

MINUTES OF THE STUDENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE OF FACULTY SENATE MEETING

Friday, February 9, 2018

Approved February, 2018

12:00 PM – 1:30 PM

COLISEUM 2114

Meeting called to order at 12:02 pm

Members Present: Rahmel Cowen (Graduate School Rep), Lucas Elmore (Graduate Student Rep), Xiofeng Gu (COSM), Markesha Henderson (Chair, COE), Lynn Pazzani (COSS), Elaine MacKinnon (COAH), Ryan Bronkema (COE), Patty Moran (THSSON), Alex Sutton (COAH sub for Dawn Neely), Xavier Whitaker (Dean of Students), Elizabeth Youdell (SGA)

Guests: Leigh Ann Hussey, Director of Financial Aid and Jessica Wiggins (Associate Director of Financial Aid)

ADOPTION OF AGENDA AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The agenda as published was adopted with no additions

A motion to approve the minutes from the November 17, 2017 meeting was made by Ryan Bronkema and Seconded by Lynn Pazzani. Motion Carried.

REPORTS AND UPDATES

SAFBA Committee

Markesha Henderson provided an update on the SAFBA application process. Student organizations and departments that applied for funding will be interviewed.

Student Government

Elizabeth Youdell provided an update on student government. Elections will be held the week before spring break and students can apply on Org Sync for senator or executive board positions.

Student Affairs and Enrollment Management

Xavier Whitaker provided an update from the Division of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management. Health services is experiencing a spike with incidents of the flu. A campus-wide reminder is going out to encourage people to take the appropriate precautions.

The director of career services position received 90 applicants and the search committee has begun evaluating the candidates. An opportunity to meet and recruit additional participants will be at the upcoming NASPA convention. UWG will host a reception.

OLD BUSINESS

There were no outstanding matters before the committee.

NEW BUSINESS

Financial Aid

The SAEM division featured at this meeting was Financial Aid. Leigh Ann Hussey, Director of Financial Aid provided an overview of developments in the department:

- Changes Higher Education Reauthorization Act due for renewal – anticipate major changes – Prosper Act – Meeting coming up to hear more about it.
- 2 changes beneficial to students
 - Purchased a new software system that allows them to upload documents electronic – signatures are electronic which eliminates the need to mail in documents.
 - Summer Pell Grant, also known as “Year Round Pell” will be available effective summer 2018 semester. Students who are Pell-eligible will receive an extension in the amount they receive to cover summer semester educational expenses. Students are now eligible for 3 semester in an academic year. To qualify you must attend fall and spring and be enrolled at least part time. Part time in summer is 6 hours. Within next couple of weeks information will go out to students. The awarding process begins at the end of February. Students complete a very simple 1 question survey and they are automatically registered. The office will review their eligibility. This does not change loan eligibility or maximums but students can get additional pell.

Following the presentation, the floor was open for questions from the committee

Xavier Whitaker shared there will be new themed learning communities to focus on financial literacy - Get Smart and Invest in You – Money Smart UWG. Faculty can also schedule presentations for their classes.

Ken Hilderhoff was unable to attend but sent in a concern via email on behalf of RCOB:

“Buying books or the access to codes for e-books were the worse in years for many of us in RCOB. Please have them outline the many programs they have to help students in your meeting notes so that I can share them with RCOB. I know they have a book buying extension program and possibly others that we are unaware of as professors. I also realize the issues with waiting for funds are student related.

Leigh Ann Hussey responded the Bookstore to the Rescue program allows students to charge a portion of their refund to the Bookstore. If they purchase outside of the bookstore they have to wait until their refund posts. The best way to ensure students can use financial aid to purchase books is to ensure faculty members list the book with the bookstore. Dual enrolled students have to purchase from the bookstore. If they purchase from outside of the bookstore they cannot use financial aid and eBook codes have to be purchased by the bookstore.

Lynn Pazzani inquired about whether the summer Pell grant would count towards their maximum award. Leigh Ann Hussey responded full time is \$4000 fall and spring and students are eligible for an additional \$2000 in summer. The lifetime eligibility limit is 6 years full time Pell.

Concerns were sent to the committee regarding the servicing of COE Graduate Students. The automatic messages students receive such as the "Pace of Progression Warning" listed resources that are not applicable to graduate population. Leigh Ann Hussey indicated she was aware of the issue and it will be addressed but also remarked, although they would not likely take advantage of it, graduate students are able to utilize any of the services listed.

Leigh Ann Hussey stated the main issue with servicing graduate students is that they are waiting until June and July to get their financial aid. She advised they start as soon as they possibly can. The deadline for admissions and late acceptances has a lot to do with when students apply for financial aid. The process should start no later than March. Colleges should manage expectations for financial aid with students they are admitting after the deadline.

She has made staff available for extended hours to accommodate working professionals who need to speak to someone after business hours. She also advised that students make a phone appointment and do not hang up even when call volumes are high, such as when payment deadlines are close.

Jessica Wiggins informed the committee before the graduate school disbanded and was left to the individual colleges, there used to be a graduate student financial aid representative and the position was discontinued. When graduate school reorganized it was not put back in place. This recommendation will be forwarded to Dr. Lingrell.

Other issues is the call center does not have voice mail unless closed but students can't leave voice message.

It was suggested to poll the colleges to find out what they have questions about so that they can be added to FAQs on the website. FAQ sessions were not well attended and they are willing to come to departments to do presentations.

It was suggested that a directory on who to contact by subject area when you have a question be listed on the website. Currently they do not publicize the contact list for financial aid staff. Non-peak times the wait time is 3-5 minutes – It was also suggested that deans who deal with hardship decisions need formal communication channels and should have a direct number and not wait in the same queue as students and external inquiries. FINAID@westga.edu email address is helpful and typically when an email is sent the response is timely.

Legislative changes regarding financial aid should also be formally communicated to colleges and THSSON.

The department is satisfied with their technology and infrastructure and has incorporated text notifications if there is something wrong with their documents. Students do not check their email and a lot of important notifications are sent to their westga.edu address.

Rahmel Cowen will continue the conversation on how to address graduate student financial needs with the colleges and THSSON.

FUTURE MEETING DATES AND TOPICS

The next meeting will be in April pending agenda items from SAEM. An availability poll will be sent for a Friday afternoon meeting.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Feb 25 and 26 graduate students will be coming on campus for interviews for assistantship positions

The meeting was adjourned at 12:53