ANNUAL MEETING WITH OFFICERS OF THE U. T. SYSTEM STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL

The University of Texas System Student Advisory Council will meet with the Board to discuss accomplishments of the Council and plans for the future.

AGENDA

1. Executive and Standing Committee Member Introductions

2. Chairperson’s Report and Overview

3. Executive Committee and Standing Committee Remarks and Recommendations

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The University of Texas System Student Advisory Council was established in 1989 to provide input to the U. T. Board of Regents working through and with the Chancellor and U. T. System Administration on issues of student concern. The operating guidelines of the Council require that recommendations have a multi-component focus and that the Council explore individual campus issues with component administrators prior to any consideration. The Student Advisory Council consists of three student representatives from each U. T. System component institution enrolling students and meets quarterly, usually in Austin. The Standing Committees of the Council are: Academic Affairs, Campus Life, Finance and Planning, Health and Graduate Affairs, Legislative Affairs, and Technology/Facilities Planning.

The Student Advisory Council met April 4-5, 2004, to finalize their recommendations as set forth on Pages 3 -11 prior to the May 2004 meeting of the U. T. Board of Regents.

Council members scheduled to attend are:

Vice-Chair: Mr. Emmanuel Gomez, U. T., El Paso, Accounting

Academic Affairs Committee: Mr. Carlos Rangel, U. T. Pan American, International Business

Campus Life Committee: Mr. Brian J. Haley, U. T. Austin, Senior, Government

Finance and Planning Committee: Mr. Josh Warren, U. T. Arlington, Interdisciplinary Studies

Health and Graduate Affairs Committee: Ms. Marian J. Barber, U. T. Austin, Graduate Student, History

Legislative Affairs Committee: Mr. Jonathan E. Moody, U. T. Southwestern, Graduate Student, Physiology

Technology/Facilities Planning Committee: Ms. Marian J. Barber, U. T. Austin, Graduate Student, History
The University of Texas System
Student Advisory Council

2003-2004

Recommendations and Report to the

Board of Regents

of the

University of Texas System

May 7, 2004

Jeremy Chance,
Chairman
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS SYSTEM

Student Advisory Council
Jeremy Chance, Chairman
8282 Cambridge Rd. Apt. 1004
Houston, Texas 77054
713-799-8991 (Home)
713-927-7238 (Cell)
713-684-8232 (Pager)

Chancellor Mark G. Yudof
Chancellor, University of Texas System
601 Colorado St.
Austin, TX 78701

Dear Chancellor Yudof:

As the 2003-2004 term of the University of Texas System Student Advisory Council draws to a close, I have had the opportunity to reflect on the accomplishments of the council as well as the unmet challenges for which the students of the University of Texas System need your help and the help of the UT System Administration to continue meeting our constitutional mandate to “create a University of the First Class for the People of Texas.”

Contained in the attached report are both our recommendations and a record of accomplishments for the past academic year. We ask that the members of the Board of Regents, as well as the Chancellor and his staff, carefully review and consider these, as they represent the collective voice of the students enrolled in our great University System. Over the past year UTSSAC has faced many challenging issues which affect students. This year we addressed issues such as tuition deregulation and the consequent rise in tuition, the loss of healthcare coverage for graduate students, the 'B-on-time' program, an education budget shortfall for the state, downsizing of UTSSAC representation from 3 to 2 students, and the upcoming UT System Compact. While addressing these important issues, we have also developed an unprecedented outreach project, 'United To Serve'. This is our opportunity to create a sense of community for all components of the UT System. We have the chance to make our mark as student government leaders on the entire UT System.

I look forward to May 13th and look back on all we have accomplished with a sense of overwhelming pride. I believe that this year as a council we have achieved more than any previous year. None of this would have been possible without the contributions of each and every UTSSAC representative. I would like to give a special thanks to Linda Williams, Dr. Pedro Reyes, and Dr. Edward Baldwin. Without their guidance, much of what we have accomplished would not have been possible. Finally, I would like to thank the 2003-2004 UTSSAC Executive Council. Without the drive and perseverance of the officers and chairs then this year would not have been such a success. I am excited about the direction we are headed. I take from this lasting experience a feeling of camaraderie and accomplishment. The State of Texas is truly blessed with the best and brightest leaders of tomorrow.

Sincerely yours,

Jeremy Chance
2003-2004 Chair UTSSAC
Technology and Planning Committee
RECOMMENDATIONS

I. Technological Changes:
UT System should remain on the cutting edge of technology. It is crucial that each component has access to equivalent technological resources to provide an equal and excellent educational environment.

We, the members of the Technology and Facilities Planning Committee of UTSSAC, urge the UT System to make enhancement of its technological capabilities a top priority in order to accomplish these goals:

1. Each component should have the technological infrastructure to offer students courses anytime of the week. This would allow for maximum usage of facilities and potentially lower individual class sizes, promoting closer student-faculty relationships.

2. Investment in technology would enable all UT System components to approach the leading edge of higher education. This will allow growth in all fields of academics as we continue to strive for excellence.

