Executive Membership Meeting  
Minutes of December 3, 2009

Convener: Janiece Kiedrowski, Chair

Recorder: Kathleen M. Kielar, Secretary

Agenda:
1. Approval of the minutes of November 5, 2009
2. Report of the Chair
3. Report of the Vice Chair
4. Interactive discussion with Ellen Dussourd, Director of International Student and Scholar Services
5. Old Business: Continuing discussion of committee reorganization
6. New Business
7. Adjournment

Minutes:
1. Minutes from the November 5, 2009 meeting were approved.

2. Report from the Chair

We have set up a meeting with HR on December 11 to work on building our relationship with HR. We have HR coming into the General Membership meeting in January. We want to consider how PSS and HR will work together. An organizational chart was distributed. It was a conceptual illustration of how we believe that the committees and the PSS structure would work with HR. Janiece solicited comments from the group as to items to talk about with HR. Agenda items that the Executive Officers want to talk about with HR include a discussion of the PSS/HR organizational charts, mentoring, emergency preparedness, centralized training advertising, Fair Labor Standards Act, and the Collaborative Performance Management training. We are also aware the HR would like to talk to PSS about how to promote the volunteerism effort, as well as the Workforce Development initiative.

Jim Jarvis gave a brief overview of what the Workforce Development initiative was. It includes the impact of UB2020 on the region and what it is going to mean to people outside of the University. We are looking at skills that are needed to fill newly created jobs within the University. Identification of skills both externally and internally will be ongoing.

We may be hearing something about the budget. 9 – 13 million dollars will be cut this year, 20 million dollars will be cut next year. We are all in it together.
3. Interactive discussion with Ellen Dussourd

Ellen Dussourd talked with the group about international student stressors, the environment which they are working, and how this impacts their work. The ISSS office serves 3,775 international students. They are also required by law to serve students who are on Optional Practical Training, which is a work experience that F-1 students are eligible for which complements the student’s degree program. This OPT period has been extended for 29 months...so ISSS is obligated to serve students up to 29 months after they graduate. This accounts for another 1,000 students whom ISSS serves on a yearly basis. ISSS also provides non-immigration-related services (e.g. information about Social Security cards, income tax filing, driver’s licenses, banking, public transportation, utilities, etc. plus trips and activities) to visiting scholars, and international faculty and researchers. There are approximately 300 visiting scholars, and 500 faculty and researchers in H-1B status at UB. H-1B refers to the H-1B temporary worker visa category, which is for individuals in specialty occupations. UB Immigration Services, which is staffed by an immigration attorney and paralegal, provides immigration services to those individuals.

What Ellen wants us to consider is what it is like to be an international student in the post-9/11/01 environment in the U.S. All international students are governed by immigration regulations. This includes their travel, employment, studies and their vacations. ISSS has to monitor and track international students in F-1 and J-1 status through a system called SEVIS, which is a Department of Homeland Security system which tracks all F-1 international students and their dependents, and J-1 Exchange Visitors and their dependents who enter the United States. ISSS has to comply with this heavy regulatory burden, and educate our students about this requirement.

In WNY we have a very heavy Department of Homeland Security presence as a result of being next to the border. ISSS has had to develope a working relationship with Immigration & Customs Enforcement, Customs & Border Protection and Border Patrol. If UB international students fall out of immigration status, there are consequences. 14 UB international students have been detained in the federal detention center. International students face stiff penalties for things we might consider minor. For example, one UB international student was detained for carrying 9 credit hours instead of 12 credit hours.

The ISSS office has the role of educating our students about these requirements, reporting to the government, advising our students while they stay here, as well as providing a welcoming environment. At International Student Orientation, ISSS staff members share stories of what happened to UB international students who violated their immigration status in the U.S. The intention of educating students with real stories is to deter them from violating any of the terms of their stay here.

International students also face a variety of stressors, including language barriers. Ellen then went on to give examples of Indian English and the English we use in the United States. They may also lack a social support system as well as face isolation and cultural shock. Many are not used to being alone, nor do they have experience in finding support systems on their own. Students who come from warm countries experience physiological affects to their bodies as a result of the cooler weather in Buffalo.
These stressors can cause significant, negative consequences such as depression, suicide attempts, etc. as a result of not being able to establish connections.

