Facilities and Healthcare Committee Meeting 15th January, 2014

Present: Angharad Davis, Kristin Graves, Michael Parker, Wendy Xiao   
  
Apologies: Michelle Kriner, Paul Baranay, Brittany Angarola

Meeting opened 8:07pm

1. **Project Updates**
   1. Tax advice
      1. AD noted that planning for the GSA’s Tax Advice event (AKA ‘Ask An Accountant’) is well underway; the event will take place on Thursday, 30th January, at 7pm (US residents) and 8pm (non-US residents). Chad Marion has secured the panel of experts and booked a venue, and posters were distributed for advertising the event at tonight’s general assembly.
      2. A refreshment budget of $100 has been approved by the GSA chair and treasurer (who are being extremely supportive of this event). AD will contact suitable caterers to enquire about their prices for this kind of event.
         1. KG recommended Koffee, on Audubon St; she has participated in several events that they have catered. In particular she noted the ‘no frills option’ that they offer, which provides event catering but no clean-up, as a very affordable and practical option.
         2. KG and MP also recommended Café Romeo, on Orange St.
      3. AD was uncertain about how best to estimate the number of attendees, both for catering and seating purposes. MP is of the opinion that the event is likely to be crowded, and so estimates should err on the generous side.
   2. Housing
      1. WX reported that the university housing committee met today.
         1. Having already met with the owners of Pike International, a report is now being written, which will then be shareable. The committee will be talking to the owners of New Haven Towers in the next few weeks.
         2. Regarding HGS renovations, it seems that at least some beds in the dorm space will be lost as the tower is converted into office space. To compensate for this, apartment-style dorms will be made available in nearby buildings, which will probably be available by the Summer.
            1. WX noted that there are some differences of perspective on the committee with regard to the design of accommodation, which may be owing to generational/time-of-life differences. In the case of these buildings, the lifestyle needs of students need to be taken into account (e.g. flexible living spaces and easily movable furniture, space for a couch and a TV, etc., will usually have priority over a formal dining space or large kitchen)
         3. In addition to these, a number of commercial housing developments are in the works downtown; some of these may be available by this Summer (2014), and the rest probably by next Summer (2015).
         4. The parameters for a ‘Yale Seal of Approval’ for New Haven housing continue to be worked on.
         5. The new Yale Housing website is currently under construction, and should be tested in March and rolled out in April.
      2. WX continues to work on plans for a Yale Housing Fair.
         1. Ideally, this would be held during pre-visit weekend (a weekend during which students accepted into the med school visit prior to making their decision). KG observed that in humanities departments, admission procedures don’t work this way (i.e. there is no ‘pre-visit weekend’); MP noted that some admitted students (including himself) elected not to go to these weekend visits, and suggested that it might be worthwhile to investigate how well attended such events are.
         2. The issue of whether the housing fair would be open to students in the broader graduate school (i.e. not just those in the med school) was raised. KG noted that many humanities students would probably have difficulty finding the med school, and may not make the effort to go there.
            1. WX was anticipating holding the housing fair at the med school in late February or March, but could conceivably set up a second one with proper assistance. KG thought that having one expanded housing fair would be preferable to holding two smaller ones.
            2. AD enquired what the considerations would need to be in order to expand the housing fair to include attendance by students outside the med school. WX cited the issue of location; she has negotiated a suitable space at the med school, but other university spaces (e.g. Commons or GPSCY) might be inconvenient for various reasons, or require a hire fee. (WX has asked the dean of the med school if it would be possible to collect a small fee from each of the participating businesses in order to help cover costs, and is waiting for a response.)
            3. WX noted that the med school is really quite easy to get to, since it is on a Yale shuttle line. AD suggested that planning could incorporate signage at shuttle stops to assist those who do not often visit that part of campus. MP pointed out that turnout from non-med school students will in probability be low, but that this is not inherently a problem. He suggested that the event be made available to all grad students, but without anticipating a wide attendance from among the broader grad student population.
            4. WX is contacting a number of local landlords, including Taft, Pike, PMC, Chelsea Company, and others, to invite them to participate in the housing fair. AD noted that these housing options are all situated either downtown or near the med school; however, there is nothing wrong with using this housing fair as a pilot program with a focus on the needs of med school students and those interested in living downtown. If successful, the housing fair might be expanded in subsequent iterations to include housing options in other parts of town, e.g. East Rock.
