

Student Life University Senate Committee

Fall 2024- Spring 2025

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Summary of Student Life Committee Discussions

The Student Life Committee's primary goal is to engage with the campus administration to address student life, focusing on housing, athletics, safe spaces, and student engagement in campus activities.

Executive Summary

Our committee was able to be that engagement for the university senate by ensuring we understood how the Student Affairs area dealt with the horrible floods that closed residential buildings and the impact on athletics changes to students now being given large sums of money for playing sports at the Division 1 level.

I have led an initiative with others in ensuring that the students continue to have safe spaces to have positive discord on the issues that may be emotionally charged across the world. We all come from different backgrounds and perspectives. By putting a process in place to have these conversations we are a better community.

Student Affairs launched a Pulse survey that asks students how they are feeling. Based on the response it could ask a couple of additional questions. These allow the student affairs group to reach out to those in need to ensure they are supported.

As well as listening to the unique challenges and changes that are happening in the commuter student community, the undergraduate student government and the Dean of Students are looking for more engagement with this population.

For next year, the students suggested creating events that are "screen free". These events would ask students to keep their phone in an alternative location to increase social interaction. I am working on the healthy screen use initiative with a team of

faculty and I will the make connections between student life and this committee.

Overall the year has been informative and we feel that the committee has been able to unique position itself as a governance body for the VP of Students and Dean of Students

The issue has been attendance in the committee. We continue to lack the university faculty representation that would be desired by the administration. In addition Dean Rick would like to have more faculty engagement at events.

Housing

The committee has been actively involved in discussions regarding student housing, particularly following the floods that created a housing crisis. The immediate response involved finding alternative housing for students. Longer-term plans include the construction of new facilities like the Tabler and P3 building complex and exploring housing options for graduate, undergraduate, and faculty members. The committee acknowledged the complexities of expanding student housing due to SUNY system considerations. They also discussed the need to prepare for future challenges, as the campus infrastructure has limitations in handling significant rainfall.

Impact: These discussions and actions demonstrate a proactive approach to addressing student housing needs, both in crisis and for long-term growth. The plans for new housing and exploration of various options aim to improve the quality of student life by ensuring adequate and suitable living accommodations.

Athletics

A significant portion of the meetings was dedicated to the intersection of athletics and student life. Discussions with Athletic Director Shawn Heilbron centered on the implications of the NCAA ruling that allows athletes to be paid. The committee addressed the financial impact of the House lawsuit settlement, which will result in a loss of \$330,000 per year for Stony Brook Athletics. This ruling is transforming college athletics, raising concerns about funding, support, and the balance between academics and social life for student-athletes.

Impact: The changing landscape of NCAA regulations poses both opportunities and challenges for Stony Brook Athletics. The committee's discussions highlight the need to adapt to these changes, ensure financial stability, and maintain the integral role of athletics in the student experience. There's an emphasis on increasing campus community engagement to support athletics.

Page 2

Safe Spaces and Civil Discourse

The Student Life Committee has been instrumental in launching programs aimed at creating safe spaces for students to communicate about internal and external issues. These sessions provide a platform for productive discussions between students and faculty, fostering a better understanding of the student experience and its impact on student life. The committee also discussed the "Humane Discourse Workshops," designed to improve communication skills among students. These workshops focus on meaningful listening, community building, and constructive engagement. There is an ongoing effort to integrate these workshops into the curriculum and orientation programs.

Impact: By promoting safe spaces and civil discourse, the committee is addressing the need for open communication and constructive dialogue on campus. This initiative aims to equip students with essential skills for navigating complex conversations and fostering a more inclusive and understanding campus community.

Commuter Students

The committee also focused on the needs of commuter students, who represent a significant portion (50%) of the student population. Discussions included the Commuter Assistant Program, mentorship programs, and the role of the Commuter Student Association (CSA). The committee explored ways to improve commuter services, including creating dedicated spaces and addressing the challenge of reaching commuter students who may not come to campus regularly.

Impact: Recognizing and addressing the unique needs of commuter students is crucial for ensuring their engagement and success. The committee's focus on enhancing commuter services and support programs demonstrates a commitment to serving the diverse student population.

Overall Impact and Recommendations

The Student Life Committee plays a vital advisory role, working to improve various facets of student life at the university. The committee's discussions and initiatives have the potential to significantly impact the quality of the student experience, from housing and athletics to fostering a supportive and communicative campus environment.

Key recommendations from the meetings include:

- Continuing to advocate for and develop adequate housing solutions for all students.
- Adapting to the evolving landscape of college athletics to ensure the program's success and the well-being of student-athletes.
- Expanding programs that promote safe spaces, civil discourse, and effective communication skills.
- Enhancing services and support for commuter students to foster their engagement and sense of belonging.
- Enhancing the events that would encourage more social interaction among students.

By addressing these areas, the Student Life Committee contributes to the overall mission of creating a thriving and supportive university community.