

COWBOY PARENTS COUNCIL

Meeting Minutes

February 18, 2011

The Cowboy Parents Council held its spring meeting on Friday, February 18, 2011, beginning at 2:00 p.m. in the Faculty/Staff Lounge (Room 301) of the College of Business on the UW campus. Brad Irion, Chair, presided. Those present included Council members – Becky Adair, Trish Arthur, Sara Axelson (*ex officio*), Robert Balzan, Karen Blaker, J.B. Chapman, Joe Gulino, Maryalice Gulino, Dan Herlihey, Vickie Herlihey, Patricia Horton, Brad Irion, and Carlene Irion; Staff – John Nutter; and Guests – Tammy Aagard, Jo Chytka, David Cozzens, Pat Moran, Megan Hanneman, and Don Richards.

Welcome: Brad convened the meeting and welcomed all members and guests and asked each to introduce himself/herself. Prior to the meeting Council members enjoyed a tour of the new College of Business building led by Associate Dean Penne Ainsworth.

Vice President's Update: Sara expressed appreciation for the time and efforts contributed by Cowboy Parents Council members and noted the unique value they bring to the University.

She introduced Megan Hanneman, Assistant Controller. Megan noted she has responsibility for the offices of Accounts Receivable, Cashier, and Student Financial Operations. She interacts with parents primarily on matters relating to payment of tuition and fees and other University charges. She views communication as the key to resolving issues. She is seeking to incorporate technology into as many processes as possible to create efficiencies, but still wants to keep the human aspect of communication. She welcomes outside perspectives on how operations under her purview could be improved. Sara indicated that Megan now joins the Enrollment Managers meetings to help make better connections with various Student Affairs offices. Megan's contact information will be shared with Council members via email.

Sara discussed UW's enrollment statistics. At the end of fall semester, UW has 13,806 students, which is the largest number ever. By the end of the spring semester, she expects that enrollment will again exceed 13,000 students. She said 60% of campus students have enrolled in an on-line course. UW is working to establish articulation agreements with out-of-state colleges in nearby states. She said recent analysis shows that student retention rates from fall to spring are higher than last year at this time and fewer students were placed on academic probation than at the end of last fall.

The federal College Access Challenge Grant is being implemented by Becky Vinzant. College preparation advisors have been hired and are working in three Wyoming high schools. Another advisor is working with Wyoming's seven community colleges. The grant is also funding the use of MAP-Works retention software programs at several colleges in Wyoming. The grant has also provided for the hiring of a student veterans services coordinator.

The Division of Student Affairs has had some personnel changes in leadership roles. A national search has begun to replace Robbie Darnall, Executive Director of Alumni Affairs. A search is underway for the Executive Director of Residence Life, Dining and the Wyoming Union. Eric Webb is serving as the Interim Director. Tammy Aagard is the Interim Director of Student Financial Aid while also continuing to serve as University Registrar. Keith Evashevski has agreed to serve as Interim Director of the University Counseling Center.

A public-private partnership is being considered for development to construct new student apartments to replace the Summit View apartments. The new facilities will have apartments consisting of four bedrooms, rented individually, connected to a common living and kitchen area. A formal development agreement will likely be presented to the Trustees for approval in May. Once this project is underway, UW has plans to modernize White Hall and then consider renovations to Crane and Hill Halls.

UW has enhanced its efforts to provide education and safety around sexual assault prevention and response. A position reporting to the Dean of Students has been created to advise and counsel victims of assault, and a new hotline has been put in place, 766-STOP. Peer mentoring programs are being developed.

Academic Advising: Jo Chytka explained that the Center for Advising and Career Services, which she directs, advises undeclared students who are primarily freshmen and sophomores. The colleges have different models for advising; for instance, the College of Business has professional advisers in a central advising office. Education and Health Sciences have a similar model. Other colleges have decentralized faculty advising. Advising is mandatory for all undergraduate students. Each student needs to be involved his/her advising process. Freshman advising is becoming more difficult as more and more freshmen enter UW with prior college credits, face complicated curriculum requirements, and need to maintain scholarship eligibility when challenged with a variety of criteria required by different scholarship programs.

Jo's office sponsors a group called Advising Conversations which is a monthly meeting of academic advisors from across the University. She provided copies of a checklist that is used to structure the advising process. Students should get to know their advisors well. If a student wishes to change advisors, the student can request and be assigned a different advisor. Most students visit their advisor during Advising Week. Unfortunately this busy week only allows for a meeting of approximately one half hour each. Students are encouraged to schedule other meetings with their advisors. There are also on-line tools available to help guide students in creating an appropriate course schedule.

Tammy Aagard, University Registrar and Interim Director of Financial Aid, discussed the on-line degree analysis program available to all students. It can be used to check a student's progress toward earning a degree. The ability to check one's degree status was first introduced in 2000. In 2006, UW switched from a locally written program to one developed by UW's current software vendor—Banner. The Banner program provides extensive information. To answer the question of "What courses do I still need to take to graduate?" the Registrar's office has developed a program that became available for the 2010 fall semester. It does not tell a student when to take a course, so a visit with an advisor is still recommended.

