



President's Report to the Senate

Regular Business Meeting, March 23, 2016

Can Aslan, GSO President

SU Climate Assessment Survey

I am aware that many of you might be overwhelmed by the messages about the University-wide Climate Assessment Survey. If you have already taken the survey, thank you, once again. If you have not had the chance to take it, yet, I would like to encourage you to do so. The deadline for the survey has been extended until March 28, 2016. Survey can be completed at <http://rankinsurveys4.com/syr/> (in Spanish or English), or a paper-and-pencil version can be obtained from the information desks in the Schine Student Center, Goldstein Student Center, and the Nancy Cantor Warehouse.

Dr. Susan Rankin of Rankin & Associates Consulting, which is serving as the outside consultant for Syracuse University's climate survey, defines university climate as "the current attitudes, behaviors, standards and practices of employees and students of an institution." The climate is often shaped through personal experiences, perceptions and institutional efforts. This survey is vitally important because data from it will help inform plans to foster a more inclusive learning, living, and working environment at the University.

Survey participation is voluntary and confidential. It takes approximately 20 minutes to complete the survey. Once the survey is completed, you will find a link on the last page to participate in a drawing for various prizes.

Please take advantage of this important opportunity to let your voice be heard.

For more information, please visit <http://survey.syr.edu>.

Graduate Student Health Insurance / Employee Benefits Working Group

The new Graduate Student Health Insurance / Employee Benefits Committee ("GSHIWG") has been formed and started meeting by the end of February 2016. The GSHIWG is charged with (a) reviewing the Syracuse University policy for student health insurance requirement as it pertains to graduate students and (b) providing recommendations concerning implementation of the policy to ensure that graduate students have access to an affordable, ACA-compliant plan. In addition to the four representatives from the GSO, the GSHIWG consists of representatives from the Graduate School, Student Health Services, Budget Office, Human Resources, and Student Affairs, along with a faculty representative from Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, who is well-versed in the subject of health insurance, serving as the Chair of the Working Group.

The GSHIWG has, so far, convened twice with more meetings scheduled. Among the initial discussion topics were the charge of the Working Group, main issues that warrant investigation, benchmarking,

and discussion, and comparison of health insurance options (POMCO vs. Aetna) for graduate students and employees. The Working Group continues to collect internal and external data, and discuss what the best option(s) for graduate students and employees is or would be.

While the Working Group will continue conversations, discussions, and exploration into the next year, it has been confirmed that graduate employees (TAs/RAs/GAs) will remain eligible for the SU employee plan in the 2016-17 academic year. However, according to the latest notice issued by the IRS on February 29, 2016, universities have been granted a grace period until January 1, 2017, (for plans beginning before that date,) to adopt suitable alternatives according to the IRS guidelines. While discussions regarding the IRS guidelines and interpretations that prohibit subsidization of student health insurance premiums (costs) based on employment status for certain types of health insurance plans. The IRS notice issued on 2/29/16 can be found at these links: https://www.irs.gov/irb/2016-09_IRB/ar09.html & <https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-drop/n-16-17.pdf> .

Student Health Insurance

The Student Health Insurance Working Group (“SHIWG”) has been meeting weekly for over a year to discuss and make decisions regarding the Aetna Student Health Insurance Plan (“SHIP”) and the SU Student Health Insurance Policy requiring all students at SU to have an ACA-compliant health insurance plan. The Working Group has been evaluating the currently offered SHIP, which will be offered to all students in the 2016-17 academic year, and changes to coverage of the Aetna SHIP is expected to be approved, soon, by the Board of Trustees. A major change includes an upgrade from a Gold Plan to a Platinum Plan. Subject to approval of the new SHIP design, some examples to the changes for the 2016-17 Aetna SHIP include:

