THURSDAY, MAY 12

D. RECONVENE MEETING OF THE BOARD


The University of Texas System Student Advisory Council will meet with the U. T. System Board of Regents 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

The Student Advisory Council met on February 18-19, 2005 to finalize the recommendations set forth on Pages 3 - 9. Council members scheduled to attend are:

Chair: Mr. Josh Warren, U. T. Arlington, Interdisciplinary Studies

Academic Affairs Committee: Mr. Nick Staha, U. T. Austin, Finance

Student Involvement and Campus Life Committee: Ms. Laura Rashedi, U. T. Dallas, Natural Science and Mathematics

Graduate and Health Affairs Committee: Mr. Casey Townsend, U. T. Arlington, MBA

Financial and Legislative Affairs Committee: Mr. Brent Chaney, U. T. Austin, English and Government

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 multicomponent focus and that the Council explore individual campus issues with institutional administrators
prior to any consideration. The Student Advisory Council consists of two student representatives from each U. T. System institution enrolling students and meets three times yearly, usually in Austin. The Standing Committees of the Council are: Academic Affairs, Student Involvement and Campus Life, Graduate and Health Affairs, Financial and Legislative Affairs.
Student Advisory Council
Josh Warren, Chair

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

Dear Chancellor Yudof,

Each year, the UT System Student Advisory Council, consisting of two representatives from each institution, meets to discuss issues of importance to students across the system. These recommendations are researched, discussed, and debated until the most salient, relevant recommendations are forwarded for your review. These recommendations represent the efforts of our 28 members over the past year. We trust that they will receive your earnest attention.

This was an innovative year for the Council. With the assistance of the Office of Academic Affairs and the Office of Technology and Information Services we utilized WebBoard, an online threaded discussion tool, to keep our discussions going after our face-to-face meetings in Austin. Our recommendations cover a variety of topics categorized into our four major working groups. This year's committees included academic affairs, graduate and health affairs, financial and legislative affairs, and student involvement and campus life.

The Council would like to thank System Administration for our involvement in a focus group held by the Employee Group Insurance Department. Four representatives from UTSSAC spent half a day in Austin with the staff discussing proposed changes in the non-employee student health insurance program. We were pleased with the process and are happy than many of our suggestions were included in the final Request for Proposal.

We continue to support the United to Serve Initiative held yearly during the National Volunteer Week and acknowledge the time and effort that your staff gives to coordinate that program.

I would also like to take this opportunity to publicly thank and commend the members of the 2004-2005 University of Texas System Student Advisory Council for their service to the Council and to their fellow students. These recommendations show their dedication and effort to serving their fellow students well, and it has been an honor to serve as their Chair.

Finally, I would like to give a special thanks to Margie Harris and Dr. Edward Baldwin. Without their guidance, much of what we have accomplished would not have been possible.

We appreciate the opportunity to present these recommendations on behalf of the 180,000 students in the UT System.

Sincerely,

Josh Warren, Chair
The University of Texas System Student Advisory Council
THE UNIVERSITY of TEXAS SYSTEM STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL RECOMMENDATIONS TO
THE BOARD OF REGENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS SYSTEM

After careful consideration we, the members of The University of Texas System Student Advisory Council, respectfully recommend the following recommendations to The University of Texas System Board Of Regents. The findings of the Council show that recommendations presented here concern a wide array of students at multiple institutions in The University of Texas System.

Academic Affairs Committee

The Academic Affairs Committee of The University of Texas System Student Advisory Council submits the following five recommendations:

Recommendation 1

Expand Collaborative Academic and Certificate Programs among member institutions of the System.

The University of Texas System should utilize its diverse programs at member institutions for the benefit of students across the System. This recommendation presents the best solution because it protects the integrity of academic programs at host institutions while allowing opportunities for students who might not otherwise have access to the diverse academic experiences offered across the System.

We request that the Board charge the Office of the Chancellor with the task of exploring potential collaborative academic programs among System institutions. The Chancellor would then report the findings of the study to the Board for further action if appropriate. As this recommendation requires further study, the Council looks forward to working with the Chancellor and the appropriate individuals in further studying this matter.

While implementation of this recommendation would require no changes in current Regents' Rules, it would require the assistance of the Offices of Academic Affairs and Health Affairs.

Recommendation 2

Amend the Regents' Rules to require each institution to maintain a standing copy of every course section's required course materials (including textbooks and packets) to be on reserve in each institution's respective library.

This issue is important because:

1. the availability of required course materials is essential to the learning experience of a student;
2. a student may not always have sufficient funds to purchase a personal copy of required course materials;
3. there are times, especially at the beginning of a semester, when required course materials are not available at local book stores, and
4. a student may misplace a personal copy of his or her required course materials.

A universal policy will ensure that every student has access to required course materials. This recommendation presents the best solution because a student may not express the dilemma to sympathetic officers of the institution because he or she is embarrassed because he or she lacks resources to acquire a personal copy.

Student Advisory Council
April 2005
Recommendation 3

Expand the NetLibrary to make available required texts of each section of each course offered at each institution.

The NetLibrary has the potential to significantly reduce costs to students who would use the internet to access required texts. The NetLibrary offers a student enrolled in a particular course the convenience of a private copy of a required text while the System might be able to benefit from economies of scale since the NetLibrary is a System-wide resource and the per-book cost of electronic rights to these required texts could become quite low.

Additionally, System students not enrolled in a particular course could have convenient access to all textbooks without purchasing a personal copy.

This recommendation presents the best solution because it utilizes technology and economies of scale to provide greater access to academic resources for System students.

