

Committee on Student Affairs

Minutes of the 38th Meeting of the Committee on Student Affairs held on 16 Oct 2008 at 3 pm at Room 5015, Student Affairs Office.

Present : Prof Karl Tsim (Chairman), Prof Tai-Kai Ng, Prof King Chow,
Prof Chi-Ming Chan, Prof David Cook, Prof Charles Chan,
Prof Kar-Yan Tam, Mr Lai Chun-Yin, Miss Birunda Chelliah,
Miss Lau Mei-Ting, Mr Pang Yee-Kwong, Dr. Grace Au (Member and Secretary)

In Attendance: Mrs Pandora Yuen (SAO)

Action

Welcoming Remarks

1. The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting.

Terms of Reference and Membership of the Committee on Student Affairs

2. Members noted the terms of reference and membership as detailed in paper CSA/38/1. The Committee would meet at least twice a year. Except for personal data or restricted matters, discussion papers and minutes of this Committee were open information. Members might consult faculty and students for their views on issues raised at the Committee, or bring to their attention discussions and decisions of the Committee.

REDBird Award Program

3. Dr Grace Au gave an overview of the REDbird Award Program which was newly launched by SAO this semester. A total of 22 senior students were recruited as REDbird coaches while 108 first-year students as members of the REDbird Club. The REDbird Club was a learning community for nurturing desirable attributes of the students. The program last through all 3 years. One important feature of the Program was continuous feedback being given by mentors and coaches to facilitate the learning process. Dr Mavis Kelly, an Australian expert had been appointed as External Assessor to provide evaluation support to the Program.
4. Members noted the role of the REDbird Award Program Committee and its composition as detailed in paper CSA/38/2. It was suggested and members agreed that a student representative and/or a REDbird coach/member be included in the Program Committee to enable direct access to student feedback. After consideration, members endorsed the appointment of the External Assessor and the membership of the Program Committee.
5. The student representatives further suggested that student societies, such as the Student Social Service Society, be involved in some of the activities of the REDbird Award Program as appropriate. Dr Grace Au undertook to follow up on this suggestion.

Dr. Grace Au

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Green Ambassador Program

6. Dr Grace Au reported on the progress of the HKUST- Hang Seng Bank Green Ambassador Program which was newly launched by SAO this semester (Paper CSA/38/3). A panel was in the process of selecting 20 out of the 39 applicants. The commitment of the green ambassadors was 2 years, with training and most of the activities completed in the first year, while serving as mentors and engaging in outreach activities in the second year. With funding support from Hang Seng Bank, the Program was to recruit a total of 120 green ambassadors over a period of 4 years.

Medical Insurance and Medical Relief Fund

7. Members heard a presentation on the background calling for a review of medical insurance coverage for students and the recommendations as detailed in paper CSA/38/4.
8. On the recommendation to have additional in-patient insurance for students, there were various views among members. Some members were very supportive not only because of the medical coverage, but also because this was part of education for students to learn their social responsibility. There was concern for the coverage might not be sufficient, although it was pointed out that the more the coverage, the more the premium. There was a view that students as young adults were the healthiest group in the population and as such whether they would need as much coverage as the other groups. Some members were not supportive of making it compulsory because some students might have their own arrangement. After much discussion, the Committee supported in principle in-patient insurance for all students especially the non-local students. The Committee noted that this issue would need further discussion by the university administration with regard to the logistic arrangements.
9. On whether or not exchange-in students should have their own medical and travel insurance, the Committee supported unanimously that it should be compulsory and on students' own expenses.
10. The Committee discussed the recommendation to set up a medical relief fund to assist students who have financial difficulty in paying for essential medical services under critical or emergency situations. Members agreed unanimously that this arrangement was both useful and necessary in view of the very different needs of individual cases which might not be well taken care of by other means. The Committee noted that further discussion on the technicalities and logistic arrangements was needed.

Selection Panel for Student Enrichment Activities Fund (SEA Fund)

11. Members took note of the Student Enrichment Activities Fund which was established this year under the management of SAO to promote student learning and community spirit on the campus. A question was raised on whether the SEA Fund only sponsored on-campus activities and whether

Action

applications for activities or projects overseas would be considered. It was pointed out that the primary purpose of SEA Fund was to enrich student learning and applications would be considered on competitive basis.

12. The Committee agreed to oversee the SEA Fund and endorsed the proposed Selection Panel as detailed in paper CSA/38/5.

Student Mental Health Enhancement

13. Members heard a presentation on a proposal of the SAO to set up a Mental Health Risk Assessment Group (RAG) for preventive purposes in view of recent cases of suicidal threat, attempt and death, and other violent or threatening behavior.
14. On the proposed assessment procedures, it was suggested that if necessary, the RAG might seek professional expertise from outside to help with the risk assessment. Any recommendations by the RAG should be sent to the reporting Department Head for action.
15. After discussion, the Committee endorsed the proposed composition and terms of reference of the RAG and the assessment procedures detailed in paper CSA/38/6.
16. The Committee also noted and supported the work plans and the 2-year budget proposed by SAO to enhance student mental health detailed in paper CSA/38/6.

(There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 5 pm.)