

VICE PRESIDENT FOR STUDENT AFFAIRS

Bree Richards

Monday, November 06, 2006

Madam President & Distinguished Assembly Members,

Since the last Assembly meeting, here is what I have been doing:

1. Textbook Task Force
2. Mentoring program
3. Parking & Transportation Services meeting
4. Project: Check It resolution
5. Internal Affairs
6. GradSEHD

1. Textbook Task Force

The Minnesota State Legislature has charged the Textbook Task Force with studying the role textbooks play in the rising cost of education, and looking for possible ways to reduce such costs. The task force is comprised of students, professors, bookstore managers, publishers, and used book sellers.

I attended the October 13, 2006 meeting, where we discussed surveying professors to see what their attitudes toward textbooks and purchasing were. We decided against doing a survey, and instead decided that education was needed. For example, most professors do not know that the timing of their orders for the next semester greatly affects the amount students get when they sell their books back – if professors have placed their orders and will be using the same book again the next semester, students will get a substantially higher price. Supposedly, at the U of M, if the book is being used the following semester, students get 50% of the new price back regardless of whether the book was purchased new or used.

There were a few other points discussed:

- There are several states that are looking into establishing textbook rental programs to keep costs down.
- Minnesota does not tax textbooks in order to save students money.
- Some schools have built the cost of textbooks into the tuition and fees that students pay, so that students do not need to buy textbooks on top of paying tuition. This allows the schools to negotiate better prices from the publishers and to communicate more with professors about book choices.

See the announcements below for more information on this task force.

2. Mentoring program

I met with Patrick Troup, Director of the Multicultural Center for Academic Excellence, and Cynthia Armijo, Coordinator of the President's Distinguished Faculty Mentor Program, to discuss setting up a mentor program for undergraduates. We are working on establishing a framework and goals for the program, and have a pilot study in mind. We will also be meeting with Kristen Denzer, GAPSA Vice President for Student Affairs, who runs the mentoring program for the College of Biological Sciences, in order to get ideas.

3. Parking & Transportation Services meeting

I attended a PTS student advisory meeting on October 26, along with several other student leaders. This meeting was designed for PTS to update students on what is happening within their department, and to solicit feedback/issues/concerns from students.

Here are the highlights of the meeting (a full report is available under "Reports" on the GAPSA website):

- Marketing campaign feedback – PTS would like to have focus groups to see how effective their marketing is. They will be about an hour each, and PTS will bring food. If you or your council is interested in participating, please contact Vicki Nelson at nelso043@umn.edu.
- New campus maps – PTS has created and will be distributing expandable pocket maps of campus.
- How the stadium will affect parking – it is unknown where new parking will be built, but the Huron lots will begin disappearing this summer as the stadium construction starts.
- Central Corridor Line – this plan continues changing, but the line will probably be built by 2013. The University would like this to be underground through the campus.
- Campus radio station on busses – PTS has been approached to create a "campus radio" where students can choose the songs online, and student organizations/the University can create ads that will run on busses. This will eliminate the regular radio, as well as individual bus driver music preferences (e.g., the "Jazz Man").
- Parking meters – the University is looking at creating pay stations for groups of parking meters to eliminate the need for quarters.
- Event parking – the University is nearly fully compliant with new payment card industry standards and will be looking at accepting credit cards for prepayment during events, or allowing online parking orders with barcoded vouchers to print off prior to coming to campus.

4. Project: Check It resolution

Mahmoud Fadlallah and Stephanie Travis, both second-year law students, have been working on an initiative to standardize a part of admissions applications across the University. Project: Check It started at the University of Michigan, and is designed to make the racial/ethnic background question on admissions applications relevant and uniform. I wrote a resolution concerning this issue and brought it to the Executive Board meeting on November 1, where Mac and Stephanie presented. The Executive Board suggested some changes, and the revised resolution will be brought to the December 6 joint MSA/GAPSA meeting.

5. Internal Affairs

I attended the first meeting of this semester for the Internal Affairs Committee on November 3. We discussed executive and staff evaluations.

I have also been working with Suzanne Sobotka, GAPSA President, and JAWS to get our website switched over to the University's central servers while still allowing our staff to have work e-mail addresses. This process is nearly complete.

6. GradSEHD

One of GAPSA's coordinate councils, the Graduate Students in Education & Human Development (GradSEHD), is currently disbanded. I am working with past members and interested CEHD students to revive it. If you or anyone you know are interested in helping with this, please let me know.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:**Textbook Task Force**

There is one opening for a student representative from the University of Minnesota. The remaining meetings are:

Friday, December 1st, 2006

Thursday, January 25th, 2007

All meetings are held at the Minnesota Office of Higher Education, 1450 Energy Park Drive, Suite 350, St. Paul, MN. If you are interested in representing University of Minnesota students on this task force, and can attend all remaining meetings, please contact me ASAP.

Student Senate open seats

There is one position still open for each of the following schools:

Dentistry

Nursing

Pharmacy

Public Health

CEHD

Senators would need to attend all Student Senate meetings as well as University Senate meetings. The schedule for these meetings can be found here:

<http://www1.umn.edu/usenate/meetings/ssccmtg.html>. If you would like to fill one of these open positions and are able to attend the meetings, please contact me ASAP.

Thank You,

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