

Committee on Student Affairs

Minutes of the 52nd Meeting of the Committee on Student Affairs held on 7 Dec 2012 at 9:30am at Room 7341.

Present : Prof Karl Tsim (Chairman), Prof Kar-Yan Tam, Prof Roger Cheng, Prof Tai-Kai Ng, Prof King Chow, Prof Stanley Lau, Prof Kevin Tam, Mr Ferris Chung, Miss Irene Chau, Mr Jethro Wong, Miss Louise Pang, Dr Grace Au (Member and Secretary)

By Invitation : Dr David Mole, Associate Provost (Teaching & Learning)
Mr Mike Hudson, Director, Facilities Management Office
Mr Green Lam, President, HKUSTSU
Mr Marco Ip, Internal Secretary, HKUSTSU
Mr Garlic Hsuen, Council Chairperson, HKUSTSU Council

Absent with apologies: Prof Kristiaan Helsen

In Attendance : Mrs Pandora Yuen (SAO), Miss Theresa Leung (SAO), Mr Donny Siu (SAO), Mr Raymond Tang (SAO), Ms Daisy Kwan (SAO)

Action

Welcome

1. The Chairman welcomed Dr Mole, Mr Hudson, Mr Lam, Mr Ip and Mr Hsuen for joining the meeting.

Confirmation of Minutes of Last Meeting

2. Minutes of the 51st Meeting of the Committee on Student Affairs were confirmed.

Matters Arising from the Minutes

3. In relation to point 22 on publishing student projects, members noted that SAO would display student projects on the student newsletter CHEERS.

Unauthorized Use of Campus Public Space

4. Mr Donny Siu presented the paper on Unauthorized Use of Campus Public Space (CSA/52/1).
5. Mr Mike Hudson supplemented the paper with a power point showing photos of unauthorized use and its impact. There were concerns towards safety issues such as electric shock hazards and undue inconvenience caused to others.
6. Dr David Mole also supplemented that the crowding impact was affecting students more than staff and also those who had the same privilege of use of space.
7. Mr Garlic Hsuen expressed that there were not enough counter spaces at HKUST. Many of them were booked by departments in advance. Though SAO had installed 4 counters outside LG5 but the location was adversely affected by the weather conditions.
8. Mr Mike Hudson indicated that demand for campus space far exceeded supply and priority should be given to those with legitimate purposes.
9. The Chairman invited the views of other student representatives. Miss Irene Chau expressed there was inconvenience to students during peak hours but found the rest of the times to be fine. Miss Louise Pang indicated it was hard to pass through the Coffee Shop area to lifts 25-26 during peak hours with all the blockages.

10. Dr David Mole solicited solutions from student representatives. Mr Green Lam expressed SU could consider imposing regulations but it would be hard to execute as SU could only regulate student societies but not students. Most of the times, the students on the scene would claim to be on their own accord and not for their societies. There was also abuse to the allocation and booking system where some departments reserved space for societies, other departments reserve a space and not use it or the monopoly of spaces by particular groups.
11. Mr Marco Ip indicated that student societies preferred spaces with heavy traffic, like the Atrium, believing it would help with promotion. It was unfair to some student groups when societies and faculty could use the Atrium for extended period but they had little chance to use the more preferred space. A more efficient and better arranged allocation system would be needed.
12. It was explained that University functions would need to have priority to use space for education purposes such as displaying students' works or conducting Open Day.
13. It was suggested that space at the Atrium to be better and more effectively allocated to allow more users to share usage and avoid domination by one user who may not need the entire space.
14. Mr Marco Ip suggested setting regulations to limit booking duration and usage so to accommodate more users and having same regulations for students and departments. He also understood that department booking for academic purposes should have a priority.
15. Prof Roger Cheng indicated that schools and departments had planned more activities for the double cohort and usage of public space had increased. With more activities competing for the same amount of space, partitioning campus public space to smaller bookable areas could be considered. However, University functions such as Congregation and Open Days would need to have priority. For other times of the year, setting up a limit could be considered.
16. Prof King Chow enquired the availability of data and documentation detailing space usage that could provide insight on the reason of the unauthorized occupation. He also indicated that, individual student, while representing his/ her society, should be responsible for the society's action.
17. Dr David Mole shared that it would be difficult to set up guidelines and regulations in this meeting. He suggested and the Committee agreed to form a separate Task Force on Use of Campus Public Space with representation of respective stakeholders to discuss the matter in details and propose suggestions for further consideration.
18. It was agreed that the Task Force should include all stakeholders, namely, SU representatives, 2 members of this Committee (Prof Roger Cheng and Prof Stanley Lau), and representatives from FMO, ARRO, CSO and SAO Amenities. The Task Force should discuss concerns of all stakeholders, come up with recommendations on possible usage, regulation and implementation for CSA's further consideration.
19. The measures proposed in CSA/52/1 would be revisited after the Task Force tabled their recommendations to CSA.

