Minutes: November 10, 2011

Attending: Vincent Andrews, Sarah Bennedsen, Joe Burke, Casey Carr, Amanda Carreiro, Derek Chang, Lynnett Chappell-Williams, Paulette Clancy, Christopher Clarke, Betsy East, Janet Corson-Rikert, Linda Croll Howell, David Delchamps, Deborah Durnam, Susanne Fortunato, Greg Eells, Kappy Fahey, Mary Beth Grant, Carol Grumbach, Tanni Hall, Kevin Hallock, Christine Holmes, William Horning, Kent Hubbell, Anne Lukingbeal, Michel Louge, Tim Marchell, Brendan O’Brien, Susan Murphy, Barry Perlus, Lisa Ryan, Lisa Shaffer, Leonard Stellwag, Janet Shortall, Lauren Wetterhahn, Janis Talbot, Catherine Thrasher-Carroll, Shawkat Toorawa, Tow Yau, Anni Wong,

Visitors: Roneal Desai, Jeff Montesano

Upcoming meetings: February 9, 2011, March 30, 2011

Welcome and Introductions: Susan Murphy

Update on the Means Restriction Study: Tim Marchell

1. The architectural firm Office dA was hired in August to complete a study of the 6 Ithaca/Cornell bridges that currently have temporary barriers and propose three means restriction solutions for each of the three types of bridges.
2. The firm has completed Phase-1 (site analysis) of the project and gathered data necessary to progress into Phase 2. During Phase 2 phase (development of pre-schematic designs), the firm invites a continued “conversation” with city and campus communities. A meeting with the City-Cornell Means Restriction group was recently held to provide an update on progress and to elicit community feedback. Office dA is especially interested in hearing what our constituencies think is important for them to keep in mind as they progress into the design stage.
3. Currently there are three main criteria the firm is being asked to balance as planning proceeds:
   - Maintain and/or enhance the current aesthetic of the bridges as a link between people and the natural beauty of the gorges.
   - Provide safe and effective means restriction options for each of the bridge types.
   - Submit designs that are affordable in an era of limited financial resources.
4. Some of the designs and materials under consideration for use with the bridge designs include:
   - A metal that would increase transparency (compared to the current railings and temporary barriers) and would potentially provide an increased view of the gorge.
   - A sub-structure or “fencing” material that could be placed under the bridge and not be seen by pedestrians as they cross the bridge.
5. During Phase 2, Office dA will develop sketches of possible designs using a variety of construction materials for the community to review. On campus, each of the University Assemblies will be asked for input along with the Council on Mental Health and Welfare and other key stakeholders. In addition, a web site will be established in the near future to allow everyone an opportunity to view Office dA’s Site Analysis Report and offer ongoing feedback.
6. One concern shared by a council member was that many of the students and faculty still don’t seem to be well informed about the research findings regarding the effectiveness of means restriction in preventing suicide. Despite articles in the Cornell Chronicle, Cornell Daily Sun and information on the Caring Community website there still remains a good deal of cynicism regarding the project. Student council members commented that they feel student negativity toward this initiative has decreased largely in part due to reading articles in the Cornell Sun. Other student members representing Cornell Minds Matter say that the fences make them feel cared for, and that they know the fences in place have saved lives. It was suggested that more information be shared with faculty directly.

Action Items:
1) Members of the CMHW are encouraged to offer their feedback on the means restriction project.
2) The university communications group will be asked to identify ways to further inform the campus and local community about the research basis for means restriction.

Notice and Respond: Friend 2 Friend:
1. The Jed Foundation has developed a model for mental health promotion and suicide prevention that includes essential areas where activities and strategies need to focus. Cornell has adapted this model to include the following goals/components:
   - Foster a healthy educational environment
   - Promote life skills and resilience
   - **Increase help-seeking behavior**
   - Identify individuals in need of care
   - Provide mental health services
   - Deliver coordinated crisis management
   - Restrict access to lethal means

The Notice and Respond gatekeeper training program for faculty and staff addresses at least two of these areas (in bold above). Building upon the success of this program, thoughts turned toward the development of something similar for students once funding could be secured. During the Spring 2010 semester when Betsy East, Assistant Dean of Student Services in the Engineering College, learned that their college had received an alumni gift, this hope became a reality. Working with the Cornell Interactive Theatre Ensemble and Gannett the student gatekeeper program *Notice and Respond: Friend 2 Friend* was developed.

