

Student Faculty Policy Committee Annual Report 2013-2014

The Student Faculty Policy Committee of the ASU Academic Senate worked on two major issues during the academic year 2013-2014: Alcohol Prevention and Education and Student Debt. Two sub-committees were formed to research these issues and make recommendations. Gregory Bernstein, Manuel Barrera, Stefania Tracogna and Katalin Kolossa composed the Alcohol Prevention sub-committee; the Student Debt sub-committee was lead by Len Gordon. The committee started to examine alcohol related issues because of the events that happened at the beginning of the academic year that resulted in injury to students, and unfortunately others occurred as we continued to work on these issues (such as the recent tragic death of an undergraduate student). The SFPC collaborated with the Ad-Hoc Committee on Intimate Partner Violence and university response to the Tau Kappa Epsilon's offensive Martin Luther King, Jr's "party." Early in our discussions, we focused on social media and stalking and worked the student government from the Tempe campus. Finally, the committee examined the Lab Safety Committee's report and the RCA report on retention of research data.

Alcohol Prevention and Education Recommendations

Far too often student alcohol use results in adverse consequences that range from the tragic deaths that grab headlines to the sadly common academic and legal problems that threaten students' classroom success and career opportunities. The Student-Faculty Policy Committee reviewed existing ASU policies concerned with alcohol use. That review stimulated our interest in learning about existing ASU resources devoted to the remediation and prevention of student problem drinking. The Committee is grateful for an invited presentation by Associate Dean of Students, Ron Hicks, who enriched our understanding of the prevalence of student alcohol problems and actions the Dean of Students' office takes to engage students who commit policy infractions. In addition, Associate Professor Pam Sterling of the Herberger Institute's Film, Dance and Theatre area informed us of original drama creations that she and her students perform at freshman orientation sessions. The program named "Dis-Orientation" contains dramatic depictions of common challenges that confront freshmen such as situations involving drugs and alcohol.

The Committee focused on the policies and resources that can be accessed by the ASU community on the web.

Policies

The most extensive description of alcohol policies is contained in the Student Services Manual [<http://www.asu.edu/aad/manuals/ssm/ssm106-03.html>]. ASU's policy document includes topics such as relevant state law, possession of alcohol in campus housing, alcohol use at university-sponsored events, dangers of alcohol misuse, and treatment resources. The Board of Regents' Student Code of Conduct also has content pertaining to alcohol use.

It appears that the Student Services Manual section on alcohol was last revised on January 19, 2011. Some minor updating is needed. It also is interesting to note that when the Committee began its work in the fall, it was difficult to find the relevant alcohol policy documents. Now, ASU alcohol policies can be found with a simple Google search that includes the words "asu drug alcohol policy." We are not certain what caused this improvement.

Resources

Educational materials on drugs and alcohol, self-assessment instruments, and information on treatment resources are provided on the ASU Educational Outreach and Student Services website [<https://eoss.asu.edu/wellness/drugs>]. The content of the website is excellent and is grounded in evidence-based assessment and intervention principles. For example, the alcohol self-assessment tool integrates assessment of alcohol consumption with assessments of factors (e.g., perceived alcohol use norms, costs of alcohol misuse, advantages of responsible use, readiness to change) that could encourage students to modify their drinking on their own or to seek assistance. There is much to like about this well-crafted resource page.

Initially, finding these resources by navigating ASU's webpages required substantial knowledge and intuition. It is not obvious that alcohol resources could be found under "Educational Outreach and Student Services," then under "Student Services," and finally under "Wellness." We believe that few students would recognize the menu item labeled "Wellness" as containing drug and alcohol resources. Fortunately, it is now possible to reach ASU's alcohol resources by a Google search containing the words "asu alcohol resources."

Recommendations.

Alcohol policy information in the Student Services Manual should be reviewed for possible updates.

On-going monitoring is required to determine that alcohol policies, treatment programs, and prevention services can be found readily by common web-search engines.

