

## **Student Organization and Recognition Advisory Committee October 5, 2004**

### **Background and Context**

The University recognizes that student organizations can add vitality to student life and enormous value to the educational, personal, and professional growth experience of students and strives to encourage and nurture student involvement in meaningful activities to promote this growth as well as contributions to the larger University community and public. The University also recognizes the desire and right of students to freely associate as they form organizations. There are times in which students find it advantageous to affiliate their organizations with the University in order to access opportunities for certain benefits and privileges such as funding or use of resources. There are also times in which students may form organizations that choose not to affiliate with the University. Depending on the level of affiliation, organizations can be held to the same standards as the University itself in legal, fiscal and ethical matters and are expected by the larger community to observe the highest standards regarding student life and maintenance of a healthy and safe living and learning environment. Independent organizations would be under an obligation to comply with University policy and exhibit University core values only inasmuch as they are composed of students who would normally do so. In this sense, independent organizations would be granted no special rights or privileges. They are treated the same as students/citizens in this regard. In an increasingly complex legal, ethical and fiscal milieu, it is necessary to define and establish a framework for University-student organization relationships.

Over the past 18 months, University administrators, representatives of the community, and students engaged in a thoughtful effort to explore the relationship of student organizations to the University. They identified important questions and developed some preliminary answers regarding financial matters, risk management, scheduling and space allocation, general benefits, resources and privileges, issues related to special interest student organizations (such as those with a religious or political focus or those having exclusive membership practices), student organization rights, responsibilities and governance. They also began to identify the educational needs of student organizations and University faculty, staff and officers related to these issues.

During approximately the same period the Greek community, with support from the Office of Greek Life and others in the University community, created a strategic plan to sustain Greek-lettered organizations on campus and improve the student experience in keeping with the core values of the community. Following the creation of this strategic plan the Vice President for Student Affairs put forth related ideas focused on the health, safety and academic engagement of the student members of the Greek community. Considerable discussion took place. However, no decisions about those proposals were made.

### **Approach**

During summer 2004, the opportunity for bringing together these discussions and work emerged. This opportunity led to the consideration of a new approach. To continue the fruitful discussions that have occurred and to create a framework for relationships between the University and student organizations, including the creation of related policies, procedures and governance mechanisms, the Vice President for Student Affairs will appoint a committee to develop recommendations. Previous discussions regarding Greek Life will be folded into the work of this committee. Although there are special aspects of Greek-lettered organizations there are more similarities with other student organizations than differences.

### **Student Organization and Recognition Advisory Committee (SOAR) Charge**

The Student Organizations and Recognition (SOAR) Advisory Committee exists to create a framework for relationships between the University of Michigan and student organizations that addresses legal, ethical, developmental and fiscal concerns. The committee seeks to improve the ways in which student organizations interact within the larger university community through the identification of organizational needs and the clarification of institutional expectations regarding the operation of student groups, the

establishment of equal access to University resources by student groups, and the creation of systems to ensure that student organizations operate consistently with the university's core values surrounding student life and maintenance of a healthy and safe living and learning environment.

### **OBJECTIVES:**

To develop a comprehensive student organization recognition policy through meaningful collaboration with students, alumni, faculty and staff that satisfies the following goals:

1. Provide opportunities for students to be involved in meaningful activities that contribute to their education and personal and professional development, to the university community, and to the greater community;
2. Provide high quality co-curricular experiences for students, which include positive interactions with university faculty and staff;
3. Provide equal access to the resources and services of the university to all student groups;
4. Maximize the potential created through the presence of student organizations for self-directed/peer-oriented learning;
5. Provide an effective mechanism for ensuring that student organizations comply with the University's expectations regarding financial accountability and responsible stewardship of public resources that apply to all members of the university community.
6. Provide an effective mechanism for ensuring that student organizations operate consistently with the University's core values surrounding student life and the maintenance of a healthy and safe living and learning environment for all students.

### **Composition and Structure**

The SOAR Committee will be advisory to the Dean of Students and Vice President for Student Affairs. It will be a working group that brings the voices, knowledge, and experiences of students, alumni, staff and faculty to the table. The Vice President for Student Affairs will appoint the members of the Advisory Committee and its Sub-committees. The Dean of Students will remain in close contact with the Committee while its work is accomplished. Members will employ a collaborative decision-making process when preparing their recommendations and advice.

A Core Team will be comprised of a chair or co-chairs, staff experts, sub-committee chairs, and students. It will develop detailed charges for the sub-committees, coordinate their work, integrate their recommendations, and prepare final recommendations for the Dean and Vice President.

Sub-committees will be formed to address distinct areas. The precise work and how it will be done will be determined by the core team and sub-committees. The sub-committees identified include:

#### Financial

The financial sub-committee will be charged with developing policy recommendations regarding the appropriate use of University funds distributed to student organizations and appropriate revenue generating activities by student organizations "in the name of the University".

#### Risk Management

The risk management sub-committee will be charged with developing policy recommendations that will promote the responsible management of liability exposure to the University as a result of student group activities.

### Scheduling/Space Allocation

The scheduling and space allocation, use, and review sub-committee will be charged with developing recommendations for the use of University space by student organizations, which is fair and efficient.

### General Benefits and Resources

The general benefits and resources sub-committee will be charged with developing recommendations for the delivery of benefits to student groups depending upon their level of association with the University.

### Special Interest Student Organizations

The special interest student organization sub-committee will be charged with developing recommendations for the recognition and support of religious and political groups, groups with exclusive membership policies such as intramural athletic teams, sororities, and fraternities, and other special interest groups as identified.

### Student Organization Jurisdiction

The student organization jurisdiction sub-committee will be charged with developing a statement of student groups' rights and responsibilities as well as an appropriate governance system. This should include a definition of student group. The sub-committee will also review and revise the University student organization application, currently used by the Division of Student Affairs, so that all schools and colleges may use it in the future.

### Rollout/Registration/Definitions/Evaluation/Follow-up

The rollout sub-committee will be charged with developing recommendations for the presentation of the student group recognition model to the key stakeholders (i.e., students, faculty, deans, directors, executive officers and regents). It will also recommend evaluation mechanisms and follow-up activities.

## **Timeline**

- **Mid-October** Appoint Committee
- **October-February** Meetings and working groups
- **February 21<sup>st</sup>** Submit Draft Recommendations to the Dean of Students
- **February 28<sup>th</sup>** Provide feedback and questions from the Dean of Students
- **March 7<sup>th</sup>** Make Final Recommendations to the Dean of Students
- **March 7<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup>** Share Final Recommendations with campus community for comment & feedback
- **April 4<sup>th</sup>** Dean of Students reviews Final Recommendations and community feedback and makes recommendations to the Vice President for Student Affairs
- **April 13<sup>th</sup>** Vice President for Student Affairs will provide a response and decision
- **Implementation** TBD