

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
URBANA-CHAMPAIGN SENATE

Committee on University Student Life
(Final; Information)

SL.18.01 2016-18 Annual Report

The following report summarizes the activities of the Senate Committee on University Student Life (USL) during the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 academic years. The Committee met seven times in 2016-2017: October 7, November 4, December 2, January 27, February 24, March 31, and April 28. It met five times in 2017-2018: September 15, October 6, November 3 February 2, and April 27. One of USL's primary functions is to serve as a liaison between Senate and the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs. Another is to raise, discuss, and act on issues of particular concern to student life.

Throughout 2016-2017, Vice Chancellor Renee Romano, and throughout 2017-2018, Vice Chancellor Danita Brown Young brought information to USL on new programs and student affairs issues; Student Body President Raneem Shamseldin reported on activities of the Illinois Student Government. Assistant Provost Kathryn Martensen kept the committee informed on activities in the Office of the Provost of interest to the committee. Professor Damarys Canache chaired the committee in the fall semester of 2016 and Professor Mark Dressman chaired from January, 2017 to April, 2018.

A number of issues have been raised and addressed during the past two years. These have included:

2016-2017:

- Sexual Misconduct. Vice-Chancellor Romano briefed the Committee on the progress of efforts to determine the extent of sexual harassment/assault on campus, as well as efforts to establish online training for faculty, staff, and students. This was an ongoing issue of discussion throughout the 2016-2018 school years.
- Free Speech and Civility. The issue of balancing rights to free speech with a need for civility on campus was a continuing discussion throughout 2016 and into 2018. Discussions of specific instances as well as concerns about the legal implications of enforcing restrictions and penalties were discussed at nearly every meeting. This is an ongoing concern that the Committee hopes to focus on in the coming year.
- Food Insecurity/Student Hunger. Dawn Aubrey, Associate Director of Housing for Dining Services, briefed the Committee about concerns that some students on campus were experiencing food insecurity and hunger. She presented findings from a survey of several higher education institutions in Illinois (not named) indicating a problem at some of these. A survey by the School of Social Work suggested that food insecurity was also a problem on the UIUC campus. A memo was drafted and Chancellor Romano shared this with the Senate Executive Committee. However, because the data lacked specific information either about the UIUC campus or about which groups of students were affected, and because the presence of food banks in the campus area was noted, no further action was taken.
- Immigration visas and DACA. Announcements by the Federal government regarding changes in visa processing procedures and the restriction of visas for students from some countries in the

Middle East and Central Asia, as well as the cancelling of DACA and concerns about the status and safety of undocumented students on campus were discussed at multiple meetings in the spring 2017 semester. Martin McFarlane, director of ISSS, twice briefed the Committee on the University's position with respect to advising international students from the countries affected by the Federal government's proposed ban, as well as the effect on the processing of H-1 visas for faculty and staff hired from overseas. Jorge Mena Robles, Assistant Director of La Casa, briefed the Committee on efforts to support undocumented students, not only from Latin American but other regions as well, and described training sessions for faculty and staff offered periodically throughout the year.

- Title IX. Also in response to proposed Federal changes in Title IX regulations regarding sexual assault and gender equity, Danielle Morrison, Title IX and Disability Coordinator, met with the Committee to brief them on the University's response to proposed changes. Morrison also briefed the Committee on training about sexual assault/harassment for faculty, staff, and students.
- Revision of the University Chalking Policy. Vice Chancellor Romano introduced proposed revisions to the University's chalking policy (the practice of using chalk on sidewalks around campus to announce events or protest), noting the lack of enforcement provisions in the current policy.

2017-2018:

- DACA and Undocumented Students. Discussion about DACA and undocumented students continued in the fall 2017 semester. Assistant Director of La Casa Jorge Mena Robles again briefed the Committee on the status of DACA, undocumented students, and efforts to provide training to faculty and staff on these issues.
- Revision of the University Chalking Policy. Based on discussions from the spring 2017 semester, Chair Dressman introduced a revised policy and the Committee edited this version, which included language banning hate speech, requiring pre-approval, and requiring violators to pay for removal of offensive statements. However, concerns about the feasibility of approval arrangements and whether penalties could be enforced tabled the revision.
- Student Government Resolution on Medical Marijuana. A resolution passed by the Student Government to change rules permitting students using marijuana for medical purposes to live on campus was presented to the Committee for endorsement. However, members of the committee questioned the feasibility of allowing some students in a dormitory to use marijuana for medical purposes and noted that there were already provisions for seeking exemptions for medical reasons from the on-campus housing requirement.
- Student Mental Health and Well-Being. Over the last two years, brief discussions regarding the state of student mental health and well-being on campus were raised by the Committee, with concerns that the campus lacked adequate numbers of personnel and facilities. The discussion was fueled by a perceived rise in suicides and other incidents. In March, the Director and Associate Director of the Counselling Center, Carla McCowan and William Roberts, briefed the committee, noting that although visits to the Counseling Center had increased, this was likely due not to an increase in problems but rather to a reduction in the stigma. McCowan and Roberts briefed the Committee on multiple programs and discussed the Center's overall needs, noting that the current ratio of students to counselors is 1600 to 1, higher than ratios recommended by national associations.

- Discussions about the Committee's Mission. Chair Dressman raised the issue at the end of the Spring 2017 semester and again throughout the 2017-2018 school year of the purpose and mission of the University Student Life Committee. He met with SEC Chair Bettina Francis and Nancy O'Brien regarding this issue and raised it for discussion with the Committee. He also expressed a need for the Committee to be less episodic in the issues it takes up and to look for ways to contribute to discussions within the Academic Senate beyond meetings of the Committee.

USL urges that student input be solicited through as many Senate committees as possible. The Committee especially urges that USL be included in all Senate deliberations in which university student life is or may be affected. This will be particularly important as campus leaders consider allocation of future budgets.

COMMITTEE ON UNIVERSITY STUDENT LIFE

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