



Report to the Chancellor's Council
University System of Maryland Student Council
April 1st, 2013

The University System of Maryland Student Council met on February 24th at Bowie State University. At the meeting, the Council discussed a wide range of topics including shared governance, the legislative session, mental health, and textbooks.

Shared Governance

The Council has continued its discussion of shared governance and is currently in the process of writing the draft report. At the meeting, the Council preliminarily took an inventory of shared governance at the University System level and began to diagnose problems and create initial recommendations. Additionally, Council members will complete their interviews of each student body president by the 15th. The Council intends to review a draft of the report at the April meeting and approve a final version at our final meeting in May. We hope to present a draft of the report to the Chancellor's Council at the May meeting and take feedback from the Council.

Legislative Session

As we approach the final days of session, the Council has continued its activism in Annapolis. The Council has spent the majority of our time since the rally focusing on the budget and on higher education bills. Specifically, we have taken an active role in working with Vice Chancellor Hogan and the state relation council in suggesting amendments to the College Completion and Readiness Act. The Council is additionally excited to see the progression of Governor O'Malley's voting accessibility package, which could continue the progress of our state of incorporating college students.

Mental Health

The Council discussed mental health services on each campus and the various issues that students face in accessing those services. While each campus has a different set of needs, a common theme that emerged was that there are too few mental health professionals for the increase that has been seen with student demand. While the discussions around mental health have followed violence on several of the campuses, Council members felt strongly that students, faculty, and staff should avoid outwardly linking the need for mental health services to violence prevention because of the stigma that it creates for people seeking help.

Textbooks

The Council discussed textbook affordability as it seems that, once again, the legislation that would create a sales tax holiday for textbooks is likely to fail. The Council is concerned that the permission of an internet sales tax from the federal government would cost students a substantial amount of money without a state sales tax exemption.

Additionally, the Council began a conversation on how the University System can become a leader in the adoption of open source textbooks. These textbooks are written by faculty members and are peer reviewed, but take out the publisher as a middle man. The books are the same quality as traditional textbooks, but provide professors flexibility in using them and are free to access and inexpensive to print for students (\$30 avg/book for printing). Other states have incentivized professors writing and using these books.

Conclusion

As the Council looks towards sine die and our penultimate meeting this month, I would like to thank each of you, and, in particular, Vice Chancellor Hogan and the state relations council for permitting students to be a part of the legislative process. I hope that this experience has been mutually beneficial, as I know that we have, at the very least, learned a lot from being involved in the process.

The Council will hold our penultimate meeting on April 14th at the University of Maryland, Eastern Shore.