

Notes from Student Services Review Team

Student Services Consultants

General Comments

Staff

Folks are working very hard...

...lots of good people...

...very dedicated, in spite of weak leadership

...seem to believe in what they are doing

But they desperately crave to be a part of the whole

...a part of a common mission

Students

Students don't feel "acknowledged" by the University

...a feeling of distance

...aside from an occasional RA or teacher

...are not aware of University structures as

entities...whether Housing or LSA

All student concerns have a multiplier for

minority students

Students believe that "The only way to get things

done around here is to raise hell."

(Although it clearly does not have to be that way...)

The Report Card

Report Card

(See accompanying material)

Note...very surprised at how rapidly group reached
consensus on these issues...validation of scoring

An extraordinary lack of communication

...within SS and outside SS

...lack of a sense of mission.

Permeated by an adversarial attitude

toward both the administration and the faculty

Common Themes

Time after time, sensed a decoupling from the rest
of the University

An unwillingness to consider themselves as part of
the University and following the policies and
directions of the University

Comments on Particular Units

Housing

UM has one of the better Housing departments in the
country...at least from an operations and financial
point of view

Losses of sophisticated dedication and interest

However it has become a large bureaucracy
And it is clearly unconnected to the rest of the University
Some question of just who should manage "student life"
in residential housing--where do you want
tensions to be resolved.

Michigan Union

Concern about adding Michigan Union to Housing
...clear lack of community on this
...no trial balloons, no process
This is worrisome...and a tell-tale sign of
the lack of management skill

Career Planning and Placement

This part of operation is in good shape...
...view themselves as broader than LSA

Admissions

Well structured and managed

SAPAC

Quite adversarial
Out of touch with the outside
Not the leaders they like to portray themselves as

Counseling

Very weak organization

Minority Affairs

Should not have a "czar", but rather a distributed operation.
But there must be someone seen as the leader,
...beyond the President
and in charge of coordination.

This should be everybody's job.

The Mandate has now empowered leaders throughout
the University to move ahead.

Noted that the acrimony of CDM was *paralyzing some folks*
...it is clear that a change is needed.

Also lots of minority student hostility toward VPSS office
Need to build a better network of intergroup relations...

...Blacks, Jews, Hispanics

Need to be a "student council" of 15-20 student leaders
to represent these various views

UVa uses a fund to bring next year's leaders
together for a summer...to plan the year
ahead along with the VPSS!

Other Organizational Issues

Perhaps Director of Admission should also be over
OFA--at least get better coordination,

particularly of scholarship aid
Real problem with student record system
...woefully inadequate
Student athletes are another real concern
...the degree of decoupling from the University
Another huge issue...UM structure--part public and
part private
A notable lack of cooperation between Academic Services
and Student Services
Too much confusion in titles--among student
services and academic affairs
Lots of bitterness over AVP Norboby...
...believes this appointment devalues
student services...perceives this as a
"dumping ground"

What are the Problems?

Leadership

Clearly has been a serious vacuum in leadership for almost two decades

It is clear that Student Services has been without leadership for almost two decades...and this lack of leadership has propagated from the top through the organization.

As a result, the University is now at high risk...
...without the policies, practices, and procedures necessary for an effective operation...UM is "ad hocing" everything.

The situation is quite urgent
...a disaster lurking around the corner
...South Quad is a good example of what might happen

Clear that little has been done during the past year
...simply cannot bring in someone inexperienced and expect them to handle this situation.

Some bright spots
Royster is the one really bright star in OSS
...good understanding, right attitude, etc.

Mission

No clear mission...
...nor a mission acknowledged by the Administration or Regents
No effort has been made to develop a mission
Absence of willingness within SS to celebrate positive aspects of the University
...should be "culture bearers" or "culture definers"

Disquieting not to hear folks celebrating the mission of student services...not just a function of the lack of leadership, but the entire culture has deteriorated
Incredible tendency to ignore or even oppose mission statements, policies, and practices, of the University administration
The highly decentralized nature of the University also contributes to this sense of isolation...but there is no reason that decentralization should inhibit an effective student services operation--rather it is being used as an excuse.

Arms length approach to students

...absence of a disciplinary code

...IFC interactions

(In fact, Housing sees the Greeks and competition)

Legal opinions are binding us unnecessarily

Also a fear to take on Greeks because it is too big an issue

But of course this is where the "isms" really should be attacked first!

Need for an intergroup relations among Greeks--frats, sororities, Black Greeks

A "This Too Shall Pass" Culture

Lots of folks have been here a long time

...and they are willing to ride things out

(Mary Ann suffered greatly from this resistance)

Student Services is a very inbred organization...

in desperate needs of folks from the outside

...some outbreeding, particularly in supervisory roles

Resources

Resources are probably adequate, but not being focused where they should be...need an analysis of priorities

Some reorganization is probably necessary

For example, one apparently has responsibility for enrollment planning and analysis

Students conveyed their impression that inadequate attention was being given to learning outside the classroom

Most distressing:

A marked unwillingness to assume leadership or responsibility for student crises. This is really a red flag of an organization in bad need of a major shakeup.

Every crisis should have been anticipated...and would have been anticipated and easily handled by an effective operation.

Leadership Issues

Student crises

Most disturbing was the unwillingness of student services staff to accept responsibility for handling student

crises.

Further, it was alarming to note the degree to which Student Services was keeping information from flowing up to the administration. (Here, the South Quad incident was a perfect example).

The duty of the VPSS is to inform EOs on issues...

...and the same duty applies to other senior management such as the Director of Housing

Most campuses have a SWAT team to manage these issues

...the Gulf War as an example

When it comes to crises, it is more the substance of the issue than the rank of the people that determine participants on the team.

Such teams typically consist of 4-5 people, called together by the VPSS.

They play a role both in assessing the situation, developing action alternatives, and providing for necessary coordination.

Need a better sense of what students are saying when they go back to their schools, since this will catch up with us eventually.

A Warning: South Quad incident is not over...

...should be very careful about how first couple of events of year are handled.

Need lots of advance planning before the start of the term.

The Code

At some point, someone is going to have to deal with student conduct code...but here it is best to deal not so much with discipline and penalties as rather what is expected of students.

In a sense, the Housing Credo takes an important step in this direction.

Need an overall university set of standards
...written by a non-lawyer!

New Leadership

Should seek

...experienced leadership

...external search (no internal candidates)

...someone who has seen it all before

Back them to the hilt for 5 years or more,

since some tough personnel actions will be necessary.

But also need someone in OSS who has student affairs at heart

Ideal: Make Royster a Dean of Students

...a true "Dean", sitting on AAAC...
to provide connectedness to colleges
...an advocate for students, with capacity to reach across
organization in a matrix fashion

There will have to be many organization changes

...but, in fact, there already is a great deal of change
occurring without direction.

Will also require lots of team building