Student Fee Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes 4/4/13 1:00 p.m.

Members present
Bradley Pennington
Samantha Payne
Justin Velten
Kay Pleasant
Ona Tolliver, ex-officio
Sheryl Dennis, ex-officio

Non-members present
Amanda Bayatpoor, Veterans Resource Center Coordinator
Rosemary Cooper, Enrollment Services Center Director
Katy Cline, Student Affairs

Members not present
Amber Amerson
Gabriel Ramirez
Kenny Bizot
Kim Harvey-Livingston
William Nelms

In Chair Amerson’s absence Ona Tolliver called the meeting to order at 1:03 p.m.

Amanda Bayatpoor and Rosemary Cooper were invited to discuss the Enrollment Services Center and Veterans Resource Center. Committee members asked the following question

How many military students do we have right now and how many total students do we have currently? We certify both veterans and dependents and that is approximately 600 (up about 75 over the last two semesters); in total UT Tyler has about 7,000 students.

How many enrollment serve center specialist are employed now? Right now there are 11 ESC employees who assist with all the students with enrollment, admissions, financial aid (5 at the front counter) but these 11 are not able to certify veterans benefits, they direct veterans and their dependents to the Veterans Resource Center as these students often have a number of questions that extend beyond the scope of enrollment, financial aid and admissions (including other veterans benefits like mortgage assistance, health benefits, etc.). Amanda Bayatpoor in the Veterans Resource Center assists in addressing these other benefits as well as serving a resource for education benefits assistance. The Enrollment Management division facilitates assisting and supporting all students and is comprised of Enrollment Services (11), Registrar’s Office (~5-6), Financial Aid (~6), Admissions (~15).

How many students does the Veterans Resource Center regularly see? Amanda Bayatpoor has seen 9 students in the Veterans Resource Center this morning for a variety of concerns and questions including educational benefits, study resources, and VA benefits.

Rosemary Cooper informed the committee that Enrollment Services is responsible for a number of other things so the Veterans Resource Center is able to assist with questions our veteran students have always had that the ESC had not been able to provide support to previously.
Amanda Bayatpoor informed the committee when she is recruiting or completing outreach efforts in the community there is not a person on-campus to provide this support to veteran students. The student assistants are excellent but they do not have the certification and abilities to discuss specific military records/benefits.

Why would we take fees paid by all students to support this smaller group of students (~9%)? Would it make more sense to train each of the ESC personnel to support veterans? Amanda Bayatpoor stated that some schools try this approach but that UT Tyler would lose the veteran population because they are not supported as successfully. One of the students currently studying in the VRC is a non-veteran and that is typical of the office, non-veterans use the space, they participate in events and we encourage them to attend.

PTSD – Do you have statistics on how many people have PTST here? A significant number of veteran students (as many as 50%) have PTST or TBI (traumatic brain injury). So they are students that want and need help though they may not appear that they need assistance. Bringing on the veterans resource center allowed the ESC to bring on the right kind of help that can address the concerns of these specific students rather than a group of any employees. Much more than just pushing papers and is not there to provide administrative support. Amanda Bayatpoor is a certified peer to peer mentor for PTSD and has completed military training that would allow us to facilitate these groups on campus that allow students to make connections in classrooms and create a network to assist them be successful students.

What is the retention rate of military students on campus? The office has only been open on-campus. We have increased enrollment but have not been able to do as much outreach to our students. Amanda Bayatpoor and Rosemary Cooper will provide retention numbers Fall 2012 to Spring 2013 by close of business today. Although we have 600 veterans and dependents those are only students using benefits. We have a number of folks on-campus that are ex-military or are eligible for benefits and not using them as well as. We are the first school in east Texas to create a veterans resource center. We know there is so much more that could be done as well.

There was a 1.3% increase in veterans and dependents in 2011 and 2012. So over the course of one year we say an increase of 1.3% and have seen more now. The creation of the office is making our veterans and dependents come out of the woodworks. Prior to the office existing we had students not using their benefits and resources.

The committee discussed the value to the university of this office and the importance of this additional person and the funding sources available to this endeavor. The committee discussed the other services that would be provided, outreach necessary, connecting us in the future, retaining our students and the differences between the services offered by the ESC and the VRC. Committee discussed the Veterans Resource Center request for additional person, allocations based on the percentage of the student body that is served. Veterans expect a lot more service than the average student. Is this the place for the VRC personal to be funding this? From an advising perspective it has made a huge benefit to our 600 (probably+).

Last year there were a lot of items that were funded from a plethora of areas that crossed over. Not knowing what would come from where can be a challenge. The committee can only use their best judgment when it comes to allocating or moving forward for a recommendation.

We cannot assume it will be funded elsewhere. If you choose not to fund it we can’t guarantee what will be funded elsewhere.
The state of Texas acknowledges there are a lack of resources regionally for these students. It is within the scope of veterans benefits as a whole. The veteran student is very different than any other student because their benefits color all other areas of their lives. The veterans come here with a different set of priorities, different focuses, etc. Across campus we have a prevenalce of people assisting as they can help.

Sheryl shared that we are at a real crossroads with the threshold of employees for the student body that we have currently. Our state will likely mandate some items and are trying to find funding for veterans areas.

The committee reviewed the entire budget the committee has to not count on it being funded elsewhere or that the president might say no to items funded or find other funding. So all that can be done in here is what is available to us now. You can send anything forward that you want. Many of the positions that are on this list has been sent forward but that does not mean any of them will be approved.

This committee is comprised of people that are good stewards.

The accounts discussed by the committee to re-review in alphabetical order are: Co-curricular, Intramurals, Leadership & Service, Patriot Center, Student Activities, Veterans Resource Center. Intramurals & Patriot Center could be removed from that list of priorities.

Reviewed the Leadership & Service request, Student Activities request and would recommend the remaining 4143 to co-curricular.

Now the committee goes to process. You will be able to go back and see if you could pull from other areas to fund the Veterans Resource Center position and travel. IF you want to fund that position you need to come prepared with where you would to fund.

Do you want to fund the VRC position in full, in part or in portion. AND if you want to fund it where should it come from.

PRIORITY LIST should funding be found elsewhere for items that are approved.