Committee on Student Life (CSL)
Friday, December 3, 2010
Room 12-196 12pm – 2pm
Minutes taken by Lisa Stagnone
FINAL

Present: Alex Slocom, Robin Deits, Enectali Figueroa, Barbara Baker, Cody Coleman, David Singer, James Hong, Danielle Guichard-Ashbrook

Guests: Jonte Craiglead, Speaker of the Senate; Graham Ramsay, Video Blogging

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TOPIC: Minned/Maxed-Out: MIT vacuum/bloat
Dining

MIT Students: Are they board? Are they maxed out?

Some folks play video games to unwind. Some procrastinate via video games. Some students experience a drop in motivation and prone to reluctance after a break or holiday stretch. Some students may stay in their rooms alone instead of seeking out others and being social. Could this be a reaction to stress?

Are there resources for procrastinators? Is there a way to manage time more efficiently?
1st year UAAP – time management
S^3 has resources
UOAD has options/resources

IDEA: Have an MIT Video game that takes you through the steps of what, especially, 1st year students, may experience, based on what others have experienced, to assist them in their time here. Make it fun and informative. Have it as an interactive game where you need to go through set A in order to get to set B. Make it LIVE for others to join in.

WHY: With this game, it will make people aware of what a typical 1st year student experiences, so they may not feel so alone and overwhelmed. Some people don’t like to reach out and ask for help. They start to feel inadequate or feel that maybe they are the only ones experiencing these feelings, which leads them into a deeper isolation and start to doubt themselves. This, most of the time, can be something that students can work through, if they are aware of it. If they understand that everyone goes through it, it may help them deal with stress.

James Hong spoke of the Grad Students, 2 year program, Expanded Cultural Program, which ran in his dorm. It was opened up within the dorm for groups to meet, have dinner and socialize. Financial backing and scheduling of dinners occurred then the students followed through attending the dinners. This program happened under Dean Lerman. After Dean Lerman left, the program ended. Due to a lack of interest, the program fizzled out.

Recap: you had 500 students and 150 participated. 1st year 8-10 groups of 15; 2nd year it grew to 25 groups from 4 dorms.

Action Item: James Hong to write results of program.
How isolated are UA? Would a program be welcomed like Expanded Cultural Program? Do we need it?
It may be needed for a few folks. The general population can find others. Sometimes the dorms have groups or cliques that are predetermined by building or maybe floor. We should be concerned over the population that cannot find someone or a group to relate to. Some have friends outside of their dorms so they don’t socialize within their living areas and then some just don’t socialize at all.

Some students come out and socialize within the dorms at dinner time. Students will come out of their dorm rooms to eat which leads them to be social but some tend to stay with their own groups and not inter-mingle with other groups.

Would it help to force the students to mingling outside of their groups? Does it help to break up the pre-existing groups? Once forced out, people would have a chance to meet others and have a diverse group to socialize with even if it’s just for a scheduled time. It could be with classmates as well as outside of their class. Maximum potential for student groups to explore themselves cross campus to broadening their cross sections.

Minned/Maxed Issue might be addressed by:
Have a group of diverse life forms having dinner.
Ask Alumni to sponsor a dinner, financially. If we had 10K for sponsorship, we can open it up to a broad group. Funding endowed dinner by Alumni.
   a) Alumni defines group
   b) Others define group – not alumni
If no one signs up, then balance goes in General Funding
**ACTION ITEM:** Alex to talk to Chancellor Clay

Maxed-Out
What is there for options for maxed out students? Most people don’t use the resources that currently exist. We have GRT’s, other hall members, advisors, the Medical Staff, S^3. Students don’t use resources due to their segregated aloneness. International Grad Students (38%) are afraid to seek help. It’s interpreted as a sign of weakness. Students would rather ignore issues instead of addressing them.

Most people, who do seek help from resources, get help. Some student may turn within their dorm for support. Some seek resources. Some will in turn to tell others how easy it was to use a resource which will make others more aware of them and more apt to utilize if someone they know can vouch for it. Admitting that you need help isn’t spoken of. This is an internal on-going battle.

Unfortunately the culture changes with every incoming class. Therefore, you are constantly dealing with new people getting to know a system that is new to them. Personal relationships within the student’s circle can help. Using GRT’s in halls helps.

What would be helpful?
- Maxed out dinners in dorms would help but would need to be held early in the semester.
- 5th week flag students invited with surviving S^3 participants would be helpful.
- Having something right after the break to get people back on track would be helpful.
**Dining:**

Earlier this week a new Dining Plan went out which includes a Basic Plan, Flexibility Plan and Adjustments options to be designed to your personal likes.

After reviewing the plans, students have identified the following as items they would like highlighted and addressed, presented by Jonte Craiglead, Speaker of the Senate and Robin Diets, Class of 2011:

- Students object to cost of plans
- Plans are too expensive
- MIT is deciding all meal details
- Have students see the model that defined the program
- Becomes a social status divide if you choice by hall with or without dining

Some students can’t afford financial aid and this forces them to pay more through loans. Some students don’t trust the administration and feel it is immoral and unethical not to post the business model. Let’s offer this action to everyone to run their own reports and come to their own results. They may end up being the same but we’ll know how we came to the results. Complete openness of data balances trust.

**Question posed to students:** It’s been stated that students are asking for the dining model now, has anyone asked for it earlier? Is this information posted anywhere? Has anyone looked for it? It’s been presented to us on a few occasions already. Tom Gearty came in earlier this year to talk about it again. Are we being asked to re-invent the wheel? We can’t start over now. Process has been followed. Surveys have been populated by students again and again. People are tired of surveys. Lots of decisions are made through political committees. We want to know how we got to here.

**Question posed to students:** If cheaper, would students like it? Is the pricing and option? The MIT pricing is the cheapest compared to other universities already.

It’s not the pricing. It’s the fact that students weren’t ask what they wanted.

We need to provide economic models, run programs and see the results. After running algorithms and reviewing results, will we know what the true model is. We don’t want to aggravate the students because students become alum and MIT alum has a lower contribution rate. Just last week one of the HDAG Student Reps quit which suggests the process does not work.

**Question posed by students:** Why do we have to decide on a plan for 5 years from now? Why can’t we take this program, run it a year and see what happens and tweak it along the way? Or keep the plan the way it is and run the new plan parallel?

You will not find a business that can afford to run on a yearly basis. You will need a commitment of 5 years for it to be financially smart.

**Question Posed to Committee Members by Alex Slocom:** As the Committee, should we state that we don’t have all the data, to the extent of legality and can you expose the data and business model to see the origins of the cost estimates? Students want to understand data and model. **Action Item** for Alex to send note to Dean Colombo and Chancellor Clay.