Many of our students do not feel comfortable with U.S. values and at times feel pressured to compromise their values. Examples of such values include extramarital relationships, etc. Americans often do things spontaneously, that is just not done in their country. ~ I know what you are saying here, but it’s broader than what I said. People all over the world can be spontaneous although perhaps not so easily regarding their intimate relationships.

Academically, international students face greater academic pressures than U.S. students. In their home countries, a high level of education, plus excellent academic performance are often the only way to ensure a decent living. When these students come from poor countries, education often times is their only hope for themselves and for their families. International student families give up a great deal (e.g. vacations, finances, weddings, etc.) to support the educational endeavors of the child. The parents also apply a significant amount of pressure that we simply don’t. Families have depleted family savings or even put the family home up as collateral to support their child’s education.

International students also face a lot of financial restrictions, either because of their status as an international student or because of their culture. International students can only work off of campus with special permission and under certain circumstances. They also can’t take a semester off or be registered only part time. If they do, they face arrest and detention.

Randy Borst talked about International Students with disabilities. It is difficult for an International Student to navigate the American system to get accommodations for their disability. First there is a language barrier. For example, you can be dyslexic for English but not for Chinese. International Students cannot document their disability because where they are from it is not acknowledged or documented. They don’t often get an assessment or diagnosis. They also can’t go to their families’ and admit that they are doing poorly here because of a disability simply because they are ashamed. Our system is also based on self advocacy and international students are not as comfortable with self advocacy.

Sometimes the student will take a job illegally. This has many negative consequences, including being hurt on the job and not being able to receive help because of how they got their injury would put their status in the United States in jeopardy ~ They may fear this, but it isn’t true. Further, their family will shame them because they are supposed to be concentrating on their education.

Randy stated that Korea is more progressive about disabilities than we are. The Palestinians have good psychiatry while, in other Middle Eastern countries, they don’t admit to mental illness. Overwhelming shame prohibits students from coming to get help.
Ellen then discussed the International Student Mentoring Program which ISSS organized in cooperation with Counseling Services. The program is designed to provide social support to newly arrived international students to help them adjust culturally. A secondary goal is to give UB American students and staff a meaningful international experience. The program was started in the fall and recruited 50 mentor applicants. Time was spent matching newly arrived international students with professional staff and returning Study Abroad students. ISSS is also recruiting students in Counseling, Education and School Psychology, Social Work and Learning & Instruction from the Graduate School of Education to help them out with their careers. ISSS is trying to make this an educational experience for everyone and hopes that UB staff will have some of the rich experiences with international students that the ISSS staff does. The mentoring program is a one-semester commitment and ISSS is taking applications for the spring. Applications are on the PSS website. No international experience is necessary to be a mentor. Programs are there to support both the student and mentor.

4. **Report from the Vice Chair**

Website committee is going to meet in January to see what kinds of improvements are needed for the site. We’ve just added a photo gallery.

Student Life Committee is working on communicating with student programs that already exists. They are examining what else should be going on?

Standards Committee has created some templates and standards for promotional materials to email out to general membership.

Outstanding Service Awards. If you know of an employee that deserves extra attention, please take the time to nominate them.

5. Meeting adjourned
2009 Professional Staff Senate
Executive Committee Attendance

Date of Meeting: December 3, 2009

Area I:
Present  Mathew Deck
Present  Rebecca Goodman
Absent   Fred Covelli

Guests: Laura Yates

Area II:
Present  Dave Ballard
Present  Letitia Thomas
Present  Ilene Fleischmann

Area III:
Present  Randy Borst
Excused  Amy Wilson
Absent   Dan Ryan

Area IV:
Present  Laura Pruski
Excused  Cherie Williams
Present  Anne Marie Swartz

Area V:
Present  Amanda Brown
Present  James Jarvis
Present  Laura Dantum

Officers:
Present  Janicee Kowalski
Present  Ann Marie Landel
Present  Kathleen M. Kielar

SUNY Senators:
Present  David Ballard
Present  William Coles
Absent   Henry Durand