We understand that ASU Wellness Services is considering ways to expand evidence-based prevention programs on the ASU campuses. Other universities across the

country have formalized alcohol prevention programs that reach in-coming freshman students and sometimes their parents. We support efforts to establish programs for the prevention of alcohol misuse and encourage the allocation of human and financial resources to facilitate the implementation of effective prevention programs at ASU. Alcohol abuse should be addressed during Freshman orientation and be a mandatory topic in Freshmen Seminars. Both the health-related as well as the legal consequences of underage alcohol use should be stressed. ASU should require incoming freshmen to take an online course such as Alcohol-Wise (found at <https://eoss.asu.edu/wellness/alcoholwise>). Completion of this course could be counted as part of the grade in the Freshmen Seminar. "Peer education" should be implemented through the creation of programs where students educate their peers in residence halls about the consequences of alcohol abuse.

Student Debt

The Faculty Student Policy Committee sub-committee on student debt, led by Len Gordon (Emeritus College) examined the growing concern with student debt. The committee gathered information from sources noted by Duane Roen respecting the ASU site information on student tuition, differential costs for some programs and student loan information. In terms of trends, the information on "Tuition and Fees Schedules" was valuable. Attending open forums with President Michael Crow provided more information. That was added to significantly in the SFPC meeting of February 26th with Melissa/Mizzy Pizzo, ASU Executive Director of Financial Aid and Scholarship Services, to talk about student debt. Prior to that meeting, Ms. Pizzo was asked to discuss with our committee the following student debt matters for discussion:

- A review of the trend in tuition increases at ASU
- A breakdown of differential tuition rates both in terms of undergraduate and graduate tuition rates
- A breakdown of differential tuition and fees for different undergraduate and graduate degrees
- A review of how ASU's tuition and student debt levels compare with other public research universities now and over time
- A discussion of how student debt levels are being addressed and can be more effectively addressed by students and the university

We took into account that ASU on a comparative basis provides undergraduate and graduate students with relatively more support, less cost and less debt than most public universities. In that context we noted the overall university trend, including

at ASU, is to result in significantly more debt for many students than was the case for most of our and the country's university experience. Although above average in respect to lower student debt, at ASU about 60 percent of seniors graduate with an average of close to \$23,000 in student loans which need to be paid back with interest. The average amount owed by ASU graduate students upon graduation is close to \$50,000. These figures are much higher than at prestigious private universities like Harvard, Yale, Princeton and Stanford as they have large alumni endowments of billions of dollars not yet available to ASU or to most public universities.

As a much higher proportion of college students go to public universities than to smaller private universities, this constitutes a major challenge for ASU as for other public universities. ASU is making a major contribution in addressing university costs for students with lower family annual incomes of \$60,000 or less. After the family covers any Expected Family Contribution, EFC, the ASU Advantage Program covers tuition, room and board and supplies with work-study and grant aid. This important aid program leaves many middle class students with family annual incomes of over \$60,000 with substantial student debt. A reflection of the high student debt concern is evident in a February Gallup poll which found that 94 percent of Americans believe it important to have a degree beyond high school but only 23 percent of respondents said higher education is affordable to everyone who needs it.

After the February 26th SFPC discussion, a number of policy considerations arose. These included:

- Orienting students toward the services available to them given that most will be engaged in securing student loans. This could include related topics such as the differential tuition and fee costs of different majors, part time work available on and off campus, counseling on how to budget and not over use credit cards and related practical means of helping to manage student debt to preclude unnecessary stress, which has an effect on successful student graduation outcomes.
- Having the university leverage its economic influence in the community to explore the leveraging of banks who administer student loans on keeping down interest rates to cover costs primarily rather than large profits, noting that over time this will accrue to the benefit of the banks from graduating productive students.
- Related to the above, exploring how students in needed majors – like elementary education and social work, advocacy and work in the non-profit sector– but who secure lower professional income once graduated, can pay back student loans on a longer, but no more costly, basis.

Overall, the concern with student debt – based on ASU’s and all university costs – will be a long term continuing one. It will need to be monitored and policy effectiveness reviewed on a regular basis.

Respectfully submitted by

Student Faculty Policy Committee members
C. Alejandra Elenes, Chair 2013-2014