

Committee on Student Life (CSL)
Friday, October 30th, 2009
Minutes taken by A. Hansen

Minutes

Present: Muriel Medard, Barbara Baker, Liz Denys, Danielle Guichard-Ashbrook, Vivek Sakhrani, Cinjon Resnick (alternate UA Representative), David Singer

Guests: Paul Baranay (Speaker of the UA Senate), Renee Barnett-Terry (visiting Fellow from University of California, San Diego, residing at Warehouse)

Agenda I: Introductions

New members from the Undergraduate Association who are replacing Nathan A. Pallo: Liz Denys, the UA Secretary General, and Cinjon Resnick, a UA Representative.

Agenda II: Minutes Review

Any edits on the Minutes from the previous meeting on October 9th?

- The number 1,000 for visiting students had been an estimate of how high the number of visiting students could potentially be. This was based on the number of visiting students reported by the International Students Office and Human Resources while allowing leeway for unaccounted students.

*The final report for the subcommittee of taskforce has not been released. Once it has Muriel will send excel files to members of CSL.

Agenda III: DAPER fee restructure and DAPER class registration

The issues of DAPER fee restructure and DAPER class registration is a recommendation from the Committee on the Undergraduate Program (CUP) because it is an academic issue, but because sports and health are also related to student life this topic will be discussed by CSL. This topic was not discussed in the previous meeting because of the fact that it was not a recommendation from the student life taskforce.

- The proposal deals with the possibility of removing or reducing the physical education requirement and the restructuring of the DAPER fee.
- This recommendation has been brought to the attention of faculty and a discussion has been set for Muriel Medard to meet with Al Oppenheim (he is chairing the committee on DAPER) and Steve Hall (Chair of CUP).

Discussion:

- Does the committee have any other information available regarding this matter?
 - No, it is only known that the fee restructuring would involve increasing costs (it is unknown if or how it will actually happen, or how much fees would be increased).
 - Julie Soriero has met with CSL in the past to discuss DAPER fee restructuring. Perhaps she should be invited again?
- Should this discussion be postponed until there is more information on the matter?
 - Muriel would still like to know the questions and concerns of the committee for her meeting with the chairs of CUP and DAPER.
- This would affect students who use DAPER facilities on their own time beyond PE requirements because they enjoy the variety of classes offered. Additionally, there is an

interest from graduate students to take PE classes, but undergraduates get the priority because of the PE requirement.

- There is a sizeable population that would like to test out of the PE requirement which could reduce costs.
 - There is already a demanding physical test which allows you to test out of the requirement. This test might not be well publicized.
 - If there is a sizeable group of students who want to spend time on activities other than taking mandatory classes, could these same resources be redistributed to more elective activities? This could save money, would not force students to take classes, and would enable interested students to take additional classes. The best way to look at the problem is how to cut costs by redistributing resources, not to look at the problem as what harm will come of the cuts.
- Many students don't view classes as mandatory because there is so much variety of classes that most people can find something they enjoy. Although many classes can't happen outside of a class setting (e.g. archery), many students would prefer more self-directed classes for activities that can be done on one's own time (e.g. weight lifting).
- It is very important to avoid the perception that DAPER is not supporting PE or varsity sports (due to the recent cutbacks of varsity team) and is also charging more for access; people will understand if just the resources are decreased, but not if the prices also go up.
- It is hard to understand why sports are being cut and prices could still be raised, especially when cut teams are able to raise their own significant funds (in today's TECH there is an article on how the wrestling team raised enough funds to support themselves as a club sport).
 - Many varsity sports alumni have been asked for donations.
 - Even before varsity sports were cut people were frustrated with the general lack of funds for club sports.
 - There is still no additional money going into club sports now, and club sports do depend on money from DAPER.
- Is there anything in the UA report on taskforce recommendations for DAPER? This might be useful to look at.
- What is the role of Intramural sports (IMs) in all of this? The impression from the survey data is that there is a very high participation in IMs.
 - There is a lot of student interest and participation in IMs across the board.
 - Many graduates spend time in IM programs and the programs aren't very resource intensive because referees are volunteers, teams coordinate themselves, and basically the only costs for MIT are facilities.
 - Intramural sports are very different than classes, they are both physical activity but intramurals are for playing sports whereas classes are for learning how to play sports.
 - It would make more sense to give class credit to club sports than intramural sports because club sports are more organized and attendance is required for team members.
- Would it save money to eliminate the swim test or must this test remain in effect due to mandates from the past?
 - MIT is a Sea Grant institution. This may be part of the reason for the swim test.
- How many students living off-campus play sports or use gyms off campus?

- Many graduate students do use programs off-campus through parks or the city of Somerville, etc.
- Graduate students did push for summer inclusion in the student life fee which implies that a significant amount of graduate students still use DAPER.
- DAPER might have some good information regarding the numbers of graduate and undergraduate students using their facilities (from id cards used for access).
- Any information the GSC has and could bring to a CSL meeting regarding off-campus students would be useful.
- The committee will revisit this topic when we have more information.

