GSA Facilities and Healthcare Committee Meeting 6th November, 2013

Present: Michelle Kriner, Paul Baranay, Angharad Davis Chad Marion, Wendy Xiao.  
  
Apologies: No apologies were recorded.

Meeting opened 7:10 pm

1. **‘Deep Dive’ review and next steps**
   1. Study space – Elizabeth Lang
      1. Postponed due to absence
   2. Housing – Wendy Xiao
      1. Folded in with item 2. G&P Housing Committee update (see below)
   3. Mental health – Paul Baranay
      1. Forthcoming meetings
         1. A number of different meetings are forthcoming; PB will set up a timeline of these
            1. Member Advisory Committee (MAC) meeting Friday, 8th November; will include someone from publicity who is interested in working with us
            2. A meeting with Dr. Siggins will take place within the month
            3. GPSS/GSA meeting next week
            4. AD: Other meetings and events coming up include

Safety Net meeting, Friday 8th November

YCC Public meeting, Saturday 16th November, 3:30pm (location TBA)

Mind Matters publicity campaign in early November (to be held on cross campus)

* + 1. Teaching issues
       1. The issue of trying to integrate some form of mental health awareness into teaching has been raised previously; how should we go about this?
          1. Contact the Yale Teaching Center (formerly the Graduate Teaching Center)
          2. MK: The Day of Teaching at the beginning of Fall semester might be the best way to reach the most people, although it couldn’t be guaranteed to reach everyone
          3. PB: This could also be one of the Advanced Courses offered as part of the Certificate in College Teaching Preparation

MK One potential difficulty would be in ascertaining whether people would sign up for it (attendance is voluntary; what would the demand be?)

AD A further concern might be the issue of who would be qualified to teach such a course

PB Someone is bound to have the requisite skills; e.g. those who train the Walden counsellors

PB Both of these issues could be addressed to an extent by separating skills from resources: even compiling a categorical list of resources to which TAs could turn would be useful.

WX asked what kind of situations such a course would cover? E.g. Ranging from ‘everyday’ stress management to addressing serious suicidal impulses

PB Probably inclining more towards the former, although dealing to some extent with the latter would also be useful (NB someone is sure to have a list of basic ‘best practices’ [e.g. when to listen, when to send them somewhere else etc] that could be used as a resource)

WX It would be useful for teachers to know how to demonstrate making study plans etc. for students, in addition to knowing how and when to intervene in more serious situations

* + - * 1. PB will start a conversation with the Teaching Center about these ideas, and report back.
    1. Collaborations
       1. AD met with Chris from Mind Matters, and found them to be largely on the same page about mental health issues at Yale, with the provisos that (a) they are (naturally) focused on the undergraduate experience and perspective, and (b) approach the issues very much as a student interest group rather than an organisation interested in seeking to implement broader structural changes within the university. They are potentially more interested in conversation than collaboration.
       2. WX noted that there is also a psychiatry interest group at the med school, associated with NAMI, the National Alliance on Mental Illness. Among their other activities, they also run screening sessions on depression (e.g. symptoms, things to look out for in others, etc.)
    2. Retreat
       1. PB outlined the idea of holding a ‘Mental Health Retreat’ as a way to bring together interested parties, build the conversation, brainstorm about issues and potential solutions and so on.
          1. Bringing all of the interested parties together with university administrators could be difficult; bringing just the student groups together would be more feasible
          2. WX noted that the psychiatry residency program has a lot of this type of events – e.g. a mindfulness and meditation group, a cycling group, and so forth. PB and AD agreed that this retreat idea will function less as a support group or outreach opportunity for individuals who are struggling with mental health issues of their own, and more as an opportunity to discuss the structural and cultural problems contributing to or exacerbating poor mental health at Yale, and to continue to work towards finding possible solutions.
    3. Committee issues
       1. PB wishes to examine the structure of the Member Advisory Committee: e.g. is Dr Siggins (Chief of Mental Health and Counselling) a regular member, or does she just attend a number of meetings per year where mental health is a topic of discussion?
          1. PB feels that a more regular standing committee including Dr Siggins would be helpful.
       2. A meeting with PB, Dr Siggins and Ernest Baskin (representing the GPSS) has been scheduled to discuss recommendations from the GSA/GPSS Mental Health Report) has been scheduled.
          1. PB: Ideally this would then progress to standing meetings; and from there to a regularised committee.
       3. AD noted that the YCC report made three recommendations as to possible ways that a Mental Health Committee might operate: (a) a committee of interested students; (b) the formation of a new Yale College committee [which in the YCC iteration would not have included representatives interested in the graduate student body]; (c) the expansion of an existing committee, such as Safety Net. Of these three, AD opined that option (b) held the most promise, if expanded to include grad students as part of its purview.
          1. PB agreed that neither a committee of students nor the expansion of Safety Net would be the most productive, as neither would have a mandate to enact change.
          2. PB was of the opinion that a meeting between select representatives and MH&C would get a lot done; and that there are MH&C-specific issues that are not adequately addressed in the current Member Advisory Committee meetings.
  1. Tax advice – Chad Marion
     1. Deep Dive report
        1. CM noted the general agreement from the General Assembly that taxes are difficult, and that there are conflicting responses regarding how helpful the OISS model (or indeed the OISS) is for international students
     2. Subsequent developments
        1. CM reports that a number of further comments and queries have subsequently been emailed to him, including one from a representative, some of whose constituents were not aware that they had to pay taxes
           1. This suggests that, in addition to promoting tax assistance, we/the university may also want to promote awareness about general tax issues (e.g. the fact that a stipend counts as taxable income) in order to educate the general student body.
           2. This might be addressed during orientation, and/or via an all-student email sent out every January
     3. Future plans
        1. CM has been made aware of several potential contacts:
           1. Steve Blum – a CPA-trained financial adviser who is actively involved with STAY (Students and Alumni of Yale) and AYA (Association of Yale Alumni); he already provides free financial planning events for graduate students and thus may be interested in expanding to cover taxation topics
           2. The Dixwell-Yale Community Center

