the goal of a one rate structure for all of the residence halls.

The only perceived barrier to one rate is the question of should a premium price exist for the new Residential Commons? Because current residence halls (Virginia-Snyder, Boaz, Mary Hay, Morrison-McGinnis, McElvaney, Cockrell-McIntosh) will be retrofit to become residence commons and will include similar spaces to the new residence commons buildings (e.g., faculty residences, classroom spaces, enhanced programming) Student Affairs is comfortable recommending and supporting one rate for all residential commons.

All non-Residential Commons Communities ((for example Moore Hall, the Service House, Smith-Perkins (until Smith-Perkins is renovated)) will be priced lower than the Residential Commons Communities).

5.) Branding SMU (One University, Many Top Programs)

Students were quick to note that strategic advertising and marketing does not comparatively exist for all of SMU's programs. The students surveyed were unfamiliar with the branding study and project being conducted by *The Richards Group* for SMU. As the student profile changes, so do the majors and minors of SMU students. Double majors and multiple minors are increasingly common. Students seek a broad and deep, multidisciplinary education. Yet, if schools do not effectively communicate all of their course offerings and opportunities for various major and minor combinations, this positive endeavor is challenged.

Response:

During the month of November of 2012, John Oakes, SMU's Student Trustee, interviewed SMU's Provost, Dr. Paul Ludden about SMU Branding and SMU's University Curriculum and advising, and technology in the classroom. The following is a summary of their interview:

a. Branding

In conjunction with the celebration of SMU's Centennial, *The Richards Group* and SMU have launched a major marketing and branding effort. A commercial has aired on television spots, during home SMU football games, and at other major university events.

In an effort to make brand awareness and publicity equitable across SMU, several schools have completed their own studies with *The Richards Group*. The Simmons School of Education developed the brand of "Changing Minds." The Dedman College of Humanities & Sciences recently completed a study with *The Richards Group* and plans to roll out a branding campaign in the near future.

b. University Curriculum and Advising

The new University Curriculum makes it easier for a student to switch schools after 60 credit hours than for a student under the previous University Curriculum. Also of note, the advising department has undergone significant positive changes. Ellen Richmond was announced as the director of the Undergraduate Advising Center in October 2011.

6.) Technology and renovations in the classroom.

Students recognize that technology infrastructure in the schools differs substantially and funding for major renovations of buildings and classrooms are enhanced by alumni giving and other development efforts. Students referred to a strong need for renovations in the classrooms of Dallas Hall and Hyer Hall; and a need for more cutting- edge technology in the sciences, especially biology.

Short-Term Concerns

1.) Recycling

While it is easy to find a recycling can in the Hughes-Trigg Student Center, other buildings do not offer the option with the same ease. Making recycling bins more prominent will further this aim and engage the campus wide community. In regard to recycling, Keith Gardner, Senior Director of Facility Services, was asked to respond to this recycling challenge.

Response (Keith Gardner):

- Current State:

In 2010, Facility Maintenance & Service (FM&S) purchased 300 recycling containers for single stream recycling and placement in strategic public places. Facility Services operates a recycling truck 5 days per week at a cost of \$45,000 annually. The current annual income from recycling activities is \$23,000.

- Next Steps

The facility services estimates that it will require an additional 300 containers and another 100 signs to provide recycle containers in all academic and athletic building public areas and corridors. The total current cost is therefore estimated at \$25,000.

With the growth of campus and ongoing needs to encourage recycling Facility Services would recommend allocating (not in FY'13 budget) \$10,000/year. This does not reflect potential needs in new residence halls.

2.) Classroom Improvements

Many of the older classrooms do not have the necessary plugs to accommodate the use of laptops. Students suggest a change to ergonomic desks that are accommodating to various body-types. In particular, desks with one, continuous long table for the entire row are more conducive to courses that require the use of more materials in class (books, laptop or notebook, etc.).

Response:

During the month of November, 2012, John Oakes, SMU's Student Trustee, interviewed Chris Regis, SMU's Vice President of Business and Finance, about the topic of classroom improvements. The following is a summary of their interview:

Funding for physical improvements typically draws from a hybrid of two sources: individual school resources and university central funding. As far as priority for central university funding,

Dedman and Meadows are considered top priorities as their classrooms are some of the oldest and most technology inefficient. Furthermore, the Dedman School touches every student on campus giving it heightened importance. Recently, several classrooms were renovated. These include larger lecture halls in the Fondren Science Building and a classroom in the Umphrey Lee Building. In future renovations, students can be helpful to the Deans and the office of the Vice President for Business and Finance in determining suggestions and priorities.

3.) Increase Student Center Space

The Hughes-Trigg Student Center is at the heart of student programming. Given the increasing number of student organizations, Hughes-Trigg no longer has sufficient rooms to accommodate them. In regard to increasing student center space, Mark Rhodes, Director of SMU Parking and ID Card Services, and Richard Owens, Director of the Hughes-Trigg Student Center, were asked to respond.

Response (Richard Owens)

The SMU Board of Trustees Student Report is correct in their assessment for the need of additional programming space in the Hughes-Trigg Student Center (HTSC). Some efforts by the Student Center Governing Board (SCGB) and the HTSC staff have been taken to maximize existing programmable space, including the remodel of The Varsity. (One of the larger multi-purpose rooms in Hughes-Trigg.)

The SCGB has also identified additional space in HTSC that would be optimal for student programming, the Pollock Gallery. The Pollock Gallery is almost 2700 square feet or nearly the same size as the Varsity. Unfortunately the Pollock Gallery cannot be relocated until a suitable new location for the Gallery is identified. Another consideration to increase programming space in HTSC is to assess the predominance of administrative offices that are located in the Student Center. Currently 86% of the space on the third level is administrative offices. Renovating or building a new Student Center would also increase the available programming space in HTSC.

