

COUNCIL ON STUDENT SERVICES

January 11, 2011

5:00 – 7:00 pm

214 College Street – Room 313

The Council on Student Services met on Tuesday, January 11, 2010 at 5:00 pm in Room 313, Koffler Student Services Centre, with the following members present:

Voting members: Adam Awad, Anita Comella, Daniel Vandervoort, Danielle Sandhu, Jeff Peters, Desmond Pouyat, Jim Delaney, Louise Cowin, Lucy Fromowitz, Maria Galvez, Patricia Vaughan, Robert Spencer, Barbara McCann, Grayce Yuen (via teleconferencing).

Present: Munib Sajjad, University of Mississauga, QSS

Non-voting members: Rita O'Brien, Terry Rubenstein, Jim Webster

Chair: Greg West (non-voting)

Recording Secretary: Diana Scattolon

1) Approval of the agenda

Moved by Vandervoort. Seconded by Cowin. Motion carried.

2) Approval of the minutes of Dec 7, 2010

Motion by Comella. Seconded by Delaney. Motion carried.

3) Business arising from the minutes

Discussion of the format of the minutes

An example of the desired format of minutes was presented at the December 7th meeting by UTSU.

The Chair reviewed the minutes of the last meeting as formatted, noting that comments were summarized, with names of questioners listed. He asked if members were comfortable with this style of minutes. No objections were made.

Awad indicated that the minutes were in an acceptable format for UTSU's needs.

4) Equity mandate and initiatives (Galvez)

Sandhu requested an update on new equity initiatives within the student services. UTSU would like to help support initiatives and make students aware of them.

Fromowitz invited UTSU to attend the next monthly meeting with her division directors to be held on January 17th at 2 pm to learn about Student Life's initiatives.

Comella invited Sandhu to meet with her staff. The co-curricular team has recently developed a plan on equity initiatives and it could be outlined in detail.

Cowin extended an invitation to meet directly with the Hart House staff who will be implementing the initiatives.

Sandhu expressed her interest and thanks for the invitations.

5) General discussion about student services budgeting (Galvez)

Awad addressed the members:

UTSU wanted COSS to begin meeting earlier in the year so as to start discussions before the budget decisions were made.

UTSU wants to support the work and the budgets of the student services and acknowledges their work is important and has a positive impact on students' lives.

During this discussion last year, the members of COSS addressed the discrepancy between the role of student services on campus, the amount of money that students are paying and the amount of funding received from the central administration. UTSU wants to continue advocating for better funding for the services.

At this meeting, UTSU would like to discuss the idea of developing a student services budget that doesn't increase student services fees beyond the rate of inflation.

Discussion:

Spencer asked if the student services are paying central administration overhead fees and questioned if they should in fact be paying them at all or perhaps paying less. These charges may be impacting the fees that students ultimately pay.

Cowin advised Awad that Hart House has already prepared its budget for the coming year and presented it that morning to the Board of Stewards.

Cowin replied to Spencer that Hart House pays \$109,000 to central administration for university level services including administrative functions such as HR support.

Webster explained to Awad that the services have not asked to raise fees beyond the rate of inflation.

Awad replied that the request has been to increase the fees beyond the consumer price index (CPI) to include the University of Toronto index (UTI) increase.

Awad continued that the University Affairs Board approves permanent increases to CPI but only temporary ones to UTI. Each year, the CPI is calculated based on the fee amount of the preceding year. This figure often includes a UTI amount that was to be only temporary. If the UTI amount is not deducted before the CPI is calculated each year, then the UTI amount from the previous year forms part of the CPI calculation of the current year, thus compounding the UTI fee.

Rubenstein stated that UTI is calculated on the expense side but it is based on the previous year's entire budget. When UTI calculations are presented this year at COSS, the process can be clearly explained.

Peters asked if when a temporary fee is removed are incremental increases on the temporary fee also removed.

Rubenstein replied that only the temporary fee is removed.

Peters asked, in reply, if the UTI increases are indeed temporary then.

Delaney explained that the temporary increases (which may be CPI or UTI) does become part of the base fee for each of the years for which it has been approved. Each year one of the increases' terms comes to an end and that amount is not included in the next year's budget calculations.

The Chair stated that this subject will be further addressed when the budget is discussed in future meetings.