Comment from the floor that this organisation has a primary focus on youth services for local residences, especially via education programs (i.e. may not be the organisation for us)

* + - * 1. Three local CPAs, referred by the Yale legal office
      1. CM has yet to contact these people; some preliminary questions need to be answered first
         1. How many CPAs might be needed at an advising session?

MK: probably only one, depending on student response

* + - * 1. What kind of event should we hold?

WX Suggests that a general tutorial on general taxation issues (including some of the most common situations and the most common exceptions – i.e. a basic ‘how to file your taxes’) could be hosted by a grad student; then a follow-up session with a CPA might cover more complex issues.

WX suggested that there may be a student in one of the professional schools who could be interested in running a preliminary session; MK observed that students might be more likely to take the advice of a genuine CPA even when dealing with general queries.

Suggestion: When advertising the GSA CPA event, provide a link to the IRS website which provides a basic outline of various tax situations in layperson’s terms

* + - * 1. MK: How can we reach people who don’t know that they need help?

PB suggested that reaching out to the general student body during orientation would be helpful; likewise, basic information could be included in The Compass

MK suggested that we start with the proposed ask-a-CPA event, see how it goes, and formulate further plans from there.

* + - * 1. When might such an event be held?

MK suggested January, when people are thinking about their tax situation

CM noted that often people won’t be thinking about their taxes *that* early, and then all of a sudden it will be April…

* + - * 1. What should such an event be called?

Something general like ‘Tax Advice Session’ in order to minimise confusion (e.g. among students unaware of what a CPA is or does)

MK suggested turning over something basic like that to the GSA publicity committee, who could then be responsible for formulating a catchy slogan, making up fliers etc.

* + - * 1. General planning

CM will contact Steve Blum and report on further progress.

MK noted that it is not too early to start setting something up for early next semester.

CM proposed that we run a general session first, and attempt to deal with more complex issues at a later date. MK imagined that a suitable format might include a basic overview with questions permitted throughout, followed by a more intensive Q&A session at the end (similar to a housing event MK attended)

Room reservation: This can be managed through the reservation app online, or by contacting Sandra Foley in the GSAS Reception and Information Office

MK queried if we should provide snacks at the event. CM pointed out that coffee would be an effective lubricant for conversation! (As well as attracting participants)

1. **G&P Housing Committee update (Wendy Xiao)**
   1. Housing Advisory Committee
      1. This committee includes representatives from the GSA and GPSS as well as a number of other student representatives, George Longyear from the Graduate Housing Office, George Zdru (Director of the YSM Capital Program), the Vice President for Student Life, and others
      2. WX has attended two meetings so far. Topics of discussion include:
         1. Increasing the supply of available housing in New Haven
            1. Several new privately-owned apartment buildings are planned for development downtown
            2. Discussion about potentially building apartments on campus for students (NB this would include expanding the definition of student housing beyond typical dorm-type buildings)
         2. How to standardise the behaviour of landlords
            1. Discussion about potentially developing/utilising something like a ‘Yale Seal of Approval’ to reward/encourage good landlords
            2. Gathering information about the less reliable landlords and building managers around town
         3. How to improve the Yale Housing Office website
            1. The housing committee was formerly unaware with problems associated with the website; they will work on this since change can easily be implemented from their end
   2. Graduate Housing Fair
      1. WX is planning this event, to take place early in the Spring
   3. General issues
      1. WX notes that the Housing Committee is handling the major issues, which may give F&H less to do in this area. They meet regularly, and are working on gathering information, discussing ideas and plans for implementation etc.
      2. MK enquired if the housing committee will submit a report at some point? (She noted that the HGS renovations committee has been put on hold until after the housing committee makes its recommendations). WX was not sure, but will keep the F&H committee informed.
2. **Concerns/ideas from the floor** 
   1. There being no additional business, the meeting adjourned.

Meeting adjourned 8:02 pm