(Dr David Mole and Mr Mike Hudson were excused from the meeting. Miss Theresa Leung and Mr Raymond Tang joined the meeting for Agenda Item 4.)

Proposal on Promotion Activities and Chanting for Election Campaign 2013

20. Miss Theresa Leung provided an overview of work done to date. Prior to the meeting, SAO had discussed noise, blockage and related issues with SU based on

last year's layout plan. Revisions were made to the layout plan this year with an aim to improve passageway and to accommodate need for more counters due to the double cohort.

SU's Presentation on Student Election Campaign Survey 2012

21. Mr Marco Ip presented survey result of the Student Election Campaign 2012:
 - a. Students were neutral or positive towards the overall arrangement, passageway, location of chanting areas and inconvenience caused but faculty members and staff found otherwise.
 - b. All respondents found 15 days of chanting too long and the noise too loud.
 - c. Faculty members and staff saw improvement in the passageways, but little/no improvement in location of chanting areas and placement of promotional items. Students were neutral.
 - d. As with prior surveys, a high proportion of respondents said they did not support chanting, except students who were exco of societies.
22. The Chairman explained that survey data was presented annually for the past few years with similar results and asked Mrs Pandora Yuen to provide an overview to new members on the issue.

An Overview of Past Issues Stemming from Limitation of Space

23. Mrs Pandora Yuen reported that the University welcomed the double cohort and encouraged more student activities and more societies. Yet, with the limitation in campus design and most activities concentrated at the Atrium, there was not enough space for campus users resulting in the highly stressful situation. All parties need to be more considerate and tolerant of each other, understanding each other's needs, until the realization of more space and facilities.
24. The Chairman added that, until the completion of the new buildings, traffic was heavier than past years with 2000 more students on campus particularly for areas outside the Coffee Shop and along the Academic Concourse.

SU's Proposal for 2013 and SAO's Suggestions

25. Mr Marco Ip presented SU's proposal indicating that chanting would be the most important activity for the Election Campaign because students wanted to compete through their voices, be united through chanting, and show their group's uniqueness.
26. On the reason for chanting during lunch hours, it was explained that because that was the duration where there were least number of lessons. Mr Marco Ip also expressed that it was the peak for traffic and students believed they would be seen by most students. It was the only duration that amplifier could be used at the Atrium and hence louder noise levels were allowed.
27. Mr Marco Ip continued his presentation indicating changes to this year's proposal including adding an area for audience so to keep passageway clear near lifts 17-18, increase in counters due to more cabinets competing for office, collection of \$600 deposit for fines, restricting oversized display items and other optional penalties with help from FMO and SAO.
28. The Chairman invited SAO to present their suggestions. Mr Raymond Tang presented SAO's suggestions including shifting the chanting areas further away from the academic concourse, an addition of 8 counters instead of 12 to maintain a clear passageway, maintaining a maximum number of students in each chanting area (propose 40, allowing only nominated cabinets), adopting one penalty system for all violation types instead of separate penalty for different types of violation

and limiting the bulky display within counter areas.

Location of Chanting Areas

29. Members deliberated on the layout plan. Both the Chairman and Prof Roger Cheng commented that the proposed layout blocked the direct route to the Academic Concourse. Prof Cheng asked of the possibility of removing the 4 counters located near the escalator leading to the Academic Concourse. Mr Marco Ip indicated the chanting areas could be moved 2 more meters away from the Academic Concourse to allow a direct passageway.
30. The Chairman solicited comments from members. Mr Jethro Wong shared he agreed with moving the chanting area to allow a passageway and limit them to 2mx2m. However, he felt that the immediate termination of chanting as a penalty would result in strong reaction and banning for the next effective day would be more feasible.

