Facilities and Healthcare Committee Meeting 12th February, 2014

Present: Michelle Kriner, Paul Baranay, Angharad Davis, Kristin Graves, Elizabeth Lang, Chad Marion, Michael Parker, Wendy Xiao.

Apologies: Tim Altenhof

Meeting opened 8:35pm

1. Agenda
   1. Tax Advice Event
      1. MK asked if CM and AD had been in contact with Ask-An-Accountant attendees to request feedback get; CM and AD are working on it.
      2. MP asked if the information distributed at the event had been helpful. CM said that the informal feedback he has received has generally been positive, although more graduate student-specific examples would be helpful. MP noted that this kind of example might be easier to obtain if the panellists get student custom following on from the event. CM responded that this issue (what topics would it be useful to cover) is also covered in the questionnaire.
      3. MP said that he was glad that so many people attended the event; MK agreed, and stated that it demonstrates the need for such events.
      4. MK talked to the Steering Committee about the potential idea of a tax session run by students; for legal reasons, this is not advised. Steering advised instead that perhaps a group of students could meet with the tax professionals in advance, to discuss the most useful topics for discussion. (It is possible that we would be able to pay for the experts’ time for this session.)
      5. MK asked if it would be possible to run a second tax advice session during tax season if the panellists can be paid. CM is speaking to Charles (the accountant on the panel) and will bring this question up.
      6. MK asked about the state tax issue referenced in the General Assembly meeting (one representative’s constituent felt that the issue of state taxes was brushed over). CM noted that attendees at both sessions asked about state taxes, and that Charles and Ann Kulhman (OISS) both spoke to this issue. MK suggested that state taxes could usefully be addressed as a central topic in the US session. MP agreed that federal taxes are generally easier to manage; EL acknowledged the difficulty of assessing what kind of resident you are from year to year.
      7. Vote of thanks to CM and AD for organising the Tax Advice Event.
   2. Healthcare survey
      1. MK gathered feedback about the Dental and Vision Care segment for the planned survey.
         1. The planned questions are not extensive: they largely cover basics such as whether respondents are enrolled (and if not, why not), and how satisfied they are. Information about current levels of knowledge of the two tiers of dentists will be collected. Similar questions are asked regarding the vision plan (e.g. would students be willing to pay more if glasses and contact lenses were covered in the same year)
         2. MP suggested that Yale health insurance emails should incorporate clear and specific information about the programs, e.g. a link to the specifics of eye and dental coverage (cost, benefits etc)
      2. AD gathered feedback about the Mental Health and Childcare segments for the planned survey
         1. AD forwarded her draft questions to the committee in advance, and requests more detailed responses and suggestions by return email.
         2. MP was concerned about the potential for the survey to be too long, and enquired if there is information available about students’ failure-to-complete rates.
            1. KG suggested that the committee time how long it takes for them to complete the survey.
            2. MP suggested that we separate the surveys that do contain responses to the parenting questions from those that do not. PB noted that this could be built into the survey instead.
            3. PB noted that the GSA general survey last year had a completion rate of 88%, with a mode completion time of 12 minutes. He believes that the FHC survey would get similar results, as it will be forwarded to students at a ‘neutral’ time of year.
         3. WX suggested including a question gauging opinions of the Yale Health pharmacy.
         4. MK hasn’t yet examined the extant survey data on these issues as gathered by last year’s GSA survey. It may not be necessary to ask all questions again; however, a number of factors have changed since that earlier survey (e.g. the publication of the mental health report, the expansion of the dental plan etc.) which may make some repetition of topics useful.
            1. PB reported that on the GSA’s 2013 whole-year survey, the health questions included topics such as the usage of the dental plan and suggestions for improvements, the usage of Yale Mental Health and suggestions of ways in which Yale could better support students’ mental health. PB will forward the relevant data gathered by the survey to the committee.
   3. Payne Whitney Gymnasium
      1. MK noted that MP found out from the McDougal Athletic Fellows that currently there is no regular meeting between the gymnasium management and the graduate students. This is something that we would like to facilitate. MK and MP plan to speak to the McDougal fellows and the GPSS prior to approaching the gym with this suggestion, with a view to discussing current student dissatisfactions with the gym, as well as the proposal about extended operating hours.
      2. MP attended a GPSS meeting at which the GPSS president suggested that change is forthcoming with regard to the operation of the gym. The lack of transparency is surprising (especially between GPSS and GSA); MP will see if further information is forthcoming and report back.
   4. Housing
      1. WX requested feedback on the poster she has designed for the housing fair. Is it readable, and is the direct comparison of information useful?