Agenda IV: A possible undergrad-grad mentoring system: proposed by Muriel Medard.

Last year one of the main endeavors of the committee was the Interact website which was headed by Bob Berwick: the website allows students and faculty to enter their information (including pertinent details about research) and then make connections with each other without having to go through other avenues or departments. The goal of the website was to increase interaction between students and faculty. What MIT doesn't have is a system to facilitate interactions between graduate and undergraduate students. The interactions that do exist are the graduate resident tutors (GRTs) and TAs. However, international students are not eligible to be GRTs and there are fewer TA positions because of money.

- When Muriel was housemaster she had joint study breaks with graduate and undergraduate dormitories. However, she noticed that graduate students were more willing to go to undergraduate dormitories than vice versa. She wants to see if it is possible to start a big brother, big sister type of program within or even between departments for graduate and undergraduate students. She has created a similar program within her professional society and believes that this mentoring system is found useful on a reciprocal level.

Discussion:

- This would be exciting for graduates but what would undergraduates be interested in?
 - Undergraduates would be interested in getting information from someone who is less intimidating than a career counselor.
- This would be useful both as a long-term mentor program and also as a onetime program where people can get advice on a single problem.
- Some students don't have the time for a long-term mentor. Additionally, students will not want objectives where they have to meet a certain number of times per semester.
- Many graduates have a lot to learn from undergraduates if they don't come from MIT (not questions about actual problem sets but about the undergraduate curriculum). Also, graduate students often miss the connection with undergraduate life and the social aspect.
- This would also be very beneficial to international graduate students because there is so much they don't understand about undergraduate life.
- There is a consensus that this is a good idea, but what are the negatives?
 - Funding and implementation: it would be costly to hire employees to run the program and there would have to be a lot of hard work to launch the program. Would it be best to have one school buy into this program first or to have this be a program which could fall under the new Student Leadership Dean?

- The best way to ask for money is to show an existing success story. In her professional society, Muriel set up a mentoring system and once it started growing she asked for a budget. Depending on how this program is done, it could be a very low budget operation.
- The Interact website could be used to facilitate the program, i.e., for people to find interests of mentor/mentees and to state what type of mentor relationship they are interested in (not to do the actual matching).
- Graduate students already do mentoring (senior graduate students mentor new graduate students) so they are familiar with the process. The challenge is to extend the system to undergraduates and to create a system for matching people.
- Master's students do not have the opportunity to become GRTs or TAs because they aren't at the school long enough, but they would be a good resource for interacting with undergraduate students.
- There are multiple ways these interactions can happen. For example, the Public Service Center IDEAS competitions has teams creating particular ideas and graduates often need undergraduate expertise for their projects or undergraduates feel they need graduate or Sloan expertise for their projects and so the mentorships evolve organically.
- Should be cautious because we don't want school to feel intruded upon if they want to create their own mentorship program.
 - If they do create their own program departmentally it should be considered a success because it is encouraging mentoring.
 - However, this mentoring will not be done as an academic program and if possible it should ask input from departments while trying to avoid becoming segmented into departmental programs.
- Leadership and program based activities would be a good place to start this program; there are many programs which graduates have interest and expertise in, but they don't know if undergraduates desire their help.
- It would also be a good idea to start with low barrier and small group things where students can decide if they want to commit to the mentor program.
 - The program needs to make sure that the mentors are dedicated because one of the worst things that could happen is that mentees feel neglected by their mentor. Mentors and mentees should email and talk so that the mentor becomes invested in the success of their mentee. While people can opt out of the program, it would not be good to have people slacking on these duties.
- Mentoring might not be the best description of the relationship as it implies a one way street.
 - Language would have to be developed to show that this is something mutual, but it is traditional for the senior member to be seen as a mentor who takes responsibility without a supervisory role.
 - The title "mentor" will also be an incentive for graduate students to partake in the program, because they would be less interested in entering a program for graduate and undergraduate "friends".
- It would be good if faculty could back this program in advisory roles in order to give the program more longevity and credibility.

Summary:

- This program would be beneficial for both undergraduate and graduate students. It should not be used as a substitute for an academic program. International students would

be a good target for the program. The program could encourage people to sign up through Interact, the UA and the GSC (and could use a questionnaire similar to what dorms use for roommates to match mentors and mentees).

- UA and GSC representatives will take this idea back to their committees to get feedback to bring back to CSL.
- Muriel will look into finding faculty who would be interested in supervising a mentoring program.

Suggestions for Future Agenda Items:

- Freshman on campus.
 - There is a concern about the legality surrounding this issue. Muriel will have to speak with legal counsel before this can be an agenda item.
- Revisit the taskforce recommendations when the report comes out.

End of Meeting.