4.) Park ‘n Pony

In the Spring of 2009, the Park ‘n Pony office, the SMU Office of Parking and ID Card Services, moved to the Expressway Tower on the east side of North Central Expressway. This move was in response to the demand for programming space in Hughes-Trigg. The ‘M’ Lounge was established in the former location of Park ‘n Pony on the second floor of Hughes-Trigg. The Park ‘n Pony move has had many unforeseen consequences—one of which requires students to cross the highway to address their parking and ID card needs. Students do not propose that the Park ‘n Pony office returns to Hughes-Trigg, but that a permanent satellite office be established in Hughes-Trigg. In regard to a Park ‘n Pony satellite office, Mark Rhodes and Richard Owens were asked to respond.

Response (Mark Rhodes & Richard Owens):

Most of the services the student representatives shared concerns about are available on-line making the need to go to Expressway Towers unnecessary. Additionally, students are able to receive parking permits in the mail and replacement ID cards at the Office of Information Technology (OIT) HELP desk located in Fondren Library. Based on this information, Park ‘n Pony does not believe it is necessary to have a presence at a physical location. The Mane Desk of the Student Center could be considered as the location students could pick up their replacement ID cards if the students thought that location would be more convenient than the OIT HELP desk.

4.) Consistent Internet Availability

The Office of Information Technology (OIT) manages SMU Wireless, which includes two primary wireless networks: PerunaNet and SMU1911. Despite diligent efforts to guarantee Internet access in every building on campus, there have been frequent periods or locations where Internet connectivity does not exist. In regards to consistent Internet availability, Joe Gargiulo, SMU's Chief Information Officer for Information Technology, was asked to respond.

Response (Joe Gargiulo):

During the spring 2012 semester, students living on campus expressed displeasure with PerunaNet services in residential halls. OIT coordinated with Residence Life and Student Housing to initiate a multi-year project to upgrade the wireless and data networking infrastructure. As a result of this effort, student Internet bandwidth utilization increased 20%. For the fall 2012 semester, OIT continues to focus on improving student's PerunaNet Experience. These improvements include, but are not limited to:

- Ease of access to the wireless network, so as to improve student experience
- Improving Communication channels with student residents
- Increasing SMU's data network performance by implementing technology refreshment in student housing, software upgrades, and decommissioning antiquated equipment.
- PerunaNet will provide 100% indoor coverage on the Dallas, SMU-in-Plano, and SMU-in-Taos.
- Improve guest wireless service (campus-wide) in summer 2013.
- Expansion of PerunaNet into Residential Commons facility in 2014.

5.) Mustang Express Service on Weekends

The Mustang Express bus service provides free transportation for the SMU community. The service is currently unavailable on weekends. This can be a serious challenge for students who rely on this mode of transportation. In regard to Mustang Express service on weekends, Mark Rhodes, Director of SMU Parking and ID Card Services, was asked to respond.

Response (Mark Rhodes):

The Mustang Express shuttle service is a joint operation between the University and Dallas Area Rapid Transit System (DART). DART will not provide additional funds to expand the Mustang Express shuttle service on Saturdays. If the Mustang Express schedule was expanded to include Saturday service, the University would be required to fund the entire expense. It would cost the University \$60,000.00 per academic year. We have been unable to identify an institutional source for the additional funding.

6.) Strengthen and Increase Partnerships with Nearby Restaurants

Students recommend establishing more relationships with restaurants that will allow them to pay with Pony Cash. Developing more partnerships with nearby restaurants will benefit the quality of student life by offering affordable, near-by off-campus dining options. In regard to strengthening and increasing partnerships with nearby restaurants, Mark Rhodes was asked to respond.

Response (Mark Rhodes):

In the last two years the Pony program has been expanded from 11 off-campus merchant locations to now 26. We will continue to partner with off-campus merchants who add value and service to our Pony program.

IV. Additional Recommendations

In 2012 – 2013, the SRBOT will coordinate implementation of the recommendations with the SMU administration and will report progress to the Board through the Student Affairs Committee of the Board of Trustees. The SRBOT in 2013 – 2014 will conduct surveys and forums to re-assess student feedback. And 2014 – 2015 will again report on execution of the second recommendations. The “Centennial Student Feedback Report” will culminate in 2015, along with the University Centennial Celebrations.

V. Conclusion

There is no doubt from this report’s findings that the University is noticeably on a positive trajectory. Students are enthusiastic about both the physical and reputational growth of the University. And, in particular, with added opportunities, an individual student is more likely to find activities, curricular and extra-curricular, in an area of personal interest. In conclusion, the creation and positive response to this report only further confirms the prioritized emphasis placed on the student voice in the decision-making processes of SMU.

Respectively Submitted:

John Oakes, Student Trustee

William Badarak, Student Representative to the Board of Trustees, Development and External Affairs Committee

Hannah Bliss, Student Representative to the Board of Trustees, Academic Policy, Planning and Management Committee

Margaret Ellen Crawford, Student Representative to the Board of Trustees, Athletics Committee

Brian Horan, Student Representative to the Board of Trustees, Buildings and Grounds Committee

Amie Kromis, Student Representative to the Board of Trustees, Student Affairs Committee,

Alexander Mace, Student Body President, Student Representative to the Board of Trustees, Student Affairs Committee,

Elise McDonald, Student Representative to the Board of Trustees, Student Affairs Committee

James Moreton, Student Representative to the Board of Trustees, Finance/Audit Committee

Eric Sabandal, Student Representative to the Board of Trustees, Investments Committee