            5. WX noted that the businesses she is in contact with are primarily associated with larger holdings (e.g. companies that own or supervise more than one building) and that this gives them a particular interest in making themselves attractive to Yale students, e.g. by participating in the housing fair. In contrast to this, many East Rock landlords have smaller or single property holdings. MP suggested that the proposed ‘Yale Seal of Approval’ could be more useful in encouraging East Rock landlords to be accountable.
   3. Mental Health
      1. AD passed along an update from Paul Baranay.
         1. PB has been in contact with the Yale Teaching Center, regarding the possibility of integrating some form of mental health training into teacher training. At this point, the general directive is for teaching fellows to direct students with all types of difficulties or problems to their college deans. However, there is some suggestion that Dr Siggins from Yale Mental Health and Counselling may be invited to create some sort of mental health awareness video. The possibility of mental health being the topic of an advanced teaching seminar would be better raised again when we have a clearer idea of what such a seminar would look like and cover. To this end, AD will explore what similar programs might be doing in other universities.
            1. MP notes that there may be a broader cultural problem involved here, in that there seems to be a general lack of real expectations for teachers, or clear guidance as to expected standards etc., held by the university. For instance, attendance at teacher training seminars is not mandatory; neither is previous relevant experience or training when undertaking teaching work such as supervising a lab. MP observed that this suggests slightly skewed priorities; while learning how to teach may be best done by teaching, learning how to handle broader issues (arguably including mental health and other concerns) that are beyond your expertise would be valuable.
         2. PB has yet to meet with his colleagues from the GPSS and YCC (who are also working on mental health matters) this semester.
      2. MP updated the committee on plans for a Mental Health Awareness Campaign, to take place via toilet stall advertising/newsletters.
         1. MP observed that at Yale there seems to be a considerable aversion to doing things out of the norm with regard to advertising, focusing on bulletin boards and emails. Advertising in other venues, such as toilet stalls, is an unexplored avenue, and may be particularly useful given the current push for broader awareness of mental health issues on campus.
            1. MP and AD are meeting with Shayna from the Publicity Committee on Friday to discuss plans and approaches for a toilet stall poster campaign.
            2. MP’s interest in the project is primarily in creating an outlet for the Mental Health Awareness campaign; he suggested that PB and AD may be better situated to creating specific textual content for the posters/newsletters.
         2. Justine Walden (chair of the Publicity Committee) noted that the committee has significant demands on their time, and couldn’t be heavily involved on a regular basis (e.g. putting out a new poster every month). However, MP has art and design experience himself, and is happy to take on much of the strain of updating; the meeting with Shayna is to work towards the creation of a template that can easily be adapted to new content.
         3. AD noted that, as this project moves forward, there are a number of practical considerations to bear in mind.
            1. We are still unclear on the exact nature of Yale’s postering policies, especially in new locations such as bathroom stalls. AD brought up the idea that the installation of plastic sleeves that allow for the easy interchange of posters would be ideal, but in the absence of these we could potentially use our own plastic envelopes. MP noted that in his undergraduate institution, bathroom flyering was achieved by poking a hole in the top of the newsletter, and hanging it on the toilet stall coat/bag hook. However, either method of achieving changeability would work.
            2. AD noted that communication (and potentially cooperation) with other student organisations who had voiced ideas about similar campaigns would ideally take place sooner rather than later; MP suggested that PB could raise it when meeting with his GPSS and YCC counterparts to discuss other mental health issues.
2. **Semester Planning**
   1. Planning for the coming semester was tabled until such a time as a quorum is reached.
3. **Concerns/Ideas from the floor** 
   1. MP noted, with regard to Brian Dunican’s report in the general assembly that the university is dragging its feet over the GSA’s report suggesting a pilot program to extend the opening hours at the Payne Whitney Gymnasium, that it is a shame that moving forward on this matter seems to be largely out of our hands for the present. However, the committee will keep an eye on the issue.
   2. There being no further concerns/ideas from the floor, the meeting was adjourned.

Meeting adjourned 8:47pm