

Senate Community Relations Committee meeting

12:00 – 2:00 p.m.

Room 272, Hillman Library

February 19, 2013

Attendees: Amelia Brause, SGB; Kim Barlow, University Times; Laurie Cohen, ULS, Co-Chair; Linda Hartman, HSL; Kannu Sahni, Director for Community Relations; Gail Schwartz, CHS; Tara Sherry-Torres, OPDC; Trevor Smith, CHS; John Wilds, Assistant Vice-Chancellor for Community Relations, Mary Davidson Williams, OBID, Yiwei Zhang, OPDC

The minutes from the January 15th meeting were reviewed and approved.

Remarks from the chairs: Laurie Cohen mentioned that there would be some changes to our calendar and schedule. Originally, we were going to conduct our conference call to the branch campuses during our February meeting, but that will be postponed until the March meeting. John Wilds explained that there isn't generally a full-time person doing community relations work at the regional campuses. Those duties are often shared with another position. Our field trip to Larimer will take place during the April meeting, and we will look into holding the updates from our community partners during the May meeting. Once all of these new dates are set, a revised schedule will be sent to all of the CRC members.

University Update: Dr. Wilds reported on the recent Pitt Day in Harrisburg. It was very successful, and more than 500 students participated. They were very proactive and were able to ask good questions of the legislators and answer effectively. The University held a dessert reception, attended by the legislators, and the Chancellor gave a speech at the reception. The governor has decided to fund education at the same level as last year. The University's goal is to consider the current funding as a "floor" to build upon, so we can at least get back to the level of funding we had in 1995.

Construction on Salk Hall is moving along, and structural steel is going in now. Nordenberg Hall is scheduled to be ready for furnishing by the beginning of August, and the addition to the Graduate School of Public Health is almost complete. The Book Center is expected to have their soft opening in July or early August, and will definitely be ready to open in the fall.

Upcoming Community Service Events: Kannu Sahni is trying to start an organization to increase the participants in volunteer programs at Pitt, and he has been collaborating with the United Way to discover methods for this effort. There will be more regularly scheduled events to volunteer for. One tool he is using is a newsletter he passed around which emphasizes many of the highlights of recent volunteer efforts. There is also a calendar listing events on a monthly basis. One of the benefits of the calendar is making it easier for people to plan their participation in various events. This was used to great effect during the meetings in Harrisburg as an example of Pitt's value to the local community. The target audience for these examples of academic outreach were the state legislators.

In other news, the Office of Community Relations is making plans for the Pitt Partnership for Food drive in April. Kannu and Trevor Smith are working on an event to celebrate Oakland and build pride in the community. On April 12th there will be an all-day party in Schenley Plaza to raise funds for the 175th anniversary of Oakland which takes place next year. In 1839, "Oakland" was first used to describe this location. CHS is also partnering with OBID on their Taste of Oakland, on the same day. There will be family-friendly activities, bands, and a bonfire. One of the purposes is to help get students view Oakland as more than just a campus. In that vein, last year John worked on a student guide to Oakland, which

was vetted with many of the student groups, and this year's Good Neighbor Luncheon will take place in March. This will provide a chance for students and residents to discuss mutual community issues.

Amelia Brause spoke to the group next. She is our Student Government Board representative, and filled us in on what they have up to lately. Two members of the SGB went to a conference in Texas to, among other things, strategize about ways to improve the Pitt Make a Difference Day and improve participation. They are also working on a new project in South Oakland to improve housing through grants. A pilot project is being rolled out, called Service on Saturdays. Every other Saturday a bus would take students to volunteer opportunities in the area. This falls under the aegis of Dean Humphrey.

Community Partners: Mary Davidson Williams of OBID reminded us that the Drink for Pink event at Peter's Pub was scheduled for Wednesday, February 20th. John Wilds will be one of the guest bartenders, and the tips go to the Susan Komen for the Cure charity.

Tara Sherry-Torres spoke about some issues with the Oakwatch: The Oakland Code Enforcement Project. Overoccupancy is a timely issue, and it is being examined in a multi-pronged approach. This refers to more than three unrelated individuals in a dwelling zoned for single family occupancy. It is difficult to identify and prosecute.

The Green Team from OPDC has been active and working with TreeVitalize to get more trees into the neighborhood. OPDC sponsors an annual façade grant through an application process. They will match up to one-half of the price of construction up to \$5000 for homeowner-occupied homes. They are also offering a free 15-minute consultation with an architect from the Design Center of Pittsburgh to discuss options for home repairs. This will take place in the new Career Center on March 6th.

John spoke about a meeting he had with the Oakcliffe Housing Club. Councilmen Daniel Lavelle and Bruce Kraus were also there. Due to redistricting of council districts, Councilman Kraus will be more involved in Oakland than he was in the past, though Oakland will still be represented by three council districts. Mr. Kraus is working on legislation that deals with responsible hosting. This concept places the responsibility of guests at a party squarely with the host, should those guests injure others or their property.

Next meeting: March 19, 2013, 272 Hillman Library from 12:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Submitted by Laurie Cohen, March 12, 2013