

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, Dr. Dana Gibson, and Dr. Vince Webb
Wednesday, November 11, 2009
Lowman Student Center, Room 320

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:

- The Criminal Justice program is renowned.
- Student received the most financial aid from SHSU than other universities.
- Student looked into SHSU at suggestion of a friend. The location is close to home so daily commute is possible.
- A student's aunt is an alumna of SHSU and is also employed as a teacher, which is the student's preferred profession.
- Student's sister attends SHSU, so there were not many options considered by the family in terms of where the student would enroll. This was not a problem for the student because she had visited a number of times, and, as a transfer from University of Oklahoma, she appreciates the diversity of SHSU.
- Student who was attending Nicholls State University in Louisiana on a track scholarship transferred to SHSU because her parents found the distance too great to attend their daughter's events. The student spent holiday breaks on campus due to the distance from home, and found the situation to be too difficult for the family. Nicholls' focus was recreational and extracurricular, and the student was not sure the level of academic education was benefitting her. The transition to SHSU was difficult for some time.
- Student expressed his opinion that SHSU is a financial bargain considering the campus experience and the quality of the educational opportunities.
- Student wanted Criminal Justice degree originally, but changed to Mass Communications.
- The hands-on experience in the Agricultural Sciences Department has been a great experience, in addition to SHSU being close to home.

- Student from Klein Collins High School in Spring, Texas explained the academic rigor of her high school led her to anticipate hours and hours of study time required for her university courses. She has been successful at SHSU without putting forth as much effort as she anticipated and believes Klein College prepared her well.
- Student from Nigeria selected SHSU based on its strong tradition in the field of education. His goal is to learn as much as possible about the United States and Texas education systems.

What are characteristics of a great professor?

- Genuine care for student and how student is progressing in the class
- More personal relationship
- Passion for subject matter; professor who loves what he is doing and prefers to be in class with students
- Professor who takes time to help students with small tasks such as organizing thoughts and ideas for a paper in a one-on-one meeting
- Professors with personal experience in subject matter, such as business and commerce. Has applicable skills that can be passed on to students for immediate use in business
- Patient, especially with international students, who may have language obstacles to overcome
- Professors who understand that having students break into groups in class in a short time can be difficult on international students who do not know others well and have communication barriers
- Professors who take time to ensure students learn concepts rather than strictly memorize information
- Professors who use discussion boards for online courses to create communication between each class member

Changes students would make at SHSU:

- A smoke free campus would be the best solution for students who do not want to breathe any second hand smoke. For theater students, this is of particular concern. If it were possible to maintain the smoke within a certain area, that may work, but there is no one to enforce the smoking limits in place now.
- Shuttle busses are needed. Dr. Gibson indicated a study of local routes is underway, and Dr. Gaertner advised a shuttle will be in place once The Woodlands campus is operational.

- Students need more computer labs. The closure of ABI lab has been a problem because the other labs on campus are used regularly for classes, they are not open past 5 pm, or the printers are not working. Dr. Gibson will follow up on bringing ABI back online once renovations are complete, she will determine if the lab in the Margaret Lea Houston Building (formerly ABII) can offer hours outside of the typical building hours of 8 am – 5 pm, and Dr. Gibson will investigate the printer hardware issue.
- More professors are needed in the Mass Communications program.

Questions from Students:

- Is there a reason for the attendance policy on campus? Students were advised of federal rules governing financial aid recipients that require no more than three hours of absence in a semester without penalty. Recently, at the federal level it was emphasized that university faculty must take attendance to comply with financial aid rules. In terms of educational strategies, the key to success in college is often boiled down to simply going to class. The academic facilities on campus are worthless if students do not attend the courses taught within, and overall the student suffers when attendance rules are too lax to motivate them to get to class.
- A student understood her Market Research professor to say that attendance would be taken with the ID card. Is this true? At this time, there is no plan to equip classrooms with a card reader. The cost is too high at this point considering most classes are small and the time to take roll is relatively limited. If there is a problem with large classes, they could be addressed on a case-by-case basis. If professors are taking attendance with the ID card, it would be occurring in pockets around campus and not in response to a policy.
- Is there a plan to create more activities on weekends? There has been growth in the events planned on certain weekends on campus, and the efforts to keep students here will continue. A student expressed his opinion The Woodland campus will reduce the number of commuters to SHSU, which should increase the number of residents who will stay in Huntsville during weekends.
- International students would benefit from a resource guide to help them learn about functions of academic departments across the University.

VPSS Luncheon Follow-up Questionnaire Results

A total of 23 students attended the luncheon, and 17 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 – 10
Somewhat Agree – 6
Completely Disagree – 1

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

Response: Completely Agree – 12
Somewhat Agree – 3
Neither Agree nor Disagree – 1
Completely 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 – 15
Somewhat Agree – 2

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

Response: Completely Agree – 16
Somewhat Agree – 1

E. I would attend another student/administrator luncheon.

Response: Completely Agree – 13
Somewhat Agree – 4

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 I had a lot in common with other students. It is good to socialize with my peers and learn more about them and their experience.

...as a SGA senator, I'll take issues to senate meetings.

...what people thought.

...that the student's opinions matter and the staff cares about what we think and our concerns.

...that they're in the process of making more weekender activities for those that are here.

...that the administrators really care about the students and what we think should change.

...what the university is planning in the future.

...the politics with the mass transit problem, the project in The Woodlands, and Sam's attempt to open up computer labs.

...more about Sam Houston State University programs and activities.

...that the administrators really do care about our input and concerns.

...about situations with commuters and parking, planning more events on weekends, and opening more computer labs.

...that the things that affect me as a student are in the process of or are currently fixing.

...that there are people that actually care about more than just tuition.

...about the plans for parking and access to computers.

...how open the administration is towards student input.

I learned about some other students issues and concerns and why they love attending Sam Houston.

Thank you very much for the delicious food and SHSU management's concerns for students. I'm wondering if it is possible for the shuttle bus to be going between Houston (downtown area) and Huntsville like a car/bus pool. Thanks again.

TO IMPROVE THIS PROGRAM, I WOULD

...I think everything was great!!

...be on time.

...do nothing! I thought it was awesome, and very informative.

...it was fine the way it was presented.

...not change anything!

...have more programs like this.

...start the discussion earlier so other students wouldn't have to leave. The question about having a smoke free school wasn't answered.

...extend the period for more conversation, invite more guests.

...make more available dates/times for the luncheon.

...have more topics to chose from. I wasn't prepared!

...open it to more students.

...just have student organizational leaders get a chance to have an open talk just like this if there isn't already.

I believe more students would benefit from the meeting if the discussion time is increased.