

Minutes

Oakland University Student Congress
McGuinness/Caver Administration
Legislative Body Meeting Agenda
Oakland Room, Oakland Center
Monday, November 21, 2005
4:00 P.M.

- I. Call to Order**
4:01 P.M.
- II. Roll Call**
Absent: Jillian Key, George Nahas
Quorum: Met
- III. Approval of Minutes from November 14, 2005**
Mersol-Barg: I asked why your campaign slogan was appropriate but I also asked if it was appropriate.
Approved w/ proper changes
- IV. Confirmation of New Legislator**
a. Danielle Fallis
Vitale: Motion to table until Kristina Butler is present.
Seconded and Approved
- V. Student of the Month Parking Spot Drawing**
a. Jenna Dunson
Porter: I would like to amend the agenda to remove Bre Kopson.
McGuinness: Point of inquiry, at what point in the agenda would you like that to appear in the agenda.
Porter: Before guest speakers
Approved
Porter: Ms. Kopson has missed three office hours, and 3 meetings, and I believe she has removed herself from the university.
Mersol-Barg: Have you tried to contact this person?
Porter: I have sent emails, and I've made phone calls.
Mersol-Barg: Are you sure that she has removed herself from the university?
Porter: No, but aside from that she has missed 3 meetings and 3 office hours.
Kopson: Removed
- VI. Guest Speakers**
a. Vice President for Student Affairs Dr. Mary Beth Snyder and Director of Financial Aid Cindy Hermsen
Snyder: I asked Ms. Caver if Ms. Hermsen and I can come and speak on the changes in the financial aid department, and keep an annual opening of communication. We are undergoing some changes over the break, and also the \$570,000. We know that there are still problems, and the semester hasn't run as smooth as we would have like it, but next semester we will be new.

Hermson: What we call the Financial Aid Office is composed of two offices, one is the business office and the financial aid. The business office will relocate and everyone else in the office will fall under financial aid. We will answer the phones, there will be renovations, so that students will have a private space to meet with advisors. We will have a new telephone system, and it will allow us to cue calls. If there is someone calling in, students will be able to tell whether they are the first, second, third etc, on line. We will have that running before the break, on December 7th and 8th. We will be providing you with much better service than in the past.

Vitale: Are you staffed enough, or are you understaffed?

Hermson: We are going up to 22 financial aid staff in the financial aid office. We think that's the appropriate number, and that number will grow as the enrollment increases.

Cumming-Stuckman: Is there an update with email along with the phone systems?

Hermson: Email has been a challenge for us. We receive 3-4 thousand emails per month and we haven't been able to manage that service at all. With the additional staff we will be maintaining that system. The email is not secure, and we don't give personal information over the emails.

Feys: There is an email in front of me where a student has not had their financial aid processed yet. How are students suppose to deal with that, because this represents a number of students on campus. What are they suppose to do?

Hermson: There are students that apply late, some at the beginning of the school year. During that time we were behind on our paper work by about 5 weeks. They are now processing within the receipt of 5 days or so. They are caught up 5 days or so. We do send out emails. If they apply in Jan, Feb, March, April, the process would be much better.

Feys: I don't understand why the students are suffering from the back problem. Why should students have to pay late fees because of a back up on file?

Hermson: When the aid pays, those late fees are eliminated. We make awards based on the received application. The student cannot receive the awards until they provide the supporting information they have on that application. Keep in mind that we can't pay until we receive that paper work the paper work, and about 75% of the awards will be changed after the correct paper work is received.

M. Miller: There have been recent concerns with students at this time in the semester with financial aid changes, particularly work study; is that a financial aid issue, or a government issue, or are you aware of what I'm talking about?

Hermson: Financial Aid can change at anytime during the semester. A lot of this is regulated by law, so we have no choice in reducing the aid. We spend a lot of time making adjustments because of outside awards.

M. Miller: There are several students who have talked to members of this body about their work study, if we can get those accounts on paper will you be the person to come to?

Hermson: Yes, definitely please let me know.

Evans: Everyone on staffing doesn't know the policies in the office. There is a lack of consistency, and this slows up the process. It's a daunting experience for a student to come in the office and be talked down to as they should know everything already. Nobody wants to go into the financial aid office.

Hermson: I take these concerns personal, as does others on the staff. With the changes, the staff can provide you with the correct information, and we want to make the process as easy for you as possible. We will get there in January.....**I promise.**

Vitale: What is the current time frame for packets to be processed, and under the new system what would be the new timeframe. I think there should be a website with a list of frequently asked questions.

Hermson: We receive packets from FAFSA once a week. When you get into asking students for paperwork, that's when we are slowed down. When I first got here, the processing time was 10 weeks, now we have it down to five. Under the changes we are hoping to get the processing time down to about 1 week.

Vitale: Over the summer most students commute, is there going to be better services on answering phones and messages, and will students be able to fax.