Comella addressed Awad's request, stating that their budget has already be drafted. She continued that it would be a considerably different model to look at no student fees and would result in a tremendous impact on the programs and services provided. She asked if he is suggesting that the student fees remain in the budget but be replaced by central administration.

Awad explained that the original idea was to draft a budget without increases to student fees with the goal of putting pressure on the central administration to fund the difference. The intention is not for student services to have less funding.

Fromowitz replied that the services would have less money with that model. To stay with the CPI increase only would mean a cut to the services' budgets. She asked if the suggestion is to cut services to students. She pointed out that the budgets have been prepared based on various assumptions; to start this process again, asking everyone to find areas where cuts can be made, isn't possible at this time.

Fromowitz continued that the assumption that making cuts to our budgets as a way to pressure central administration to provide more funding, as a funding model, is a false one. The university budget has been set; changing our budgets for this year, at this point, is not possible.

Peters stated that it seems as though students have to keep paying more and more and he feels that we are going back to a time where post-secondary education is the playground of the rich. He asked when are increases going to end and if they will continue to be made every year without reprieve?

Awad responded to Fromowitz that UTSU wants to begin a discussion with the objective of ensuring that students don't continue to pay the majority of the cost for student services; the central administration used to be paying for a larger portion of them. Although the suggestion put forth may not be the way to proceed, UTSU feels that this is a necessary discussion.

Awad continued that student services are necessary for an improved student experience. It's also necessary to talk about not increasing the student fees and to rebalance how they are funded. UTSU understands that the services report to the Vice-Provost and ultimately to the Provost. The question being asked is why the student services are answering to the central administration when the central administration isn't covering its budgets; while students are paying for the services, why wouldn't they have ultimate control over its budgets?

Spencer stated that, if the university's core business includes student life, part of the money spent on student services should be part of the core funding of the university. Is there a way to start a targeting process to address the issues Awad has raised? The university wouldn't exist without the students; it's important that student service programs have core support and are not solely funded by privatized student fees.

The Chair stated that in his final report he will take into account the request to begin COSS earlier next year to allow for this discussion to be held before the budgeting process begins.

Peters stated that the university has the ability to provide more funding but there is not the political will.

Fromowitz stated that we all agree on the value of the services. The university doesn't have the additional money. COSS is only one of the tables at which to address this idea. The Chair will do a presentation to the University Affairs Board

where these opinions can be expressed. There are also the Governing Council board, the Vice-Provost table, the Provost table, and meetings with the president. Changing the way the university budgets are created would need to begin at those tables. She stated that she supports COSS beginning earlier but it may not produce the desired changes unless they were addressed earlier at these other tables.

Rubenstein stated that request for non-academic budgeting changes occur around September and October.

6) Residences and the tenancy act (Galvez)

Galvez stated that students living in residence are not protected by the Residential Tenancies Act (RTA). She would like to discuss changing this so that students are covered by the Act.

Delaney responded that the RTA explicitly excludes university residences. (Family Housing is covered as those residences have a different style of housing.) This omission facilitates 8-month term residencies which are different from residential leases of an indefinite term. He is not aware of a suggestion that this be changed and questions what benefits would be achieved by the change.

Awad stated that the issue arose after the G20 conference where students and tenants living in summer residence were evicted. This would not have been possible if their tenancy were covered under the RTA. UTSU would like to see legislation that guarantees certain rights to students such as a defined way to ask for justification for eviction decisions and to appeal them.

Delaney replied that perhaps this can be addressed in the students' residence contracts. He invited UTSU to articulate the issues that it would like addressed and he would bring it to residence administrators for consideration.

Spencer stated that the eviction appeared to the GSU to be a random act.

Awad asked Fromowitz and Delaney if there is desire to develop better language in the residence contracts and perhaps include some of the aspects of the Residential Tenancies Act.

Fromowitz explained that each residence has its own contract with the students; Student Life has only a coordinating role. She added that she could arrange for UTSU to be present at residence deans' meetings to put forward their ideas.

7) Other business

Galvez expressed appreciation for the cups and water provided to replace the bottled water.

Scattolon explained that the cups would be recycled.

8) Next meeting date

Tuesday, January 18 at 5 pm.

9) Adjournment at 5:55 pm.