         1. MP observed that it looks similar in layout to the poster boards found at science forms, which are usually substantially larger than WX’s planned poster size. He enquired if it would be possible or useful to create one large poster instead of several small ones. WX was uncertain about the cost/benefit of this, as well as the difficulties entailed by having numerous people gathering around a single poster.
         2. MP enquired if it would be possible to project the poster design, rather than creating a single large poster. WX thought this sounded feasible if she had assistance to arrange it.
      2. WX reported that planning continues relatively smoothly for the housing fair, including for the refreshments. She requested some assistance from the committee; MK will attend for some of the time.
      3. MK enquired if WX had any notes to share from the meeting between the university housing committee and New Haven Towers which WX was prevented from attending.
         1. WX noted that it is problematic that NHT appears to prefer to believe that a select group of students are making trouble, rather than giving credence to the 50+ independent reports that have been submitted to the committee.
         2. However, WX noted that the property manager of NHT did seem amenable to some of the alterations/improvements as suggested by the housing committee.
         3. Additional problems include the imposition of a transfer fee to move between apartments within the same building, and subleasing issues. The latter particularly affect students who wish to sublease to the end of their rental agreement in order to avoid breaking the contract as they graduate and leave New Haven.
      4. EL enquired if there were any further reports about Pike International’s interactions with the university housing committee. WX reported that while some Pike residents have not yet received the notice about the changes to the maintenance process, other residents have reported that they have seen movement on their work requests, which is encouraging.
      5. WX reported that the HGS renovation will not commence until the Broadway apartments are complete; the end date for which project will be decided on at the next corporation committee.
         1. MP was concerned that students would be left in the lurch in the meantime, since they will require additional time to find a place to live when necessary.
         2. WX will convey the concerns of students and the response of the housing committee as possible.
         3. PB noted that there is an additional issue which the housing committee needs to be aware of, namely that Swing Space is being bought by the Law School, which would further reduce the availability of university housing. EL noted that HGS already has a waiting list of students wishing for university accommodation, and that the current plan to halve the housing available in HGS will do nothing to rectify this.
   5. Childcare
      1. MK reported that the Steering Committee would like to gather information about graduate student parents and the childcare issues they face. Part of this will be covered by the FHC survey, but MK will also contact the whole FHC to enquire if someone would like to take this on as a project. Responsibilities would include gathering information and running an environmental scan to compare the situation at Yale with those of other comparable institutions.
      2. WX believed that a daycare centre was formerly planned for inclusion on Science Hill, but that this fell through. The original plan was that community members not affiliated with Yale would pay a subsidy to use the facility; the City Aldermen wished for Yale to subsidise community members’ children as well as those of Yale affiliates. WX suggested that this situation would be something for a project point person to bear in mind.
         1. MP asked if the issue of childcare is something that GESO would be interested in or could potentially have a voice in (he noted that the current Chair of GESO is an Alderman himself)
   6. Ask A Lawyer
      1. Faustin was looking for a new point person to take on the Ask A Lawyer series; however, the position may already have been accepted by someone, and so is left for now.
   7. Student Coverage Task Force
      1. MK reported that a new representative is needed for the Student Coverage Task Force, a Yale Health policy advisory committee that incorporates both undergraduate and graduate student representatives.
         1. WX and KG are both potentially interested.
         2. There is one more meeting this semester; schedule permitting, KG will attend this. WX will attend if KG is unavailable.
   8. Library report
      1. MK drew attention to Lauren Tilton’s proposal about library hours (incorporating an environmental scan comparing Yale’s library hours to comparable universities, most of which have 24/7 library access.)
      2. LT requests feedback about summer library hours.
         1. EL noted that this is a pertinent question, since during the summer months, Sterling closes at 4:45pm on weekdays and 2:45pm on weekends.
         2. CM enquired if the environmental scan in the report includes summer hours at other universities; MK replied that it did not.
         3. MK enquired if the Yale library system uses reduced summer hours during other university breaks; the committee indicated that it does.
         4. MK will check the opening hours of the med school library. EL pointed out that the med school and law school libraries are open at different hours than other university libraries, but that they also usually have more money and generally are run separately to the main university library system.
      3. MK will forward the library report to the committee and request feedback.
2. Concerns/ideas from the floor
   1. There being no further concerns from the floor, the meeting was adjourned.

Meeting Adjourned 9:16pm