II. The University of Texas System Digital Library (UTsDL):
UTsDL was created in 1994 to provide universal access to library services and information resources by all students and faculty in the System. The UTsDL is incorporated into every individual campus library, allowing each component better access to scholarly journals, electronic books, and primary citation databases in core academic disciplines.

We, the members of the Technology and Facilities Planning Committee of UTSSAC, encourage increased support of the UTsDL in order to achieve:

1. An extensive list of journals and electronic resources that can be utilized by both students and faculty.

2. Cooperation among the health science centers to maximize access to electronic resources at minimum cost to the System and the individual components.

3. A high level of academic excellence that will propel the UT System and its components further into the 21st century.

III. Maximizing Existing Facilities:
Each component faces different challenges in maximizing the use of existing facilities and the planning of new ones. We, the members of the Technology and Facilities Planning Committee of UTSSAC, would like to commend each component for including
students’ voices in these processes. We encourage the UT System and its components to continually involve students in these proactive roles.
I. Number of UTSSAC representatives from each component:
When a representative from a component is elected as an officer, that component then only has one representative to serve on the six UTSSAC committees. In an effort to address budget concerns, UTSSAC has considerably cut costs this year. When each component has two representatives, the Council experiences significant turnover each year.

The University of Texas System Student Advisory Council respectfully requests that the Board of Regents asks the System to restore the third representative to UTSSAC from each component.

II. Student involvement in decision making:
The number of students enrolled in the University of Texas System increases each year. State spending in areas such as public safety and corrections has increased over 258% in the last 15 years while state spending in higher education has only increased by 39% during the same period\textsuperscript{1}. The number of students enrolled in higher education in the state has increased greatly each year. The proportion students pay for the cost of their education in the University of Texas System has increased steadily for some time, students, in most cases, now providing at, or near, the majority of the funding for their education. Students have a stake not only in the short-term, but also long-term, success and evolution of their institutions. The University of Texas System affirmed its belief in involving students in the decision-making process by placing several students on the UT System Commission on Tuition. The results of involving student leadership in this critical decision-making process garnered not only positive results, but also much praise and support for the University of Texas System.

Discussion between student leaders from all 15 UT System component institutions reveals varying levels of involvement of students in the compact process, the tuition setting process and other strategic planning efforts.

The University of Texas System Student Advisory Council respectfully requests that the Board of Regents reaffirms its commitment to involve students in the planning process at every level. Furthermore, the Council respectfully requests that the Board communicate this commitment to the president of each component institution along with the specific request that students be involved as quickly and fully as possible in any short- or long-term planning efforts in a manner reflecting their position as primary investors as well as stakeholders in the institution.

\textsuperscript{1} [PLACEHOLDER: Cite the Comptroller’s special report entitled ‘The Impact of the State Higher Education System on the Texas Economy’]
Health and Graduate Affairs Committee
RECOMMENDATIONS

I. Graduate and Professional Excellence:
Many UT System graduate and professional programs are among the most-respected, competitive and productive in the nation. Leading-edge research, innovation, discoveries and inventions are attributable in great part to the effort of graduate and professional students. The UT System and its components benefit from the work-product of graduate and professional students in many different ways – including advanced academic reputation, new sources of funding and economic gain from patents and copyrights and other sources. In this age of information and knowledge, current graduate and professional students will undoubtedly be cast in future positions of leadership in their chosen fields of expertise. The University of Texas System Student Advisory Council respectfully requests that:

1. Recruitment of the best and the brightest graduate and professional students continue to be a primary focus of the System and all its components, to be accomplished through offering innovative and competitive incentives such as tuition and fee assistance and health care benefits.

2. Retention of current graduate and professional students continue to be a major emphasis by providing:
   a. The most conducive learning environment through well-devised institutional policies.
   b. The most highly qualified professors, instructors, researchers and support staff.
   c. The best equipment and educational facilities crucial for maintaining the highest quality education possible.
   d. Programs that promote and foster teaching excellence as well as research excellence.
   e. Innovative avenues for collaboration among UT components, private enterprise, government and the community.
   f. Comprehensive and coherent institutional assistance in competing for research funding from various sources.

3. Completion of graduate and professional programs in a timely fashion be encouraged and facilitated by the System and all components.

4. System-wide celebration of National Graduate and Professional Student Appreciation Week be encouraged in April of each year, including observances at all components that include graduate or professional students.

II. Health insurance for all students:
Health insurance coverage provides crucial benefits to the community as well as to individuals. The nine academic and six health related institutions have nearly 180,000 students. The larger the pool of healthy individuals enrolled in a health plan the lower the cost to the entity paying for the coverage and the greater the benefits to individual
subscribers. Many students are covered under their parents’ insurance plans. The insurance industry standard age to which students may continue to be covered on such plans is expected to be reduced to 22 years of age. An increasing number of students are compelled to go without health insurance. Without financial help many students would be unable to afford even reasonably priced health insurance. Recent legislation has forced System components to explore ways to continue to provide health insurance to graduate student workers. All students in the System’s Health Science Centers and all international students throughout the System are currently required to carry health insurance. Students from the Health Science Centers report that the requirement has been beneficial.