The Office of the Registrar is also working on a software program to allow students to enter their transfer courses to learn what courses may be transferred to UW and what UW requirements they will help the student meet. It will be accessible through a public website that can be used by anyone, including Wyoming community college advisors.

Jo reported that UW is surveying advising effectiveness. Sara observed that there is so much information for an adviser to master; therefore, the student must also take responsibility—"claim his/her education." Tammy reported that the Office of the Registrar is also working to develop electronic checklists for students to use for various processes. Jo announced that a "What If?" software tool is available to students who are considering a change of academic major. It allows them to learn how courses already completed will be used to meet the requirements of a new major.

Council members then discussed individual experiences. They noted that the changes will be helpful to future students. Sara noted that a UW committee is looking at changes to the University Studies Program (USP), which will hopefully result in simplification of the general education requirements for all students. Dan asked how Cowboy Parents can help publicize these tools and what should parents ask of their students. Sara replied that through emails and the *Wyoming Family* newsletter, we hope to inform parents of these resources. Jo pointed out that UW is developing a virtual orientation program that will include a parent portion. Parents will be able to continually access this information.

Legislative Update: Don Richards, Director of Governmental and Community Affairs, discussed the work of the State Legislature, which is in its sixth week of an eight-week session. Wyoming is in a strong fiscal condition. Both houses have passed a supplemental budget bill, and each has addressed UW's requests.

Several changes to the Hathaway Scholarship program have been discussed, and UW is commenting when appropriate. UW has also been monitoring other issues such as carbon sequestration (UW has the largest experimental program in the U.S.) and natural gas-fired engines (UW wants to use such engines in its shuttle buses).

Each Student A Person Award: Having reviewed nominations for this award prior to the meeting, Council members selected a recipient from among the nominees.

Council Member Recruitment: Following a brief discussion, it was decided to hold the summer Council meeting on Thursday, June 3. Joe and Maryalice offered to host a barbeque at their home following one of the Council meetings.

The Council discussed ways to recruit new members to the Council. It was suggested that the interest cards be reviewed. A phone call explaining the nomination process should be made to anyone indicating an interest on a card. Council members expressed a willingness to make the calls. People expressing an interest in being involved with Cowboy Parents should be contacted within two weeks of our receiving their card. Ways to involve them in activities and projects need to be identified. It is important to involve them while their interest is high. Perhaps a checklist of potential activities and projects could be developed for volunteers. Becky and Rob volunteered to assist.

Budget: Council members reviewed the budget report prepared by Janicca. They asked for a more detailed report on the Student Emergency Fund, including information of the situations for which it was used and the payback arrangements, if any. They acknowledged their annual contribution to the Fund and their donation of \$2500 to start the endowment for the Fund. In order to more fully understand the financial status of the organization, they requested an income/expense report and a balance sheet. They discussed the possibility of setting a minimum amount in the budget in reserve for emergencies. A new budget will be presented for adoption at the fall meeting.

It was suggested that refreshments at meetings be reduced as a means of tightening the budget. Also members expressed the feeling that recognitions of fellow Council members should come from their members' own funds, not the Cowboy Parents budget.

Fundraising: The Council members discussed the silent auction. They noted that \$2,000 was raised in 2010 and that amount was matched by the President. They recognized the great work of Jolene Freeburn and Trenda Weisshaar on the auction and asked that a note of thanks be sent to each of them. They have provided excellent documentation on how to conduct the auction. Dan and Vickie volunteered to coordinate the 2011 auction if others would accept assignments, especially with creating displays. Carlene volunteered to help with displays. It was suggested that each item be assigned to a member to solicit and prepare a display. It was recommended that items be secured from around Wyoming, so that Laramie donors are not overwhelmed. Since the auction only lasts one and a half hours, it is good to keep it to 20-25 items, and maintain the quality of the items. Baskets or products and gift certificates that can be used by students are popular.

Parents' Calendar: There was unanimous support for the parents' calendar concept represented by the sample calendar from the University of Wisconsin. Council members suggested submitting student photos. Becky recommended taking tips from the book, "Happiest Kid on Campus." She has the book and would like to help with the project. The academic-year calendars could be easily sold at New Student Orientation, Move In, and Family Weekend. An ad could be placed in the Orientation booklet prepared by Student Media.

Summit Parent Session: It suggested that a parent be available in each residence hall during Move In to offer suggestions and encouragement to parents while students are completing paperwork in the halls. Another suggestion was to hold a Friday morning session for parents—before noon—because some parent stay overnight on Thursday and head home the next day. Another suggestion was a session for parents after the President’s reception, when the students are participating in activities on Fraternity Mall.

Conclusion: In wrapping up the meeting, Council members were invited to a social event at Altitude Chophouse that evening, to assist with Discovery Day Saturday morning in the Union Ballroom, and to greet parents of prospective students at Washakie for lunch on Saturday.

Adjournment: With no further business to conduct, the meeting concluded at 5:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John Nutter