Minutes
Fourth Work Group meeting March 27, 2008
Library Conference Room

Attending: Guido Davis Del Piccolo, Gordon Dossett, Nancy Grass Hemmert, Miriam Mohr, Pete Morris; Dawn Murphy, Peggy Kravitz, Tricia Ramos, Alex Rosales, Bernie Rosenloecher, and Toni Trives. Guests: Greg Brown, Melody Overstreet and Natasha Vokhshoori

Correction to Minutes for March 14: Tricia Ramos attended.

Old Business: continuation of discussion on international students

Alexandria Rosales, Acting Associate Dean of International Education and a new member of the Work Group, presented additional information. She noted that the students who spoke at the previous meeting stated concerns that were reflected on the Student Satisfaction Survey. Out of 2,499 F1 students, 719 completed the survey. Results show that students attended SMC because of its transfer reputation and overall reputation and that two-thirds of respondents believed that the college helped them reach their goals. Two-thirds would recommend SMC to their friends. The survey suggests that many international students don’t feel that the college cares about them as individuals. On that question (and several others), Guido (and others) asked about the survey process. On that question, 31.5% of respondents expressed “no opinion”: did that mean that students had given up completing the survey or they didn’t understand the question—or they truly did not have an opinion?

Alex stated that not enough homestays could be found to meet demand. The fee increase that was passed in January, 2007 was not communicated to international students until summer (after many students had arrived in the United States). (In contrast, the fee increase scheduled for this fall has already been posted on the International Education website.) The international office has a fairly large student worker budget, but a total of 20 hours has been cut. The office is seeking to improve communication by publishing a newsletter, reinstituting a web page, and organizing events (such as soccer matches). In addition, to help with orientation, the office is creating a number of short videos that can be downloaded by new F1 students, prior to their arrival.

Environmental Sustainability and Visible Signs of Global Awareness

Melody Overstreet (A.S. Vice President) and Natasha Vokhshoori (A.S. Director of Academic Support) presented an initiative proposed by the Associated Students to create an organic garden near the center of campus, bordering the Art Building wall and opening into the grassy area outside the International Education Center. Food ties people together; the garden would serve an educational purpose and provide a model for sustainable growing methods.
The project had unanimous support. Greg Brown reported that the DPAC Facilities Committee was pleased with the design and layout of the proposed garden and voted support for it. (Members of the Work Group expressed support for it, too.) There are still staffing and union issues that need to be worked out. To insure continuity, a Sustainability Council will be formed to oversee the garden.

The Work Group discussed the proposed changes to the Pico front of the campus. Greg reported that plans call for the location to include: the college bookstore; ice cream store and/or a coffee house; a large art project, and a re-clad Drescher Hall (in part with an LED display that could show video clips). Final decisions have not been made about exactly what displays will go in that space: the Facilities Committee of DPAC will make a recommendation early in the fall. Pete thought that this would be an excellent place for the college to show its commitment to global citizenship. He suggested that the college hold a design charrette—a brainstorming session traditionally used to determine architectural designs. Greg—and members of the work group-- welcomed the idea.

The Work Group briefly discussed the idea of displaying flags. Perhaps vinyl flags could be used, to keep replacement costs down.