The University of Texas System Student Advisory Council respectfully requests that the System

1. Perform a full cost-benefit analysis, component by component, of the possibility of extending the insurance requirement so that all undergraduate, graduate and professional students carry health insurance, under four possible scenarios:
   a. All currently uninsured students covered by MEGA Life
   b. All currently uninsured students covered by another provider of student health insurance
   c. All currently uninsured students covered by expansion of the self-insured UT Select
   d. All currently uninsured students covered through a combination of MEGA Life and UT Select

2. Perform a full scale cost-benefit analysis of defraying the cost of required insurance through a system of grants and financial aid under three possible scenarios:
   a. 100% for all students, regardless of income
   b. Sliding scale:
      - 100% - Families at annual incomes of $40,000 or less
      - 75% - Families at annual incomes of $40,000 to $60,000
      - 50% - Families at annual incomes of $60,000 to $80,000
      - 50% - Independent students and graduate students
   c. A fixed-dollar amount grant

Analysis should include effects of each scenario upon premiums and deductibles for existing subscribers to UT Select. We further request that analysis include discussion with insurers about their willingness to decrease premiums and deductibles, expand coverage and benefits, and improve customer service in light of the potentially dramatic increase of membership of healthy persons in the pool of insured.
Academic Affairs Committee
RECOMMENDATIONS

I. Assessment Measures:
We, the members of the Academic Affairs committee of UTSSAC, strongly believe in the utility of student learning assessment. The information obtained should be used to compare the value of education between different UT component institutions, with the goal of making degrees equitable between institutions, without interfering with component specialization. The results should be used for improvement of education, not for punitive purposes. Nor should they be used in any manner that infringes on academic freedom.

II. National Survey of Student Engagement:
We, the members of the Academic Affairs committee of UTSSAC, strongly recommend that the National Survey of Student Engagement be better publicized to students in order to make them aware of the impact that their participation has in the development of a quality education. In addition, we recommend that the results be made readily available to students at each component via the institution’s website.
Legislative Affairs Committee

RECOMMENDATIONS

I. Texas-B-On-Time:
Students in the University of Texas System applaud the intentions of the Texas State Legislature in the creation of the “Texas B-On-Time” loan forgiveness program. Education of its residents must be a top priority for Texas, and programs that encourage Texans to seek higher education, and assist them in doing so, should be continued. Since the “Texas B-On-Time” program is new this year, we understand that time will be needed to work out all the details and implement the legislation effectively. We strongly encourage the Board of Regents to evaluate the implementation of “Texas-B-On-Time” and to consider recommending the following improvements to the program, as suggested by the Legislative Committee:

1. Remove the limit on the number of credit hours allowed to meet the loan forgiveness criteria. Limiting the number of hours that students may take under the “Texas B-On-Time” program may discourage students from obtaining a double major, a concentration or a minor. As long as students meet the time and GPA requirements, they should be encouraged to make the most of their education.

2. Require a contribution from private institutions with participating students. One of three sources of funding for “Texas B-On-Time” is a 5% set aside of designated tuition, above the level of $46 per semester credit hour, charged to students at institutions of higher education. In order to prevent students at public institutions from funding the education of students at more expensive private institutions, private institutions should be required to contribute an equitable amount of money to the funding for “Texas-B-On-Time.”

II. Tuition Deregulation and Accountability:
The UTSAC Legislative Committee is pleased to report that the majority of institutions within the UT System solicited student input regarding tuition increases and considered student suggestions. We appreciate the efforts of the Board of Regents in reviewing and approving these proposals. Students have taken it in good faith that the institutions, will use the tuition increases solely for the purposes described in each components justification plan. In that vein, we offer the following recommendation:

1. We request that the Board of Regents carefully tracks the flow of money generated by tuition increases and holds the component institutions accountable for the use of that money, as indicated by each institution.

III. Student on Board of Regents:
We support and recommend that a student be appointed to the UT System Board of Regents as a voting member. We do not support discontinuation of the SAC at such a time as a student regent is added. UTSSAC provides a useful forum for students from the various components to share ideas and make recommendations to the Board of Regents.
Student Campus Life Committee  
RECOMMENDATION  

I. United To serve – First University of Texas System Outreach Activity:  
The student leadership within the University of Texas System Student Advisory Council has begun the challenging task of developing a UT System-wide outreach activity. United To serve is a joint venture among students, faculty, and administrators. It is the inaugural outreach activity of the University of Texas System Student Advisory Council, or UTSSAC, coordinated by the Campus Life committee of UTSSAC. The United To serve coordinating committees have been established at every component institution. We are planning to make this project an annual event within all 15 components with the common goal of serving the local communities which nurture our great institutions. The chancellor and presidents of the UT System have pledged their full support.

Therefore, we greatly appreciate your participation and request your support for future United To serve events. We believe this will be an opportunity for the University of Texas System to shine as a beacon of compassion and community for the whole country.