ANNUAL REPORT:
SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Submitted to
The University of Texas System
Office of the Chancellor
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By

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Chair, UTSSAC 2001-2002
GENERAL CONCERNS

The following sentiments are expressed for consideration. The student feels that the amount of financial burden placed on the student is increasing out of proportion with the state's responsibility. It is difficult for the student to make an informed vote concerning tuition and fee increases given a limited understanding of all other budgetary options. The committee feels that increasing student involvement in the decision-making process will both allow for more educated student feedback and encourage discussion of other budgetary options.

Deregulation of 99/133 Hour Rule -

The University of Texas System should voice full support for the repeal of the 99/133 Hour Rule as listed on the items to be considered for deregulation.

RECOMMENDATION

Increases in bandwidth throughout the system have been in reaction to problems caused by increased demand. The greater reliance of our educational system on the use of the Internet leaves little to no room for the demand to ever outweigh the supply. The current reactionary system is ineffective and should be replaced with a preventative system that takes into account the future needs of the universities comprising the UT System.

The UTSSAC Technology Committee presents the following recommendations for review and consideration as solutions to our bandwidth concerns.

1. The UT System should implement an incremental policy for bandwidth addition. This policy should entail the following two functions:

   • Mandate a yearly increase in bandwidth based on current Internet demand growth models
   • Mandate a review of the effectiveness of the bandwidth increase.

   This policy should be applied for the entire UT System, for application on both the system-wide and component levels.

2. The UT System should create a functional committee consisting of IT representatives from each component, designed to discuss and assess the current technological issues and concerns. This committee’s goal is to preemptively identify and solve potential technological deficiencies and to make recommendations to both the Board of Regents and the IT directors of each component. We recommend that this committee be the primary resource in regard to assessing the need for bandwidth increases and network restructuring in the UT System.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3. Internet bandwidth demand, on the average, experiences a two fold increase yearly. This increased reliance can be explained in the UT System by a few key factors:
Wireless Internet access is now being supplied at many components. Electronic Journals and other online resources have grown in size and use; a 3000% increase was experienced at UTHSCSA over the last 3 years. Internal component functions, such as registration and financial aid, are now being handled online as well as in person. Research has become extremely reliant upon information access and exchange, thus mandating a necessity for bandwidth increase.

4. The reactionary approach to bandwidth issues has left periods of inoperability in the UT System network. Alongside this concern, problems often arise due to a lack of communication between the components. A few examples include:

- August 2001: UT Arlington and UT Dallas were bereft of their Internet resources for two weeks because of bandwidth and network shortcomings.

5. In order to compete with peer institutions and other university systems nationwide, the ability to research and exchange information cannot be inhibited in any way. As such, we consider the above recommendations to be progressive measures, vital to the operation of thriving research programs and general information exchange. Bandwidth availability is crucial to the uninterrupted transfer of information between the components, thus enabling the UT System to communicate with internal and external associates in an efficient and effective manner.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Student Employees, regardless of hourly appointment, that provide services to the University in the form of research, teaching, or other duties related to the mission of the University should not be required to work, or be in attendance, on regularly scheduled university holidays. The student employee should have the option of regaining the time missed at his or her discretion and not at the discretion of his or her supervisor. This will bring UT-System policy, in regards to student employees, in line with that of all other university employees in an effort to ensure a positive work environment.

**BACKGROUND**

There is no consistent policy on student workdays in various components. The practice of forcing students to work on holidays such as Christmas, New Years, Easter etc. has a negative impact on student employee morale and retention.

**RECOMMENDATION**
The committee recommends the incorporation of service learning into course curriculum with the goal of achieving career development while contributing to the community.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

“The University of Texas System seeks….To render service to the public that produces economic, technical, social, cultural, and educational benefits through interactions with individuals and with local, Texas, national, and international organizations and communities…”

-UT System Mission Statement

What is service learning?

The National and Community Services Act of 1990 defines service learning as:

“a method-
1. under which students or participants learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organized service that-
   a. is conducted in and meets the needs of a community
   b. is coordinated with an elementary school, secondary school, institution of higher education, or community service program, and with the community; and
   c. helps foster civic responsibility; and that

2. a. is integrated into and enhances the academic curriculum of the students, or the educational components of the community service program in which the participants are enrolled; and
   b. provides structured time for the students or participants to reflect on the service experience.”

Why have service learning? (As described in UTA Service Learning Faculty Guide-ref)

Benefits To The Student:
- Enriched academic experience through learning by doing
- Increased access to university resources, including faculty expertise and participation in research programs academic achievement and retention of course material
- Improved graduate school and employment prospects
- Enhanced communication, interpersonal relations and critical thinking skills
- Heightened self-esteem and sense of personal efficacy

Benefits To the Community
- Influx of talented, enthusiastic volunteers to help meet expanding needs often increasing the efficiency and quality of local services
- New insights on existing problems from motivated, innovative student volunteers
- Reduced dependency on government programs and renewed sense of community

Benefits To the Faculty
- Engaged and more socially and politically active students
- Diverse experience based learning settings
- Access to additional avenues for research and publication
- Connecting with the community