If the Board concurs with the Council with respect to this recommendation, the Board could act on this recommendation by charging the appropriate officials who oversee the contract with the NetLibrary to see to the inclusion in the NetLibrary of each required text of each section of each course at each institution.

Recommendation 4

Encourage each institution to continue to promote to its community a code of honor or a code of ethical conduct; and if a code of honor or ethical conduct does not presently exist, to develop and advertise to its community a code similar to that which was announced by President Faulkner at The University of Texas at Austin in April of 2004.

The Honor Code of The University of Texas at Austin reads:

"The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the University is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community."

This issue is important because too frequently negative events on campus, off campus, and in the world at large are reflections of a decided lack of consideration of universally agreed upon values.

If the Board concurs with the Council with respect to this recommendation, the Board could act on this recommendation by taking the following actions:

Recommend, via a letter to the president of each institution, the development of a code of honor or code of ethical conduct along the following guidelines:

a. The code should expect members of the community to uphold values considered to be universally desirable.

b. The code should not require punitive action for a perceived failure to follow the expectations of the code.

c. Publicity for the code should be across the campus and target each constituency of the university community.
Recommendation 5

Ask the Office of the Chancellor to study and report on the effectiveness of the institutional compliance policies to promoting professionalism and ethical conduct within the operations of each System institution, and recommend action to the respective institution when appropriate.

There is concern that the traditional methods for reporting unethical or illegal conduct may not be effective. Of particular concern are institutions which rely on a hierarchical system of reporting inappropriate conduct.

If a student is subjected to the inappropriate conduct of a faculty member, they might have no recourse but to approach that faculty member's particular department chair, and in many cases, the student has no knowledge of relationships between colleagues and might otherwise not report inappropriate behavior out of the inherently intimidating circumstance. Furthermore, many institutions have alternative methods for reporting inappropriate conduct that are underutilized because the campus community is not adequately informed of these methods.

The Council offers the following guidelines it believes are important to be included in an institutional compliance program:

a. A telephone hotline number regularly available to members of the university community which connects to an officer specifically charged to work with matters of institutional compliance.

b. Publicity targeting each constituency of the university community advertising the services of the institutional compliance office.

Financial and Legislative Affairs

The Financial and Legislative Affairs Committee of The University of Texas System Student Advisory Council submits the following recommendation:

Recommendation 6

Conduct a study on the impact of new tuition increases on students who do not qualify for financial aid

A student's first job is to be a student. Many of our campuses have seen an increase in hours students are working and even added jobs to pay for the increases in tuition. Students who do not qualify for financial aid and whose parents cannot financially support them are hardest hit by recent tuition hikes. A family's income tax return does not always translate to a student's financial ability. We have seen an increase in students taking junior college classes in order to save money rather than taking the same classes at UT campuses.

If the Board concurs with the Council with respect to this recommendation, the Board could act on this recommendation by taking the following actions:

1. Initiate a study to analyze the problem and specific solutions for financial aid for students who are affected by tuition increases, but do not qualify for financial aid.
2. Based on the results of the study, create a program to address the need of these students.
Graduate and Health Committee

The Graduate and Health Affairs Committee of The University of Texas System Student Advisory Council submits the following two recommendations:

Recommendation 7

Investigate the feasibility of expanding U.T. Austin's nursing hotline so that institutions could "opt-in" to the service.

This recommendation presents the best solution because it allows institutions to take advantage of economies of scale and offer a service that is beneficial to all students. The nursing hotline allows students to call in non-emergency situations and inquire if their illness requires immediate attention. Because many institutions offer reduced-cost health services, students benefit by not having to pay extreme emergency room rates. Because this service is phone-based, it could be expanded to include multiple institutions if they so desired. Each institution should be allowed to determine if they wish to participate, and if they wish to do so, some equitable manner of distributing the cost between the participating institutions should be devised.

This issue is important because as the cost of tuition continues to rise, the importance of cost-savings becomes more critical.

Recommendation 8

Require all U.T. System institutions to make information readily available pertaining to mental health. Specifically, this information should include services provided both on and off-campus that relate to psychiatric issues, substance abuse, sexual harassment, rape crisis, women's health, suicide, and sexually transmitted diseases.

Mental health issues have become a greater concern in recent years. Students rely on their respective institutions for many health issues, and providing information about access to all mental health services available would be a tremendous benefit to students.
Student Involvement and Campus Life

The Student Involvement and Campus Life Committee of The University of Texas System Student Advisory Council submits the following recommendation:

Recommendation 9

Ensure the presence of an administrative position at each institution designed to deal with diversity issues and adequate processes for maintaining diversity at each institution.

This issue is of great importance because of the evolving dynamic of the State of Texas and thus, the students being educated by The University of Texas System.

This position is essential to students because it allows each campus flexibility in dealing with their particular students, faculty, and staff while educating and providing a common forum for each university community to discuss the diversity issues that face their particular institution.

The Council recommends the use of the report formulated by the Committee on Racial Respect and Fairness at The University of Texas at Austin. This document submitted to President Larry Faulkner entailed a plan to create an administrative position whose sole responsibility is to address diversity.

Additionally, the Council recommends that the individual charged to address diversity at each institution oversee a committee comprised of members of each aspect of the campus community.

Each U.T. institution has special-interest organizations dedicated to the promotion of diversity. The new administrative officer and committee would work with those current organizations to further develop programs and policies with diversity in mind.

Furthermore, the Council recommends this individual be charged to ensure diversity in the faculty, staff, and students.