Facilities and Healthcare Committee Meeting 9th April, 2014

Present: Michelle Kriner, Paul Baranay, Angharad Davis, Kristin Graves, Michael Parker  
  
Apologies: Elizabeth Lang  
  
Meeting opened 8:55pm

1. **Project Updates**
   1. Healthcare and Mental Health
      1. PB solicited committee members to attend meetings that he is unable to make it to.
         1. Yale Health Member Advisory Committee, Friday 11th April 8:30am – KG will attend
         2. Yale Health Mental Health & Counseling video planning meeting, Thursday 10th April 5:30pm – PB or AD will attend
      2. MK emailed Katie Kelly to enquire about the Student Coverage Taskforce meeting and has not heard back; she is somewhat concerned that the meeting has in fact already taken place and they neglected to inform us
      3. PB is in the process of scheduling another meeting with Dr Genecin, and in addition to this is in touch with the undergrads while they discuss Dr Genecin’s recent communication with them
         1. Dr Genecin sent an email to the undergraduate students, outlining initiatives to improve the dialogue between students and MH&C (e.g. listening sessions, the creation of the video with student input).
         2. PB noted that the graduate student body was conspicuously absent from this email and from the invitation for further dialogue.
         3. MP asked if Yale Health/MH&C has commented on the articles critical of various aspects of Yale Health/MH&C treatment of students that have recently been published? (In particular, the recent open letter in the Huffington Post that outlined a student’s experiences of being forced to gain weight and attend counselling after being identified with a low BMI)
            1. KG noted that one of her constituents has also been harassed on the basis of her BMI; MP and AD noted that they also have acquaintances who have experienced similar issues: students have been threatened with forced medical leave if they don’t comply with required counselling, weigh-ins etc
            2. PB noted that Dr Genecin pointed out that the Hippocratic Oath prevents the physicians at Yale Health from commenting on such articles
            3. MP observed that this is part of a serious broader issue, namely, how is Yale Health going to address the bad word of mouth publicity that they are receiving as a result of articles like this and those published in the Yale Daily News?
   2. Health Survey
      1. MK reported on the current status of the Facilities and Healthcare survey: at this point, around 15 people had indicated that they were interested in being contacted to provide further information about their experiences at Yale MH&C
      2. MP asked how many survey responses there had been so far; MK responded that there were about 350 responses, which is around 2% of the students who were sent the survey. MP noted that 15 out of 350 responses is quite a high percentage.
      3. MK observed that we are obtaining lots of good information from the survey, but that we will go through it at a later date after the survey has closed and we have all available materials.
   3. Housing
      1. MK has the link for the new landlord-rating website operated by the Housing Office, and will send this to the GSA members for distribution to their constituents.
         1. She noted that at present, one can only rate individual properties rather than landlords, and that one can only review currently listed properties. This seems to limit the potential effectiveness of the website as a tool for students.
         2. MP observed that landlords may be responsible for several properties (making reviewing landlords specifically a useful service to offer), and moreover that the relative helpfulness of a landlord ought to be recognised.
      2. MK, per Wendy Xiao, brought up a number of issues that perhaps should be discussion points at the next university housing meeting.
         1. The new buildings that are currently being constructed downtown are likely to be out of the student price range (e.g. around $1500/month for a 1 bedroom apartment). They will have a low-income accessibility program, but students won’t qualify for this. Query how the provision of this type of building will help with the housing shortage; one suggestion is to have Yale guarantee residency in some apartments for 5 years if the price is lowered.
            1. KG noted that, given New Haven’s high rental occupancy rate, it doesn’t make business sense for companies to offer a deal like this. MP agreed, but thought it might be worthwhile suggesting anyway.
         2. It appears that HGS will remain open for a few years, with the living space there to be renovated eventually. However, once it closes for refurbishment, it will never operate as a dormitory again.
            1. MP noted that the biggest issue with the HGS renovation was not giving the students currently living there sufficient notice about the need to move, but if the building will still be open to students next year then that problem is circumvented.
            2. Further questions about the renovation plans include: Will the dining hall be sustainable without a live-in student body; will the building still be a centre of student life (since all that will be left is offices, which doesn’t promote much congregation).
         3. The Yale-owned Elm apartments are currently open to post-docs as well as students; one suggestion that has been made is that they could perhaps be rezoned as graduate student housing only.
            1. MP noted the difficulties that are cause by the inconsistent ways that postdocs are treated, being seemingly randomly grouped with either the graduate students or with the faculty.
         4. MK queried what the best way of getting housing information to new students is: e.g. via the university housing website, the GSA Compass, the GSA facebook group and so forth. She suggested that this would be a suitable topic of discussion for the housing committee, in addition to fixing the housing rating system (as discussed above).
            1. KG asked if there was a way to collate information about properties that are amenable to residents having pets. MK noted that pets are not allowed in Yale-owned housing. The Housing website offers variable search parameters, so this could be a good way of finding suitable accommodation. MP suggested that subletting allowed/not allowed should be another permitted search parameter.
   4. Next Year
      1. MK pointed out that we need to start planning for next year, as there are only 2 meetings left for the 2013-14 GSA! In particular, we need to work out which issues are important to move forward with in the next year.
      2. MK will not be returning to the GSA next year, so the committee will need to nominate a new chair.
         1. In addition to this, someone will need to take over dental and eye care as a project: this involves monitoring the email account, meeting with the administrators who negotiate with the insurance companies, etc. The next meeting is scheduled for April 29; ideally, the new representative should be in attendance.
         2. MP suggested that this be raised as a priority issue during the next FHC update given to the GSA general assembly.
         3. MP enquired what kind of dental/vision plan data the healthcare survey is turning up. MK replied that the information is going to be very helpful; the most striking thing about the dental plan responses so far is that 50% of people who elect not to buy into the plan make this choice because the plan has insufficient coverage to make it worthwhile. This has become les of an issue with the eye plan; people who are interested in minimal optical service have other options available to them (e.g. online spectacles services etc).
            1. MP noted that the lack of contact lens exams available on the plan are an ongoing issue. MK pointed out that in fact the vision plan doesn’t offer any eye exams; you can get a basic eye exam at Yale, but there have been complaints about how thorough and accurate it is.
            2. MK noted that the survey will provide statistics useful when renegotiating the dental and eye plans.
2. **2 Concerns/Ideas from the Floor**
   1. Payne Whitney Gymnasium
      1. MP asked if there is a GPSS contact who works with the PWG. Based on a comment made at a GPSS meeting, there seems to be some possibility that we (GSA) are not being included in communications/negotiations.
      2. MK observed that we rather dropped the ball on this issue this year; normally the FHC chair would meet with the gym.
      3. MK suggested asking the author of the gym hours report how the communications between the student body and the gym usually operate.

Meeting adjourned 9:22pm