Benefits To the Institution
Heightened fulfillment of the mission statement by contributing to the development of a more involved and effective, as well as an educated, citizen

- Improved public image through responsiveness to the needs of the community
- Enhanced student recruitment and retention (contributing to “Closing The Gaps-2015,” as recommended by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board)
- Opportunities for research studies within limited budgets
- Retention of multi-ethnic students

Statistics of Service Learning in Institutions Nationwide (ref)

**Students**
- 74% offer service awards for students
- 65% have an established campus service center
- 45% offer community service as an extra credit option in courses
- 44% incorporate service-learning into departments
- 27% incorporate service-learning into majors
- 20% formally consider service in the admission process
- 12% have a formal graduation requirement related to community service

**Faculty**
- 75% make curriculum models and syllabi available
- 65% offer faculty workshops
- 48% provide grants to faculty for curriculum design
- 39% provide faculty incentives for participation in service-learning
- 36% recognize faculty with service awards
- 13% allow sabbaticals for service learning research, scholarship, program development

Stats proving how it works

Peer institutions such as the University of California-Berkeley and the University of Michigan already have service learning implemented into their curriculum (appendix x).

How can we implement service learning? What Models of this Program already exist?

Current National and local service groups committed to instituting service learning:
- Campus Compact
- Learn and Serve America
- Americorps

UT-System Schools that have already began to install such programs:

**University of Texas- Austin**
Office of Campus and Community Involvement
Contact: Allisa Carter, Graduate Student Assistant
(512) 232- 6593
Allisa@mail.utexas.edu

**University of Texas- Arlington**
Center for Community Service Learning
Contact: Dr. Mary Ridgeway, Director
(817) 272- 2124
maryr@uta.edu
RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Insurance for Graduate Student Workers (GSW) –

   It is requested that a task force be created to study the problem of inadequate health insurance for GSW’s, regardless of hourly appointment or fellowship status, who provide services to the university in the form of research, and/or teaching or other educational associated duties. Ideally, a GSW should have the option of being able to buy into the group health insurance policy of the component by which they are employed for the same dollar contribution as any other employee of the component.

BACKGROUND

1. The issue revolves around those GSW’s who are assigned to work less than 20 hours per week and are, therefore, not eligible for health insurance coverage that is provided to those GSW’s appointed to work 20 hours or more per week and all other University employees alike. Access to coverage under most policies of a parent is not available due to the age and independent status of a GSW, nor is there any other source of health insurance at a competitive cost. In choosing to work at the University, GSW’s are foregoing opportunities in the private sector and as a result, insurance opportunities are very limited or not available at all outside the University. Furthermore, the MEGALife policy available to all students of the University has been deemed insufficient to meet many of the needs of GSW’s. Benefits packages are a key factor in many students’ decisions when selecting a program in which to pursue their graduate studies, and the current System policy puts us at a competitive disadvantage in relation to our peer institutions in recruiting the best and brightest graduate students across the country as well as internationally.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To assign one member of UTSSAC Minority and Multicultural Affairs subcommittee to serve as liaison to the Special Committee on Minorities and Women.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Institutional diversity is perennially identified as an issue of student concern, and remains a main priority for student leadership throughout the state. Indeed, the statistical disparity between minorities and other ethnic groups at every level (students, faculty, higher administration) is staggering, and in recent years UT-System and the legislature have worked furiously to reverse the trend with some success. However, designing efforts to improve minority recruitment and retention have been challenging, and are further complicated by the need to avoid the legal pitfalls such as the Hopwood decision. Fortunately, the Board of Regents have made a commitment to improving this disparity and have established a standing committee addressing minority issues (the Special Committee on Minorities and Women).
Currently, the committee is comprised of select regent members and is structured so that administrative liaisons from each component report and discuss issues placed on the agenda by the regents. We have also learned that the committee meets quarterly, and meeting locations vary throughout the state. Meetings last a few hours, and typically precede a corporate meeting of the board the following month.

Unfortunately, student leaders committed to addressing minority concerns are often working in a vacuum with little knowledge of the myriad of regent rules, state laws, etc., and often our ideas do not carry because of our unfamiliarity with the limitations regarding minority recruitment and retention. Having access to the special committee, or at least the consistent feedback from the committee would allow us to make sound recommendations that can be translated into action. We believe students can be an integral part of a creative solution if we are invited to participate in the process. Among the UTSSAC Minority and Multicultural Affairs committee, a student liaison can be selected to report to the special committee, and would offer student perspective on a number of issues, including insight into what motivates students’ decisions concerning their careers before, during, and after graduation (pipeline issues). The committee membership as liaison would be a limited one for the protection of the student, and also to ensure that the absence of the student would not hinder the function of the committee. The student liaison would be able to put forward ideas, proposals, provide student perspective on issues discussed by the board, as well as receive feedback from the board. Transportation cost, which would be minimal, would be provided for the student liaison, and is justified considering the commitment the student has made to the special committee. The University of Texas should take pride in being a source for creative solutions, and the adoption of this recommendation would provide a lasting and useful channel for creative student input concerning minority recruitment and retention.