

Office of the Vice President for Student Services
Sam Houston State University
Mr. Frank Parker

Vice President for Student Services Information Exchange Luncheon
with Dr. James Gaertner, Mr. Frank Holmes, and Mr. Mark Adams
Wednesday, October 21, 2009
Lowman Student Center, Room 304

Discussion Notes:

Students were asked to share their experiences at SHSU, explain why they chose SHSU, and discuss those things about the University that they would change or improve.

Reasons why students came to SHSU:

- A transfer student from northern Idaho contacted SHSU and SFA by telephone. In comparison, the personnel at SHSU treated the student much better than those at SFA. Overall, the SHSU staff members were more friendly and helpful. The student also appreciated the chance to establish residency based on her husband's status, so her tuition expenses are considerably lower at SHSU than at SFA. The student's initial interest in SFA was based on the large number of online undergraduate courses available.
- A student from Buffalo, Texas frequently utilized the SHSU library while in high school for research and to study. Many of the high school teachers in Buffalo are from SHSU and encourage students to go to Sam Houston State. It was easy to transition from a small city to a small campus. People were very nice, and the student viewed campus as a safe environment.
- A student who visited SHSU her freshman year in high school at a UIL competition explained she fell in love with SHSU and knew since then she wanted to attend Sam Houston State. SHSU personnel were welcoming during application process. The University is far enough from home, but close enough to be able to go home to Houston.
- One student explained she is close to home at SHSU but not too far for her parents to visit. She is from a small town, and Huntsville is very welcoming, which prevented her from feeling home sick as a freshman.
- A doctoral student in the Counseling program selected SHSU over A&M, although he lives in Bryan. The Counseling faculty advised the student the pass rate on the Licensed Professional Counselor certification exam is 98 percent at SHSU. This fact convinced the student to choose SHSU. Also, Admissions answered all of his questions, and the faculty made sure to alert him to any missing paperwork to prevent delays.
- In comparing the environments of SHSU and Texas State University-San Marcos upon visiting the campus, one student expressed his decision to attend SHSU was based on a

sense that he could see himself going to class at SHSU and spending time on this campus. He did not have the same comfort with the TSU-SM environment.

- A student from Huntsville indicated the opinion of most of her high school classmates was to leave Huntsville for college. She enrolled at SHSU according to the wishes of her parents, with whom she lives. In addition to financial reasons, her parent's choice was to keep her close for now. She has aspired to be an accountant since a young age, and she is able to pursue the degree while working at a local pharmacy.
- A student explained she advised a high school coach that she wanted a degree in Criminal Justice, specifically Forensic Science. The coach asked her if she had looked into SHSU, but the student had not. Once she located the CJ website and then visited the campus, she was convinced that SHSU was the best choice. She fits in here, and SHSU is her home away from home.

Changes students would make at SHSU:

- It may not be possible, but if the buildings could be connected with covered walkways to shield students from the rain, it would be nice to avoid sitting in a cold classroom soaked with rain.
- Three intramural fields are not sufficient to meet the needs of the students. The soccer program takes a large block of the available time on the fields.
- Smoking areas should be identified as designated smoking zones away from buildings, or the current policy of no smoking 25 feet from building entrances should be enforced. Certain locations attract smokers and make it difficult, if not impossible, for students to avoid smoke in order to enter a building from a primary entrance. Other campuses post signs stating no smoking on campus.
- Students should have more attractions on campus or in the community. It would be great to have a small jazz-style café on campus. Students would like more alternatives to leaving Huntsville and would enjoy skating, bowling and laser tag facilities.
- SHSU needs to build stronger alumni-student relationships. For instance, there are many CJ alumni in Huntsville who could serve as mentors.
- The absence of the shuttle to The Woodlands has created a burden. Some students enrolled at SHSU with the understanding the shuttle service would be available.
- A student who needed a computer science tutor was not able to find one in the SAM Center. There was limited help in the Department of Computer Science, but the student would prefer for the SAM Center to offer the help. Dr. Hebert will meet with Dr. Cooper to discuss options and level of need.
- The level of difficulty of a chemistry class, which required 9 hours of preparation per week, made it difficult to handle remaining classes in schedule.

- Non-traditional student expressed disappointment with required online classes because he must work with other students who procrastinate and create a burden for him.
- Many consider core classes to be of low difficulty, while upper level classes were more difficult, yet worth the work.
- History textbook changes but history does not. SHSU has the best Department of History. Professors are willing to sit down with students. Anyone having trouble should go to the professor.