Location and Number of Counter Space

31. Mr Garlic Hsuen indicated, with many new societies being established this year, it would not be sufficient to add only 8 counters.
32. Miss Louise Pang shared that the primary issue would be to allow a passageway, it would be possible to include 4 more counters if they did not create blockage.
33. Prof Roger Cheng suggested that the 4 counters could be put in the 2 middle rows of counters.

Monitoring and Penalties towards Violations

34. Prof King Chow suggested exploring the possibilities of a more focused effort if societies wanted to show solidarity. Also, for bulky display items, he was of view that as long as SU's regulations were clearly stated at start, SU had the jurisdiction to handle violations without dispute.
35. Mr Garlic Hsuen shared that, last year SU Council removed one item and the respective society member challenged the act saying it was a personal item and SU could not remove it. It indicated the difficulty and the confrontation regulators would encounter if imposing penalty immediately.
36. Prof KY Tam agreed that it would be very challenging for student regulators to directly confront societies on the spot and it seemed only feasible to talk to violators afterwards.
37. Prof Kevin Tam shared that the delivery of penalty were to (i) deter the person who violated a regulation in continuing or repeating the act and (ii) deter other people from violation. It would be important for SU to feedback the penalty given all student societies were using the same space.
38. Mr Garlic Hsuen said SU had used this for Registration Days through mass email and this could be adopted for the Student Election promotional period.
39. There were discussions on imposing a fine as penalty. However, it was considered not effective.

Alternative Promotional Activities and Noise Level

40. Prof Roger Cheng shared the view that a more focused approach would allow more space for use. As indicated in the survey, the chanting duration was too long. There were other alternatives for societies to compete with each other such as performing their chants in form of a staged competition to demonstrate societies' creativity. The option of online competitions suggested last year could also be tried out.
41. Prof Stanley Lau suggested a 2-day chanting festival and Mr Jethro Wong a video competition, as discussed last year, could attract students with use of e-Board.
42. Prof Roger Cheng suggested for the University to set up a stage for a 5-minute presentation by nominated cabinets. We could pilot it for one year, collect feedback and SU could run the competition in the future if students found it helpful. This could be arranged on the day before the student election campaign.
43. Mr Green Lam shared that student societies had equated chanting to be the ultimate promotion activity.
44. It was also noted that the noise level and number of students in each chanting area was not clearly stated in the SU's proposal and should be stated in the regulation.

Bulky Promotional Items and Reinforcement of Regulations

45. Regarding oversize items, Members in general shared the view that they should be removed immediately considering safety issues. SU was requested to set the guideline clear this year and notify all societies in advance.
46. Mr Jethro Wong shared that, as SU's Internal Vice President last year, he had relaxed the regulation last year which might have given the message to societies that oversize items were allowed.
47. SU was encouraged to prudently reinforce set regulations. Mr Marco Ip would pass societies the message but expressed he could not guarantee their compliance.
48. The Chairman expressed that CSA had been supporting and endorsing SU's Election Campaign proposal in the past few years on the understanding that SU could monitor the campaign properly. It was against disagreement of some other campus users as CSA trusted SU's ability of self-monitoring. He sought the understanding of SU that there had been many complaints from other campus users.

Endorsement of SU proposal

49. In conclusion, the Chairman summarized CSA's suggestions to SU proposal:
 - a. Chanting areas to be moved further away from the Academic Concourse to allow a passageway.
 - b. Increase number of counters as proposed by SU on condition that 4 counters were added at locations not affecting passageway.
 - c. Number of students in each chanting area and noise level being the same as last year.
 - d. One set of monitoring and penalty system be adopted for all violations.
 - e. Oversize bulky items should be removed from the Atrium.
50. After discussion, members unanimously agreed to endorse SU's Proposal in principle, subject to the above suggestions. SU should work with SAO on the details.

(There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 12:02 pm.)