Hermson: We encourage students not to fax, because there is no reliability.

Viatale: When is the deadline for the financial aid packet?

Hermson: March 15; with the new staff there is a financial aid Q & A but it's lengthy so the new staff will be looking at the site to make sure it better servicing students. They will also be working on Sail.

K. Miller: Thank you for your help during Employee Appreciation Week, we've had a lot of students with concerns of the importance and/or relevance of documents; are they required by the federal government or by you?

Hermson: The federal government, example, names and ages of siblings.

McGuinness: OUSC passed a resolution concerning financial aid. In recent weeks, a student was removed by the police and to the Dean of Students office, and is that true, and/or did you authorize that.

Hermson: I am not aware of that incident, but there was an instance where a student punch the wall and broke something off the wall. The Deans of Students Office was called, but not OUPD.

McGuinness: Is that a practice in your office?

Hermson: If a person feels threatened yes.

Snyder: Yes all offices have the right to notify OUPD is they feel threatened because it is has happened before although it is rare.

Waquad: Is there a letter sent to the students to notify them of change when it is made?

Hermson: They receive a letter anytime changes are made.

Waquad: Is there any change on customer service in the office?

Hermson: That will be reformed in January.

Porter: Even with the 10 additional people, do you really feel that the new services will be adequate?

Hermson: There is always concern, but yes we do feel they are adequate.

Allen: As a suggestion, maybe a setup in the Oakland Center.

Hermson: We did that before and students didn't really seem interested, so we are working with the other groups on campus to have workshops and labs to feel out the application electronically. With the tuition and fees rolling, some students will pay more, and some will pay less. We are looking out for our financial aid students, and we are taking the \$570,000 and awarding it to the financial aid students.

Cummings-Stuckman: How will we know that we got different financial aid package?

Hermson: Students will be notified by letter and/or email.

Cummings-Stuckman: Is that going to say non-dispersible?

Hermson: It will be dispersible, but sometimes there are adjustments with registration and then it will be dispersed. If there are ways to make it easier for you, we want to hear from you.

VII. Comments form the Gallery

Mark Ewing: When Mr. Vitale asked the question about deadline, he received a totally different answer than I received a few months ago. The information about some things are not readily accessible. We are a very internet ready generation.

VIII. New Business

a. C.B. 06-09 (Voting Reform Commission Bill) [Joshua Miller]

M. Miller: I think it should be amended that the administrative assistant be put in as an ex-officio member, and that there should also be put into the guidelines that the members of the commission shouldn't be allowed to run in the elections.

Mersol-Barg: I have a problem that the commission is nominated by the student body president, and I don't see a reason why an E-Board member should have voting power when they don't have voting power over this body.

McGuinness: The Executive Board members represent students on various committees and commissions. As president my role is to carry out a variety of functions including appointing students to represent. If there was a problem with me carrying out my duties as student body president, that discussion was settled when I was elected; if there is dissatisfaction with me carrying out my roles as student body president then there should be conversation on my removal or impeachment as student body president.

McCullough: Because we are on the E-Board, this doesn't mean that we voted for this current administration.

Waquad: Since I sat in on that validation's committee meeting; I along with others who sat in on the process, I would think know what changes need to be made.

Mersol-Barg: There are a number of implications made. In saying that I still don't believe that (still don't believe, look above)

Point pf personal privilege Caver, J. Miller takes the gavel

Porter: Point of Information: The President does hold right to be an ex-officio member of a committee.

Rotarius: I want to make it clear that this commission will not oversee the elections. We have three members to give the outside influence.

Stevens: Although, I don't agree with almost anything politically with Mr. McGuinness, I think that he is very well capable of nominating just members for this commission. I think this could make less controversy, and allow these elections run smoothly.

Bill: Approved

Mersol-Barg: (Vote w/Rights) I don't think that Micheal will be biased, but that others after him would be biased.

b. C.R. 06-09 (Legislative Roundtable Resolution) [Aaron Kochenderfer]

J. Miller: Why is this being forwarded to Dr. Snyder?

Kochenderfer: The administration should know as well.

Approved

c. C.R. 06-10 (Student Employee Appreciation Week Resolution) [Josh Rotarius]

Waquad: I would suggest that there be an amendment to Zeta Sigma Chi Multicultural Sorority, Inc. please.

Rotarius: Motion to amend the resolution to say "Zeta Sigma Chi Multicultural Sorority, Inc."

Approved

(Main Motion)

K. Miller: I would suggest that we put Fall, because there will be a Winter one too.

McGuinness: I know that there were some concerns about what is going on as far as the budget?

Panchenko: I support the Bill.

Putansu: Call to question.

Approved

IX. Discussion Topics

a. Discussion Topic of the Week: Financial Aid

Redmond: Article in the POST! "Changes need to be made in the Financial Aid Office."

Feys: Students aren't happy because they want to know when they can have their money dispersed and be able to register.

