

## Committee on Student Affairs

Minutes of the 54th Meeting of the Committee on Student Affairs held on 25 Oct 2013 at 3:30pm at Room 7342 (Lifts 13-15).

Present : Prof Karl Tsim (Chairman), Prof Agnes Ku, Prof Christopher Leung, Prof Lam-Lung Yeung, Prof Stanley Lau, Prof Kevin Tam, Prof Kristiaan Helsen, Mr Kenneth Chan, Miss Jessica Ng, Mr Alex Tsang, Mrs Pandora Yuen (Member and Secretary)

By Invitation : Mr Sam Shek, President (HKUSTSU), Miss Bianca Ong (ISA), Miss Michelle Jong (ISA), Mr Sirui Xie (MSSS)

Absent with apologies: Prof Kar-Yan Tam

In Attendance : Ms Grace Ling (SAO), Ms Helen Wong (SAO), Ms Daisy Kwan (SAO)

Action

### Welcome

1. The Chairman welcomed new members – Mr Kenneth Chan, Miss Jessica Ng and Mr Alex Tsang and student representatives in attendance by invitation – Mr Sam Shek, Miss Bianca Ong, Miss Michelle Jong and Mr Sirui Xie.

### Confirmation of Minutes of Last Meeting

2. Minutes of the 53rd Meeting of the Committee on Student Affairs (CSA) was confirmed.

### Support for Sponsored Groups

#### *Background*

3. The Chairman invited Mrs Pandora Yuen to provide background on the University's support for student groups and present the paper for consideration:
  - a. When the University started in 1991, all student groups were affiliated under SU and the mechanism for student groups to receive support and use campus resources was established based on this understanding.
  - b. With time, as the student population and their interest became more, there were increasing number of student groups of diverse interests and other ad hoc groups that need time to gather a critical mass and test out their ideas. These groups also need the University's support.
  - c. In 2010, CSA discussed ways to help these groups and endorsed support to sponsored groups (CSA/43/4).
4. Mrs Yuen further explained the gist of the proposal (CSA/54/1):
  - a. The significant increase in students starting 2012-13 meant further increase in number and diversity of student groups, whether SU-affiliated or sponsored, causing issues related to fair access to campus resources between groups.
  - b. The proposal would be revamp the current mechanism based on the principle of fair treatment for all groups within the current limited resources.
5. Ms Grace Ling supplemented that the key idea would be to propose a 3-year limit to sponsored groups in receiving support from the University, so that groups could test out their ideas while considering affiliation with SU. This was to ensure support to all student groups regardless of their affiliations given limited resources.

#### *Views of Representatives from SU, MSSS and ISA*

6. The Chairman invited views from student representatives in attendance. Miss

Bianca Ong indicated that the International Student Association (ISA) had worked to help students cross the language barrier and integrate into the campus. She found the proposal creating good opportunities for students to conduct and benefit from meaningful activities.

7. Miss Michelle Jong shared her view that the proposal would allow better access to campus resources for international students, most of whom do not have as good connections as other students in conducting activities. Miss Bianca Ong supplemented that some international student groups would seek assistance from ISA to co-organize events and 3 years would be a reasonable duration.
8. Mr Alex Tsang, in representing SU, indicated SU's concern towards the entire sponsored group mechanism. Given SU-affiliated groups needed to abide by stringent regulations but not sponsored groups, this might give SU-affiliated groups the feeling of unfair treatment.
9. Mr Sirui Xie shared that Mainland Students and Scholars Society (MSSS) had been supporting some groups organized by Mainland students, e.g. Bookwarm, that had difficulty in reserving venue.

#### ***Views towards a Time Limit***

10. In addressing concerns towards a 3-year limit, Ms Ling shared that:
  - a. A time limit was set due to the need to focus support to new groups given resource constraints. This would also ensure equal access right and address SU's concern of affiliated clubs' feeling of unfair treatment.
  - b. 3 years would be a reasonable duration to test out ideas and build an audience. Groups that need to go beyond the 3-year limit could apply to a panel.
11. Miss Ong shared upon the Chairman's enquiry that ISA did not see the need to affiliate with SU due to the complicated procedure.
12. Mrs Yuen clarified upon enquiry from Prof Kevin Tam that the evaluation criteria to be used by the panel would be decided by the panel.
13. Mr Chan shared that the time limit would create inconsistent treatment to sponsored groups: some like MSSS and ISA would be exempted forever while other groups would be subjected to a 3-year limit. Also, there were groups such as the Air Cadet that could not join SU due to its constitutional limitation. Continuation subjecting to panel's decision would be subjective and unnecessary.
14. Ms Helen Wong shared that the 3-year limit had worked for her advising to the China Entrepreneur Network (CEN) student group that pushed forth for SU affiliation towards the last year of its sponsorship. Another successful example was the University YMCA – HKUST. The decision to get SU-affiliated was gradual and after the sponsored groups saw the advantages of the affiliation.

#### ***Views towards the Sponsored Group System***

15. Mr Tsang shared that some groups decide to be affiliated with SU because of the right to book campus resources, not because of SU's subsidies. Setting up the sponsored group mechanism would reduce groups' incentive to join SU, particularly given joining SU meant going through a stringent checking process of submitting financial report, annual plans, etc. Miss Jessica Ng was of view that SU-affiliated groups and sponsored groups were not competing on equal grounds due to the variation in checking process and it might cause discontent among SU-affiliated groups.

