

**9/12/2014/Council Weekend #1**

## Governmental Affairs Breakout

All Campuses represented? Behrend, York, New Kensington, Schuylkill, Lehigh Valley (2<sup>nd</sup> session), Greater Alleghney, Brandywine, Beaver (2<sup>nd</sup> session)

Discussion:

**1. What is Governmental Affairs**

- a. Handle issues on numerous levels of government from the state to the BOT, as well as representing the students on these levels. We also organize a day at Harrisburg to promote funding to Penn State. The State used to fund the majority of Penn State, but no the university relies mainly on student's tuition. It is highly recommended that SGAs attend Capitol Day. Drive to Strive is another initiative that collects signatures from commonwealth campuses to increase our funding. Meet your legislators is an initiative that encourages local SGAs to invite their legislators to their campus. We have also been pushing to get a student as a representative on the BOT.
- b. Goals include higher participation for Capitol Day, improving the partnerships between campuses and their local legislators. Making sure students are registered to vote will help further our cause.

**2. Senate Bill 1240**

- a. -Bill will restructure the BOT and most importantly eliminates the student BOT seat. Passing legislation through CCSG can be used to lobby the fact that we oppose the Senate Bill.
  - Abington: they also want to remove the ability to make changes to positions on the BOT by the university.
  - Beaver: Inquired into why this position was being removed.
  - Worthington-Scranton: Stated that this bill is an awful idea.
  - Berks: The board is open to making changes by itself; we need to prevent the legislator from taking control of making changes.
  - Shenango: Capitol day is an important day to discuss this bill. We have ways of coming together that we can influence changes to this bill.
  - Berks: It is important to emphasize that we tell Harrisburg that whether or not they remove a student BOT seat, we do not like that they are changing the structure of the BOT. After the Sandusky scandal the legislature wanted to take control of the BOT to prevent any future controversies on the part of the BOT.
  - Worthington/Scranton: PA legislature should not have an access to the BOT.
  - Harrisburg: We shouldn't ask the state for more money then say we don't like their bills.
  - John Shaffer: The three strategies that the BOT has outlined to restructure the BOT all include a student representative.

-John Savant: Asked the group if any SGA president would like to co-sponsor legislation that was passed out. The floor was opened for comments.

-John Shaffer: Noted that the end of the legislation that it should be worded that the commonwealth campuses oppose the senate bill.

-A show of hands showed that the majority of attendees in the room favored the legislation go to vote on council.

### **3. Meet your Legislator**

-John passed around a packet that includes all of the necessary information to hold a "Meet your Legislator" event on campus. You can send invitations to representatives from other districts as well because many campuses have students that commute from or live in another area. It is recommended that you give representatives an invitation at least 2 months in advance. Then it is important that this event is highly advertised and if anyone has any questions or issues please contact John.

-Shenango: There is a big senate race in our area, how many other campuses have important races in their area? We have out incumbent representative going for someone else's senate seat.

-John Savant: asked how many campuses have invited their representatives to their campus before? Harrisburg stated they did.

-Harrisburg: November could be a bad time to invite representatives since they are busy with reelections.

-Shenango: We had a pizza and politics event to talk about issues and be sure people know they are there to discuss state issues not federal issues.

-John Savant: Please let me know if you are hosting an event I will try to attend.

-Shenango: Make sure you contact the right people to make sure everything is run according to policy. You should also not state that this is Penn State's position.

### **4. Voter Registration**

-The room was asked what recommendations campuses had to register students to vote.

-Berks: Have an outside, nonpartisan group come in and register students. Cautioned campuses from letting politician's staff coming in from coming in to register voters.

-Abington: Registration drives have existed at our campus.

-John Savant: you can have a place to sit down at your campus and hand out voter registration forms and one place to get them is the post office.

### **5. Tuition**

- We need to keep the BOT in check with raising tuition

- Harrisburg: Net assets are increasing and in the last 2 years the net assets have increased over 52%. Unrestricted assets have increased over...
- Berks: What do you mean by assets?
- Worthington/Scranton: Assets are items owned by the university.
- Harrisburg: Assets can decrease overtime and liabilities and income are also taken account for. The Spending is what this spread sheet focuses on. Restricted assets are assets we can't touch. Unrestricted are ones we can invest in. Over time, assets have increased in 1.2 billion. We take what the state gives us plus \$800 million and we have put it into the bank. It is hard to ask the state for more money when we aren't spending it.
- Worthington Scranton: Wouldn't private donations be added to donations that are kept over time such as new buildings.
- Harrisburg: 9 ice hockey arenas in the equivalent of how many assets we have increased in over the last year. \$1.5 billion dollars came from tuition in the last fiscal year. We could give each student \$8000 back and still have the same \$800 million in net assets.
  - John Savant: we need to know the difference between the money we are sitting on and the money we get donations.
  - Worthington/Scranton: We need to look how much of those assets are coming from the state and we need to look into specifics of the budget.
  - Berks: We need to look for more transparency and we need to find more information on state appropriations and we can advocate for more transparency. Allan Janish we recommended to talk to us about the issue.
  - 191 million in assets would still exist after funds from the state.
  - John Savant: A good way is to balance tuition with the money from the state.
  - Shenango: Transparency is going to be important and we need to ask the state for more money so we can keep tuition low.
  - Worthington Scranton: At least using the money for an emergency fund would make sense.
  - Worthington Scranton: I'm sure plans are in place and tuition should not be raised.
  - Abington: With all of the money they sit aside how marketable would it be if Penn State could say the hold tuition at a specific point?
  - Harrisburg: Penn State is sitting on \$983 million in cash. \$656 million was in income. They are buying investments but still have investments on hand and besides a rainy day fund they still have cash in their hand.
  - Berks: They usually cite inflation for tuition but it seems like that is not sound logic.

-Worthington Scranton: The money being saved could possibly be being used to cover litigation and fees for issues related to the Sandusky scandal.

What progress has been made on campuses concerning current legislation? N/A

Legislation- N/A

Issues-

-Specifics may need to be clarified such as since the Governor can appoint 5 positions to the BOT could one of them be a student?

-What is the motivation behind making changes to the BOT.

-We are having \$800 million in net assets, where it is going? Why does our tuition keep going up?

-Shenango: The money that is given to us is broken down in a report that John Shafer had as of last year.

-Worthington/Scranton: I see lots of renovations, instead of renovations we need to lower tuition.

-Gov. Affairs: Most renovations are funded through private funds

-Hazelton: Tuition is ridiculous and when I am short there is nothing the university can do for me. There should be scholarships that the university should provide for active students.

**DAY 2**

Expectations

1. Of Staff- Continue to look into specifics and changes to Senate Bill 1240.
2. Of Campuses – Discuss this bill at home campuses and work on legislation as well as increasing Capital Day attendance.

Agenda Items for Next Council

Open Forum