Questions from Students:

- Is there anything being done about the limited number of art classes available each semester for art majors? Student would like to see the department grow and get more professors. Dr. Hebert advised faculty positions were open due to the high standards of the University in hiring. Four people have been hired, and Dr. Hebert expects students to see improvement. This is definitely a priority.
- Professors assign homework leaving the students with the impression the professor is not aware the student has other classes. Is there a policy that can limit the number of hours of assigned homework? Dr. Hebert advised faculty are expected to assign more than students think they can handle to teach them how to prioritize and juggle assignments.
- Textbook bundles are unfair to students. Is there financial aid for textbooks? Students recommend using alternatives to campus bookstore.
- Can the University upgrade the standard student account software programs for things like CS4? Mark Adams indicated the Computer Services staff works with faculty each semester to verify and update needed software.
- Can someone develop an iPhone application for mobile Bearkats? It could be a slimmed-down mobile version of the SHSU homepage.

VPSS Luncheon Follow-up Questionnaire Results

A total of 23 students attended the luncheon, and 21 responded to the anonymous questionnaire. The group was comprised of freshman, sophomore, junior, senior and graduate students who participate in social and academic organizations on campus.

Scale

- 1 – Completely Agree
- 2 – Somewhat Agree
- 3 – Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 4 – Somewhat Disagree
- 5 – Completely Disagree

Statements

A. *My questions and concerns were addressed OR I was provided information to follow up with an appropriate faculty/staff member or department to resolve an issue.*

Response: Completely Agree – 12
Somewhat Agree – 8
Somewhat Disagree – 1

B. *The topics discussed at the luncheon were relevant to me and/or my student organization.*

Response: Completely Agree – 14
Somewhat Agree – 4
Neither Agree nor Disagree – 2
Somewhat Disagree – 1

C. *I was able to share my opinions openly and thoroughly with students and the administrator(s) at the luncheon.*

Response: Completely Agree – 18
Somewhat Agree – 2
Completely Disagree – 1

D. *I believe the opportunity to meet Sam Houston State University administrators is a benefit to students.*

Response: Completely Agree – 17
Somewhat Agree – 2
Neither Agree nor Disagree – 1
Completely Disagree – 1

E. *I would attend another student/administrator luncheon.*

Response: Completely Agree – 18
Somewhat Agree – 2
Completely Disagree – 1

Guest Comments: *Students were asked to complete the following sentences and offer any additional comments. In general, the student comments are typed below as they were written.*

AT THIS LUNCHEON, I LEARNED

...that the admin are very open-minded and approachable. This is a great deal of comfort to know that if I ever have to go to them on a one-on-one basis, I can.

...the administrators are very cool and open to everybody. They make me feel that I am on their level.

...the faculty administration care more about students than I knew and although I do not believe all our opinions will be taken and used but it is good for them to see us.

...how several other students have the same concerns as myself and the administrators let us know the inner workings to how those concerns could get resolved.

...different opinions about the pros and cons of Sam Houston State University and what it has to offer.

...how this campus is so full of many diversity problems. I also learned that the leaders are not bad and they are approachable.

...other students' perspective of Sam Houston, and their opinions. Also, it was good to meet the administrators, and actually get to talk face to face with them.

...a lot about different student attitudes.

...that the staff is actually concerned about making a better college experience for students.

...that faculty have thought about our problems before and are more than willing to talk and listen to our concerns.

...other student opinions.

...that administrators are open and concerned about what students think.

...that students are interested and concerned about problems and also things that are going good.

...that the administration does value my (student's) opinion.

...that the university has a hold on a lot of the issues that we have.

TO IMPROVE THIS PROGRAM, I WOULD

...make it more known. Most students do not hear about the luncheons. The more point of views, the better.

...have some of the students to be more open and not so quiet.

...have the open question first then lunch.

...have more time to talk or have a follow-up luncheon with the same people to further discuss the topics. Making this a set group of representatives that attend these luncheons would be something I would join. Can the marching band have a paved leveled surface to practice on because when it rains, we cannot use it. Thanks.

...everything about the program was great!

...maybe prepare the students by telling them to have some questions ready.

...offer more of these opportunities. It was a really good experience for me. I felt more involved with the campus by doing this too.

...program was great as is.

...more talking during lunch instead of just after lunch.

...start on time or provide more time for students to ask questions.

...maybe meet with the freshman after their first year to see what they have experienced, and with the seniors before they graduate. Or just meet with different groups such as student org or commuters.

...serve better food, have the administrators intermingle with students. Not sit up front.

...have the administration mingle with the students and not sit at the head of the table. It makes it more personable.

...may have a separate luncheon for older (grad) students. Our issues are different from undergrads. Undergrads have a different perspective on education than an older adult returning to school.