

Senate Community Relations Committee meeting
12:00 – 1:30 p.m., Room 272, Hillman Library
February 21, 2012

Attendees: G. Reynolds Clark, Vice Chancellor of Community Initiatives; Laurie Cohen, ULS, CRC Co-Chair; Sabina Dietrick, GSPIA; Marian Hampton, ULS; Linda Hartman, HSLS; Patrick Loughlin, Bioengineering; Whitney Bosnyak, Oakland Planning & Development Corporation; Tracey Soska, Social Work; Maggie Folan, Pharmacy; Martha Ann Terry, GSPH, CRC Co-Chair; Tara Sherry-Torres, Oakland Planning & Development Corporation; Gwendolyn Watkins, Community Relations; John Wilds, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Community Relations; Megan McGrath, SGB representative.

Old Business: Minutes from CRC Meeting of January 17, 2012 were distributed. Laurie Cohen asked for a motion to approve the minutes; the minutes were approved as submitted.

Co-Chair Remarks: Co-Chair Laurie Cohen welcomed Ms. Megan McGrath, Student Government Board representative, to the meeting.

Co-Chair Martha Terry reported that the January 2012 Faculty Assembly meeting heard reports from the Plant Utilization and Planning Committee and the Admissions and Student Aid Committee. The Plant Utilization and Planning Committee presented a report on campus sustainability and green building practices at Pitt. The Admissions and Student Aid Committee noted that new student admissions were up by 5% over last year, and that Pitt was retaining 92-93% of the freshman class. Martha Ann reminded CRC members of the upcoming Senate office and committee elections, and encouraged members to contact Dr. John Baker if they wished to nominate anyone for a Senate office.

University Update: Renny Clark urged CRC members to attend the upcoming Honors College Convocation on February 24, 2012, at the Carnegie Music Hall in Oakland. He noted that Chancellor Nordenberg will be speaking, and three Pitt alumni will be honored with the Distinguished Alumni Fellow Awards. Renny also discussed the state budget cuts. The University of Pittsburgh is expected to see a 30% reduction in funding from last year's funding, a shortfall of approximately \$40 million dollars. The Chancellor recently asked all units to put aside approximately 5% of their current budget. Pitt costs rose by \$70 million last year, and Renny stated that Pitt is at a point where it cannot continue to absorb the continued cuts to state funding. Renny reported that an aggressive letter writing campaign was kicked off by Pitt students, and he encouraged all CRC members to attend the March 13, 2012, Pitt Day in Harrisburg. Sabina Dietrick asked Renny which local legislative leaders to contact, and Renny mentioned several, including Dan Frankel, Michael Turzai, Dominic Pileggi, and Joe Scarnatti.

John Wilds reported that the new freshman dormitory is going up quickly and is on schedule to be ready for occupancy in August 2013. The Salk Hall construction has resumed and is on target, as is construction at Benedum Hall and the School of Public Health.

New Business: Our guest speaker was Whitney Bosnyak, a second-year Social Work student. She is doing an internship with OPDC, and came to update us on some of the developments in West Oakland. The space where Breachmenders used to be at 200 Robinson Street is now called The Corner. The space

was restored by volunteers in conjunction with Friendship Community Church. The Corner is a community center, serving the Oak Hill and West Oakland neighborhoods. Some of the new offerings there are a Saturday Market, music lessons, a coffee shop, and a community night. In the future, the West Oakland community group will hold their meetings at The Corner. Whitney has compiled a list of social service opportunities, which she handed out. A number of the CRC members offered their congratulations to Whitney for her work on The Corner, and continuing the legacy of Breachmenders. In the next year, JobLinks will move into the former Senior Center on McKee Place and Louisa Streets, along with School 2 Career, the youth program run by OPDC.

There was a brief discussion about some of the housing problems in Oakland, and Megan McGrath mentioned that one of the issues is students renting properties with more occupants than those listed on the lease.

Renny informed the group that David Panassiuk, from Oakcliffe Housing Association, is working on opening up the trail that goes down from Oak Cliff to Second Avenue via a pedestrian tunnel.

Community Service Updates: Gwen passed around a form to complete listing service activities for the University's calendar of events. This is for the celebration of the 225th anniversary of the University. A calendar will be posed listing 225 acts of caring on the 225 web site @ www.225.pitt.edu. Other community service events include the Sock-a-Thon, Monthly Food Drives, and Partnership for Food. The Greater Pittsburgh Food Bank is on the second Thursday of the month, and so far, Pitt has contributed food for approximately 600-700 recipients.

Megan spoke to us as a liaison from the SGB Outreach Committee. This is a new committee, and it came about in response to Pitt Make a Difference Day. The Student Government Board wanted to be more involved and recognized an increased need to connect more with the local community. They recently held a "good neighbor lunch" with a mixture of students and residents. One of the goals of March Student Madness month is a total of 17,000 hours community service. The chair of the Governmental Relations Committee, Robert Beecher, is asking students to attend Pitt Day in Harrisburg on March 15th, and he also encouraged students to participate in the letter-writing campaign and call their elected representatives to raise awareness about the University's situation vis-à-vis the budget cuts imposed by the governor.

At a recent Oakland Task Force meeting, someone asked for a summary of reported incidents of student misconduct. Was any action taken against the students? One student was assigned to perform 50 hours of community service for an incident in January. There are increased police patrols, more bicycle officers, and more police on foot patrols. The police have been attending large student parties and asking the students to tone it down, but not in a heavy-handed way.

Gwen Watkins reminded us that staff and faculty can go to the Kurtzman Room in the William Pitt Union to write letters to legislators from nine a.m. to three p.m. today and Wednesday.

Future Meetings:

Next CRC meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 20, 2011, from 12:00 – 2:00 p.m. in 272 Hillman Library.

Submitted March 6, 2012

Marian Hampton