2. This fall, over 700 students enrolled in the Engineering 1050 First Year Student Seminars attended the program as one of the workshops offered during this 8-week course. In addition, sections were offered a workshop titled *Finding Balance* that reviewed stress management strategies and ways to build resilience. By November, about 50% of sections had received *Finding Balanced*, about 99% of sections had participated in the *Friend 2 Friend* session. The Peer Advisors for 1050, and the Academic Excellence Workshop Facilitators (upper class Engineering students), were also shown the *Friend 2 Friend* program.

3. The program uses a filmed scenario (written and produced by CITE) that shows how three students respond when their friend shows signs of distress. After viewing the scene, a facilitated discussion helps students examine the mental health situation from multiple points of view, including their own, which allows for frank discussion of common barriers students may experience when aware that a friend is struggling, and how to overcome those barriers. Additionally, emphasis is given to naming support resources for students as helpers and for the person in distress. Thirdly, students learn that asking someone about suicide does not put the idea in someone’s head, nor increase the risk that someone will act on suicidal thoughts. The overall message for students is “when you see something concerning, do something;” and that may include talking directly to the person or telling someone else who can follow through with support.

4. Council members then previewed the DVD scenario and shared their reactions:
   - Many described the film as very realistic, and powerful.
   - Engineering faculty, who had seen the program with their 1050 sections, commented on how engaged students were in the discussion. They also thought the program helped students see a way through the problem. They were pleasantly surprised at the level of maturity the students showed during the discussion portion of the program.
   - Who facilitates the program is also important, as that person sets a tone for the discussion.
   - Discussion was more active in the 1050 sections that had previously participated in the *Finding Balance* session. This program gave students a context in which to place the *Friend 2 Friend* session and familiarity with the facilitators.
   - Some felt that it was good to show how two men responded to another man in distress.

5. The following suggestions were offered on how this program could be used in the future with other student groups:
   - This could be used for RA training in the fall.
   - Offer during orientation as a required session, similar to the “Tapestry of Possibilities” program.
   - Could be offered to a variety of populations: international students, graduate students, teaching assistants, athletic teams, fraternity/sorority chapters, etc.
   - Engineering would like to offer it to the student organizations affiliated with their departments.
Action Item: What are the “captive audiences” of students who could participate in the Friend 2 Friend program? Please share your thoughts and suggestions with Jan Talbot (jit1).

Student Assembly Resolution: Recommendations to Faculty Regarding Mental Health and Well-Being of Students.

1. A draft of this Sense of Body Resolution (see attached) was distributed to members for review along with an overview of a training program planned for student volunteers next week.
2. Over the past few weeks members of the SA have met with various faculty members, Dean of the Faculty Bill Fry, and Gannett staff to draft this resolution. Today they asked CMHW members to share their feedback and suggestions on the resolution before it is taken to the SA for a vote.
3. One faculty member expressed a need to find the right balance between student and faculty responsibilities in managing academic workloads and the time conflicts that arise around prelim schedules.
   a. When students take more than 15 credit hours a semester, students also need to assume responsibility for doing the work that comes with those extra credit hours.
   b. The more courses one takes, the greater the likelihood of having prelim / paper conflicts. Should faculty have to make accommodations in these situations?
   c. From a student perspective, it was asked, “shouldn’t faculty be supportive of students who are seeking to further their knowledge and experiences?”
4. Others suggested that the shorter the resolution and more specific it could be, the better faculty would respond.
5. Along with the resolution, SA members are hoping to recruit and train a group of 100-200 students who are interested in discussing this resolution with faculty members across campus. The volunteers will learn more about what things faculty members are currently doing to make their classroom environment less stressful and more supportive for students. Faculty suggestions and ideas from these conversations will be shared with the SA, the dean of the faculty and other faculty members for possible use in their classrooms.
6. The students who prepared the resolution feel there are many small ways faculty can lower the level of stress felt by students in their classroom. By working together to make these small changes and by creating a more flexible policy on how to manage prelim conflicts, they believe that students will realize a big difference in the academic environment.

Note: The Student Assemble voted to pass Resolution 40 on Thursday, Nov. 11, 2011. It will now go to the Faculty Senate for review.

7. After the Student Assembly meeting on 11/11, the SA and several other student organizations held the Cornell Caring Community Celebration to bring students together to show that there is community at Cornell that really cares about student wellbeing. Over 400 students participated in the event.

Minutes taken by Janis Talbot