J. Miller: As soon a financial aid came out of my mouth, I heard "incompetent fools" and other things of that nature.

McGuinness: Legislative body should get kudos on the resolution, and this is the biggest concern that I have. Mr. Ewing has once spoken on a sit-in in the financial aid office. I cultivate further dialogue.

M. Miller: Clearly among the student body there is dissatisfaction concerning the financial aid office. Something else that I've noticed is that Oakland often tries to compare themselves to other universities.

Cumming Stuckman: If you took note she said that Financial Aid is Accountable as an office, and she also promised to be more efficient.

(Point of Personal Privilege: Alicia Feys, Adam Panchenko)

Vitale: An overwhelming majority was not satisfied with financial aid.

Putansu: This has been a discussion topic more than twice, we all agree that financial aid sucks. I'd like to motion to close this discussion.

Closed

b. Selection of next Discussion Topic of the Week

K. Miller: State of Student Employment on Oakland University's Campus

(1)

Putansu: Nothing (6)

K. Miller: The State of Smoking on Campus and the Health of Non-Smokers on Campus(3)

K. Miller: Security (2)

c. Transgender Inclusion on Campus

K. Miller: The Conference opened my eyes to a lot of things, and we need to make transgender students feel more comfortable on this campus. I was thinking that we should have Transgender friendly restrooms, and transgender floors in the residence halls.

M. Miller: We need to tell people what transgender means or what it is.

Mersol-Barg: The population is small; it doesn't seem necessary.

Hardenburgh: Not only do we have students that are transgender we have friends, family, so to say that we don't need it, is blind, because it is uncomfortable.

Porter: I think that it's one of those topics that need to be looked into more to find out exactly what we need.

Cummings-Stuckman: We should make sure that the transgender students are comfortable with it. Some of them may not want to be singles out.

K. Miller: The cool thing is everyone would be included, not just transgender students.

Stevens: Will it be one toilet, or an entire restroom, and I don't see a problem with it. I think that if we can make students feel comfortable, we should build resolutions.

Putansu: Maybe we should just take signs down and just put "RESTROOM."

Cumming-Stuckman: In doing this we need to think about male predators who would maybe be using these restrooms that are open to everyone.

Mersol-Barg: I don't know if there are any guidelines the university has for bathrooms.

Rotarius: I would like to yield to Mark Ewing.

Ewing: I would use both (Restrooms & Housing) I don't think it matters how many transgender students we have on campus, we have a responsibility. There is a such of thing as transgender, and there's not always just male and female. There should be gender identity in the non-discrimination policy.

K. Miller: I think it would be hot if someone drafted a resolution on what Mark just talked about.

d. Additional discussion topics related to Guest Speakers, Comments from the Gallery & submitted statements of Student Concern

K. Miller: 2 Statements of student concern, one statement was concerning smoking and how students can't go from class to class without being forced to walk through a cloud of smoke.

McGuinness: Recommend that we table this and the second statement of student concern until next week.

(Peter Vitale present and voting)

Mersol-Barg: I am a bartender in a smoking section, and I am in support of this smoking thing. It can get nerve wrecking.

M. Miller: Please remove the ashtrays from in front of the door.

Redmond: Motion to table until next week

Approved

K. Miller: Someone's car was hit, and OUPD's cameras couldn't pick up anything and she was angry.

Putansu: Motion to adjourn the meeting.

Meeting adjourned @ 6:20 P.M.

X. Reports

- a. Michael McGuinness- Student Body President
- b. Kori Caver- Student Body Vice President
- c. Brendan J. Stevens- Financial Affairs Director
- d. Lindsay McCullough- Student Activities Funding Board Chair
- e. Madalyn Miller- Student Program Board Chair
- f. Katie Miller- Student Services Director
- g. Saman Waquad-Legislative and Multicultural Affairs Director
- h. Krupa Ujla- Public Relations Agent

XI. Updates

- a. Montrell Porter, Disciplinary Chair
- b. Kristina Butler, research and Review Chair
- c. Allison Cummings-Stuckman, Scholarship Chair
- d. Joshua Miller, Steering Committee Chair

XII. Comments from the Gallery

XIII. Announcements

- a. **There is an opening on the Research and Review Committee. Interested legislators should contact research and review Chair, Kristina Butler.**
- b. **Student Employee Appreciation Week is this week! Show your support!**
- c. **Sunday at 6 PM there is a men's basketball game. Admission is free for students!**
- d. **Native American Awareness Celebration: Native Americans and the Environment. Wed. 11:30-1PM in the Fireside Lounge. There will be beading, refreshments, and a speaker.**
- e. **Anyone interested in participating in a focus group on Nov. 30 that will decide the topics of a leadership series next semester, please contact Sam at hardenbu@oakland.edu or x2024.**
- f. **Have a great Thanksgiving holiday!**

XIV. Adjournment