

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

Vice President for Student Services Luncheon
with Dr. James Gaertner, Dr. Heather Crowson and Dr. Richard Eglsaer
Wednesday, October 15, 2008
Lowman Student Center, Room 307

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.

- A student explained her choice to attend SHSU was based in part on the distance of the campus from her home in Dallas, Texas. She did not want to be too close to or too far from her parents. Also, she perceives the closeness of Houston in proximity to Huntsville should aid her in landing a post-graduation job in Mass Communications.
- A student who transferred from a community college was looking for a medium-sized school and chose SHSU. She explained the Wesley Foundation has become like a family to her, and she really likes it at SHSU.
- What drew one student from Panama was the music percussion faculty at SHSU. The size of SHSU was also appealing because he receives individual attention from faculty. Available scholarships played a big role in his choice, as well.
- Another student, who selected SHSU for its education program, emphasized the top quality of SHSU education graduates over graduates from other universities.
- An individual who enrolled at SHSU to obtain ROTC experience and a Criminal Justice degree, changed majors to history along the way. He enjoys the History Department and has benefitted from having a large number of courses that are military-oriented.
- An international student discovered SHSU when studying in his home country, Switzerland. He came to SHSU as an exchange student then transferred the following semester. He explained the faculty members at SHSU who are from international locales are very important to international students, and they paved the way for him.
- In terms of changes to the University, students would like to see all faculty members using Blackboard, which would allow students to be more involved in their class status.

- Students expressed concern with the school spirit shown on campus. They would like to have seen more efforts to raise spirit, even in the rain, at Homecoming, although the kick-off held in the mall area was a good start. Other suggestions included 1) holding more Friday events to try to limit the number of students who leave campus for the weekend, 2) supporting basketball and other sports, and 3) scheduling residence halls to attend certain campus programs and games. A student who commutes from Bryan/College Station explained she would not make the commute solely for a spirit or athletic event.
- For students interested in attending law school after graduation, there is not a procedure or faculty contact available to assist students in the application process. According to the student, the advisors in the SAM Center do not have the expertise needed, and each of the faculty members who were recommended to him as references were only able to offer general ideas and no specific plan.
- A student experienced transfer credit problems and met with a SAM Center advisor to seek help. The student's subsequent visits to the advising center resulted in her meeting with a different advisor each time. This created a problem in continuity and clearing up the transfer issues. She was under the impression she was to meet with the person listed on her transcript, but that person was not available each time she dropped by. She was encouraged to call and make an appointment with the advisor of her choice to resolve this issue.
- Students were concerned with the limited availability of certain required classes. For instance, in Mass Communications MCM130 has one teacher and is very difficult to get into. The students expressed their desire to have more professors teaching the class. Others were concerned that although a few classes have acceptable substitutes, some SAM Center advisors are not aware and instruct students to wait until the primary course opens up. ART180 was given as an example of this situation. Some students are aware ART233 is an approved alternative, but others were told ART180 was the only option.
- A student explained a problem she experienced as a result of not having her current grades in one class posted on Blackboard. She was under the impression her professor was giving her a B, but she received a C. She has friend, who had similar grades in the same class throughout the semester, but her friend received a D. After the friend meet with the professor, the D was changed to a B, but her C remained unchanged. She was advised to follow the student grievance policy and do not delay.
- Students required to register for classes in alphabetical order by last name were prevented from getting certain courses because they filled up early. Another student was frustrated with last minute changes to professors assigned to teach classes because the student frequently chooses classes based upon these assignments. Students were advised software changes are underway to eventually eliminate the alphabetical registration process, and last minute changes in course

- assignments are unavoidable. SHSU does not certify these changes will not occur, as unexpected illness, retirements, etc. cannot be avoided. Students were also reminded of the value of learning to adapt quickly and with as little stress as possible to the unexpected changes experienced over a lifetime of formal and practical education.
- Students shared their thoughts on the things that SHSU is doing well. One shared his opinion that the music faculty is top quality. Another praised the College of Business' Accounting department.
 - For a student who experienced difficulties in the past, his one-on-one time with professors helped him a great deal. In his opinion, this time with professors is available because SHSU is smaller than many other universities, and the faculty are understanding of student issues.
 - An international student recognized the Office of International Programs saying it is, "very, very good." Specifically, he appreciates the one-on-one problem resolution provided by the staff. He also recognized the Criminal Justice program faculty.
 - A student employed in the Lowman Student Center shared the benefits of working on campus. She has learned about SHSU and campus events in the course of her job. Also she understands how things operate because she has established relationships with the different people and departments that support the University.

Upon the departure of the program host and administrative guests, two students shared additional comments:

- An international student questioned the need to pass a test to be exempted from a foreign language credit, because the test covers his native language. He hoped to be exempt from the course and the exemption test. It was explained that all universities must document the qualifications of its graduates, and the accepted documentation in this case would be a passing score on the exemption test or a passing grade in the course.
- A student shared her frustration with the number of parking spots frequently empty in the lot marked for faculty/staff behind the Newton Gresham Library. It was explained to her that current construction has created a dynamic parking configuration, and a number of faculty and staff are still establishing a regular parking routine as a larger faculty/staff lot was recently closed.

- **VPSS Luncheon Follow-up Questionnaire Results**

A total of 17 students attended the luncheon, and 14 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 received information to follow up with an appropriate faculty/staff member or department to resolve an issue I have.*

Response: Completely Agree – 10
Somewhat Agree – 3
Neither Agree nor Disagree – 1

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

Response: Completely Agree – 6
Somewhat Agree – 6
Neither Agree nor Disagree – 2

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

Response: Completely Agree – 11
Somewhat Agree – 2
Neither Agree nor Disagree – 1

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

Response: Completely Agree – 12
Somewhat Agree – 1
Neither Agree nor Disagree – 1

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

Response: Completely Agree – 12
Neither Agree nor Disagree – 2

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

AT THIS LUNCHEON, I LEARNED...

...that school spirit is a problem that can't be fixed one way. It needs to [be] changed by changing other things.

...to get to know head chairs of the University and make new student friends. I had the opportunity to address questions in an informal, casual manner to administrative heads of SHSU. Thanks for inviting me!

...that the administration really cares about what the student body thinks and feels.

...that our Admin. seems to care about students. The food was great and I thank you for making me a special lunch. (*Vegetarian student*)

...about both trouble and good things that students go through. Fortunately, I've been able to get out of every issue I've found so I haven't really had much trouble at all, but I'm now aware of what's going on with other students.

...that Sam is a very diverse University and that registering for classes might be hard sometimes. I like the fact that we have a lot of organizations and programs to assist students.

...that the faculty really does care about the students and want to hear about problems/issues that are occurring on campus, whether that be with students, teachers or the departments.

...different ways to go about solving different problems and different people to talk to.