Meeting with Student Representatives


Absent: Stephen Bowen, Victoria Murphy, Wayne Newell and Charles O’Leary.

Trustee Wishcamper called the meeting to order and welcomed the Student Representatives. The Student Representatives introduced themselves.

Campus Updates

Nathan Grant, Graduate Student Representative, USM
- Several of the student representatives will be attending the Chancellor’s State of the University speech on March 30th.
- USM has recently organized a Graduate Student Government and this group is talking to the graduate students about the possibility of a Graduate Student fee to support the scholarly and academic pursuits of the students.

Katie Foster, UM
- UM launched the tobacco free campus campaign in January. The first year will be voluntary and the campus is offering support to those students who want to quit smoking.
- UM Student Government is seeking a new Director of External Affairs and this position will coordinate advertising campaign on the social networking site. A new website will be launched soon.
- UM Business School had a trip planned to Japan which will likely be cancelled.
- The Honors College took a trip to Washington DC and met with Senator Snow.
- Student Government helped to sponsor 8 alternative spring break trips.

Anastasia Alexis, USM
- Undergraduate Student Government officers’ elections are underway online.
- There is strong support among the students for Tab 19 – Renovation to Bailey Hall, USM.

Zole Hawthorn, UMA
- The Student Government Association succeeded in a referendum to increase the student activity fee.
Student Government is very excited about the Leadership Conference on March 19. Members from the Maine National Guard will be giving workshops on leadership.

- Raised the issue of adding the student ID number on the student cards.
  - Rosa Redonnett stated she will pursue this issue by talking to the CFO’s.

**Brianne Hughes, Graduate Student Representative, UM**

- The Graduate Student Government is working on balancing its budget and election of officers will be underway soon. Several Executive Committee positions will be vacant due to students graduating.

**Summer Meredith, UMM**

- She announced that this meeting will be her last meeting as the UMM Student Representative.
- UMM women’s basketball team won their conference division.

**FINANCIAL AID & STUDENT SUCCESS DISCUSSION**

Trustee Wishcamper asked for the Student Representatives’ input on the following: “Is the UMS doing all that it should to keep track of students and provide what is needed for students to be successful.” He also inquired if students are aware of the resources that are available to them and do they access them.

**Anastasia Alexis, USM**

- Student success is greatly impacted by how much a student has to work while a full-time student, particularly if the student does not receive enough financial aid.
- The financial aid process is confusing.
- Other funding options need to be discussed with the students.

**Nathan Grant, Graduate Student Representative, USM**

- His experience has been that the graduate students who receive graduate assistantships have greater success.

Trustee Johnson inquired if there is any financial counseling available either in a group setting or in individual sessions.

**Bernice Michaud, UMFK**

- UMFK has group counseling available but the sessions do not get into specific details. Financial aid is also based on whether the student is living on campus or off campus.

Rosa Redonnett commented that financial counseling and the adequacy of financial aid is a big issue and that it is an issue outlined in the findings in the Noel-Levitz report. Some students know to ask; however, if the student doesn’t ask the campuses need to have mechanism to seek them out.

Trustee Wishcamper asked if there is an interception mechanism for those students who do not return to university due to a lack of financial aid.
President Cynthia Huggins, UMM
- UMM offers increased campus based financial aid after the students’ 2nd year which, in UMM’s experience, is a critical time.
- When students leave the university it’s hard to get to them to inquire why they left. The campus does try to interview them; however there are other reasons in addition to financial that students leave university.
- UMM has two full-time financial aid officers and through the Strategic Investment Fund the campus has requested funding to increase the staff in that department.
- UMM tries to encourage students to take a leave of absence instead of quitting all together.

Katie Foster, UM
- She inquired if for those students who have to take a semester off there was a process for the campus to reach out to them to encourage their return to the university.
- At UM students can have a tutor for only one class per semester and there are no tutors for 300 level classes.

President Selma Botman, USM
- Student Success Officers do reach out to students; however many times there is no opportunity for an exit interview.
- Financial aid is not the only reason students leave. Research shows the inability to pass the Math requirements tends to be a major factor.
- USM has developed some funding as a safety net for student aid.

President Allyson Handley, UMA
- The faculty play an important role in student retention because they have relationships established with their students.

President Wilson Hess, UMFK
- There are policy issues around the gap between aid award and family responsibility. Many students need to find employment to bridge that gap. State and Federal grant funding is becoming increasingly more important to assist covering the gap.

Brianne Hughes, Graduate Student Representative from UM
- As a preventive measure, she suggested a freshman or sophomore seminar series with financial advisors.

Zole Hawthorn, UMA
- He agrees that the faculty have a significant role but being ready for university is a personnel issue and the students need to feel comfortable enough to ask for help.

Anastasia Alexis, USM
- Student Success Centers and the One Stop Center are great resources and a positive experience for students and will likely impact retention.
Trustee Wishcamper commented that one of the goals for the UMS is to increase graduation and retention rates. One way to succeed is to institutionalize the best practices which have a student focus and create staff accountability.

Rosa Redonnett commented that there are ways the Trustees can help. There is a piece of legislation to increase literacy work within K-12 and the UMS should show support. The federal government is talking about massive changes in student financial aid and the UMS should be advocating to maximizing Pell Grants and other sources of funding for students. Also, advocating at the state level with the Legislature for the Maine State Scholarship and Maine State Grant would be beneficial.

Trustee Wishcamper asked the student representatives how much anxiety there is about employment after graduation and how are campuses helping the students with future employment.

Katie Foster, UM
- There is a lot of anxiety but there is also a lot of opportunity for the student through the Career Center, career fairs, and faculty assisting students.
- Because many of the departments have relationships with businesses, jobs become known many departments are posting them.

Brianna Hughes, Graduate Student Representative, UM
- There are also degree related grants available for graduate students.

Nathan Grant, Graduate Student Representative, USM
- For a student with an Associate’s Degree or a Bachelor’s Degree finding “a job” is not difficult. The challenge is finding a job related to your educational background and many time there are no opportunities.
- The Advancing Maine initiative could help.

Bernice Michaud, UMFK
- There are not a lot of jobs in northern Maine so after graduation the students have to move out of the area in order to find employment.

Trustee Wishcamper asked when students are choosing a major, do they consider employment opportunities and should the universities play a greater role in the students’ decisions.

Summer Meredith, UMM
- She feels most students realize that they will need to leave the area in order to find employment but the campuses could coordinate information on local job opportunities and options and be sure the students are aware of the information.
- She commented that she is in the Marine Biology field and there is no work in Maine for her after she receives her bachelors’ degree. Many of the jobs in that field in Maine require a PhD; therefore, she will be moving to the west coast.

Anastasia Alexis, USM
- The campuses can always improve relationships with local businesses by encouraging internships and linking students with employers.
Zole Hawthorn, UMA

- Students focus on following their dream. They focus on getting a degree first and deal with finding a job after they graduate.
- It is important to have career counseling services available for the students.

Trustee Goodman commented that the more competitive the UMS is the more competitive the students will be at graduation.

Trustee Wishcamper thanked the student representatives for their input and thoughtful discussion.

Adjournment,

Ellen Doughty for
J. Kelley Wiltbank, Clerk