16. Prof Christopher Leung shared his view that whether or not it was equal grounding depended on the ease of becoming a sponsored group. Prof Agnes Ku expressed it would depend on the panel's criteria.
17. The Chairman expressed that, with the diversification of our student population, there would be increasing number of minority student groups wanting to arrange a variety of activities. All of them should be entitled to the University's support and the University needed to be fair to all groups.
18. Miss Jong suggested supporting activities base on their values and worthiness. However, Mr Chan expressed that evaluation criteria on good values and worthiness would be different with different perspectives.
19. Prof Stanley Lau expressed that the proposal was meant for good but need to be implemented with caution so not to create the impression of the University imposing barrier to student activities.
20. Ms Ling clarified that the proposal was meant to support all student initiatives regardless of affiliations. With limited resources, more students organizing activities of greater varieties and some students arranging one activity a year, getting affiliated with SU would be too complicated for them. Without the sponsored groups and projects system, these groups would not be able to arrange any activities.
21. Prof Kristiaan Helsen and Miss Ong both suggested a pilot period for the proposal.

#### ***Fair Treatment amid Limited Resources***

22. Miss Ng suggested removing the 3-year limit, but Ms Ling pointed out that the limit was set to address the concern towards fair treatment. Mrs Yuen also explained, without the time limit, it would be impossible for staff to facilitate sponsored groups to actively pursue about their future position. It would significantly impact on maintaining fair usage of campus resources and would affect the entire University.
23. The Chairman, Miss Ong and Ms Wong all agreed that the number of student groups were increasing significantly putting pressure on limited campus resources. Without a way to facilitate allocation of resources, new students hoping to access campus resources for arranging activities would be easily marginalized.
24. Mr Sam Shek shared that the time limit would prompt groups to think through their position. Without the time limit, they could linger on the decision forever. Meanwhile, groups that had special reasons for not affiliating with SU could seek special consideration from the panel.

#### ***Concerns towards Exemptions***

25. Mr Chan was of opinion that sponsored groups were already disadvantaged with less campus resources, putting a 3-year limitation would create further unfairness, particularly when groups like MSSS and ISA could be exempted. Criteria set by the panel could be subjective, creating controversies. It was also unfair that MSSS and ISA, being sponsored groups, were supporting other groups such as WILL and Bookwarm.
26. Ms Ling shared background information that MSSS and ISA were special groups that had existed before the establishment of the sponsored group system and had been contributing to the University by serving a special sector of student population.

27. Prof Tam shared that allowing some groups to have special status might leave room for argument in the future. The panel should set criteria to address this issue.
28. Prof Ku also shared that special status to some groups would impose challenge to the panel. Considering fairness and consistent treatment to all groups, the 3-year limit should be applicable to all groups, including MSSS and ISA.
29. Miss Ong shared that if it was for fairness to all groups, she found the 3-year limit for all groups, including ISA, acceptable.
30. Prof Leung expressed concern with completely ruling out exemptions because this would create problems with groups associated with the Department, such as student chapters of professional engineering organizations. It was clarified that such groups were exempted from the 3-year limit.

***Potential Difficulties for the Panel***

31. Prof Tam expressed that two sources of resources might create a scenario where SU-affiliated groups would withdraw their affiliations and opted to apply to the panel. It would be a difficult job for the panel to turn down their applications for support particularly if they had already been attracting a large group of students. It would also be necessary to make clear to students and differentiate the pros and cons of the two sources.
32. Prof Ku expressed she could foresee a lot of difficulties and proposed for CSA to review the system in due course.

***Unanimous Agreement to the Proposal***

33. Prof Lam-Lung Yeung proposed a motion to support the paper with a renewable 3-year limit covering all student groups, inclusive of MSSS and ISA but excluding groups associated with a department, and one more SU-nominated student representative to be included in the panel to represent the student population.
34. Members unanimously agreed to endorse the proposal. The panel shall be formed to further discuss the criteria for CSA's consideration. Terms of service of panel members would be one year.
35. The Chairman nominated Prof Stanley Lau to be the faculty representative for CSA and advised student members to volunteer a representative that could serve for the entire year. Student members should notify Ms Grace Ling once a decision was made. Meanwhile, the Secretariat should follow up with SU on the SU-nominated student representative.

Student members,  
Secretariat

**Update from the Task Force on Use of Campus Facilities by Students**

36. Ms Ling reported that the Task Force met several times and had put in place the following measures: provided 16 additional counters at the Atrium, Academic Concourse and LG5, on-the-day pick up of unused space and free zone at LG5 with fixed furniture. All new measures had been operating smoothly but were not successful in stopping student groups taking up catering areas.
37. Mr Chan suggested to improve the lighting of the free zone at LG5 and shared that some student groups did not prefer the free zone because the area was heavily affected by weather conditions.

**Report on REDbird Award Program**

38. Ms Helen Wong reported that the REDbird Award Program recruited 100 new members in 2012-13. As of Spring 2013, over 500 students had participated in the Program. Awards were granted to 146 students towards end of the year.
39. Members noted that the Program still attract more SBM students. Whilst understanding it was a prevailing trend within the University, it was noted that the Program Team had worked continuously to attract students from other Schools. This included promoting the Program to new students during Program Registration.
40. Faculty members suggested collaborations with Schools where Schools could leverage their co-curricular activities on trained members. Ms Wong shared that this had already been on-going through providing Schools with list of award recipients and regular meeting with Schools' co-curricular activities team.
41. Ms Wong shared that the program had been on a continuous improvement mode since its commencement. Student feedback was collected after each activity and also at the end of each year for evaluation purpose and ongoing improvement.

(There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 5:30 pm.)