

Ferris State University
Student Life Committee
2022 – 2023 Final Report

Mission Statement

The responsibility of the Student Life Committee is to define and recommend to the Academic Senate institutional policy as it affects students, including but not limited to the following areas: housing, health services, advising and counseling, student conduct and judicial services, financial aid, and publications.

The committee has a primary responsibility to bring before the Senate policy matters in the area of student life. It will be responsible for defining, recommending, and periodically reviewing policy in the realm of student life in order to provide additional direction to those charged with the administration of institutional policy.

The committee will receive recommendations and opinions from other established bodies and committees on student life issues.

Committee Members

Christy Bourdlais (Ex officio)

Amie Calhoun, Recorder

Susan DeVuyst–Miller

Bobby Gill (Student Government), until 1/2023

Jana Hurley (Ex officio)

Becca Klap (Student Government), from 1/2023

John Kriscenski, Chair

Mariah Lab

Lisa Ortiz (Ex officio)

Cindy Smith

Carolyn Sutherby

Timothy Vander Laan

Mark Young

Summary of 2022-2023 Academic Year Activity

The committee met four times during the academic year, once during the fall semester and three times during the spring semester. During every meeting of the committee, the committee heard from the Dean of Student Life's Office and discussed challenges that students were facing on campus. At least one of the Student Government seats was filled during the year and the committee also received updates from the Student Government representatives at some of the meetings.

Some of the student concerns that were discussed at the meetings involved parking complaints, mental health issues, academic dismissals, students not reading emails, as well as financial challenges. Short-term financial relief available for students was also discussed, including the Ferris Relief Fund that can be used for students with immediate food insecurity, housing needs or textbook issues. Students in need of immediate relief should be directed to the Dean of Student Life's Office. Retention strategies and the ReFocus faculty mentorship program were also discussed as well as the possibility of having graduation gowns directly charged to students' accounts.

Additionally, during the spring semester, the committee reviewed the applications for the Outstanding Academic Advisor Award and made our recommendation to the Office of Academic Affairs. It is also important to note that no specific institutional policies were brought forward to the committee to review this academic year and accordingly, no policy recommendations were presented to the Academic Senate.

Discussion

The main challenge that the committee faced during the year was the slow start during the fall semester and the transition from the committee last year. Most of the committee members from the 2021-2022 academic year left the committee, including the committee leadership from the prior year. There was no clear transition plan, and it took a few weeks for the committee to get organized. The first meeting was called in October and the committee members did their best at picking up where the prior year committee left off.

Like previous years, many of the action items and policies that have been addressed by the Student Life Committee were brought to the committee's attention by the Dean of Student Life's Office. There were fewer issues brought to the committee from the Dean's of Student Life's Office compared to the last couple of years. That is a positive sign and may indicate that there were fewer issues compared with the pandemic challenges of the two prior years. Also, the Dean of Student Life's Office was in transition this year due to the current search for a new Dean of Student Life.

Recommendations for the 2023-2024 Academic Year

It is unclear at this point how many of the current members of the Student Life Committee will be returning for the 2023-2024 academic year. It would be helpful if committee appointments were made before the end of the academic year to facilitate committee transition, but one member with a year remaining on their term has volunteered to get the committee started earlier this year. We suggest that the new committee members organize the committee quickly at the beginning of the fall semester and work closely with the new incoming Dean of Student Life to set the direction of

the committee early in the semester. Additionally, we hope to refocus the committee on its mission to make recommendations to the Senate about institutional policy that impacts student life. Perhaps more direct collaboration with the Policies and Standards Committee would be fruitful next year.

Furthermore, our committee does have a couple of recommendations regarding the selection process of the Outstanding Academic Advisor Award that came out of our deliberations this year. We applaud the Academic Affairs Office for including more university members in the deliberations for the Academic Affairs Awards this year, including having the Student Life Committee select the Outstanding Academic Advisor. We do recommend next year that the evaluation rubric is distributed when nominations are solicited and that clear expectations of what is required of nominees are provided earlier in the process. Additionally, some of the committee members felt that length of service should not be a component of the evaluation rubric.