- Reduction in annual deductible for preferred care from \$250 to \$100
- Increase in co-insurance for preferred care from 80% to 90% (meaning the insured will pay 10% of cost instead of 20%)
- Decrease in out-of-pocket maximum for preferred care from \$6,340 to \$4,000
- Removal of \$150 ER co-pay
- Removal of \$100 co-pay for ambulatory surgery center / outpatient hospital surgery facility
- Decrease in RX co-pays from \$15/\$45/\$75 to \$15/\$30/\$50

The communications sub-group of the SHIWG will begin University-wide announcements and communications once all components of the SHIP for 2016-17 are finalized, which is expected to be within a couple of weeks. A new website dedicated to student health insurance has also been launched to gather all related information in one website: healthinsurance.syr.edu. All questions regarding the policy and SHIP should be directed to Health Services.

Travel Policy

The ‘Travel Team,’ consisting of representatives from several University offices, along with faculty, staff, and graduate student representatives, continues to meet at least twice a month. Most, if not all, members of the SU community have expressed concerns and grievances with BTI (travel consultant firm) and Concur (travel management system,) which have been extensively discussed over the course of months, leading to exploration of alternative systems for University-wide travel management. While the

work of the Travel Team continues, all members of the SU community are allowed to make travel arrangements using other websites in cases when Concur cannot accommodate cheaper alternatives. In other words, if a graduate student finds a cheaper alternative on, for example, AirBnB, a comparative screenshot showing that the Concur system cannot offer booking through AirBnB is sufficient for reimbursement. In cases where Concur can accommodate the same flight/hotel/car service, a comparative screenshot(s) showing the alternative website offering cheaper rates for the exact same flight/hotel/car service for the exact same dates and times is sufficient for reimbursement.

For any questions or concerns regarding travel arrangements or reimbursement, please contact us at gso@syr.edu.

Report on Free Speech and Recommendations to the Chancellor

In collaboration with the Student Association (SA) and Student Bar Association (SBA), we held a joint forum on the Working Group Report on Free Speech to discuss their findings and recommendations the week before Spring Break. In addition, the Academic Affairs Committee of the University Senate has also had the same discussions and prepared a report to be presented to the University Senate for feedback and approval. Once all feedback is gathered, a final report of recommendations on free speech policies at SU will be presented to Chancellor Syverud by April 15, 2016.

A second, grad-only forum will be planned for the last week of March in order to provide another opportunity for input from the graduate student community. I strongly encourage you to join us in this discussion as the final recommendations to Chancellor Syverud will determine SU policies regarding free speech.

Search Committee: Senior Vice President for Student Affairs (Near Completion)

Last year, the University leadership made the decision to split the Senior Vice President (SVP) and Dean of Student Affairs position, currently held by Rebecca Reed Kantrowitz, into two separate positions. A search committee for the SVP for Student Affairs position has been formed last semester and worked with an external search/consultant firm for the past several months in identifying and interviewing candidates. Out of a total of 16 most suitable candidates in the beginning, the search committee is currently in the process of interviewing the final four candidates. A decision is expected to be made before the end of the Spring 2016 semester.

The SVP for Student Affairs will report to the Chancellor and serve as a member of his Executive Team, while working with the Division of Student Affairs. More information about the position can be found at this link: <http://www.wspelman.com/current/senior-vice-president-for-student-affairs/>

A New 'Student Organizations Policy'

In collaboration with the Student Association, the GSO has been working with the University to create a University policy that will govern the operation and dictate the relationship between the student organizations (SA and GSO) and the University. This work was started in the beginning of the 2015-16 academic year in light of certain issues in previous years regarding the use of funds and based on the fact that there currently is no such policy to which anyone can refer for clarification of potential issues.

This new policy will clearly describe and dictate the relationship between the GSO and University, and the GSO funds and its use within the confines of federal and state laws, and SU policies.

Officer Elections

We will hold elections for five University Senator positions, three At-Large-Senator positions, and four executive officer positions at our last meeting of the year on April 13, 2016. The four executive officer positions are the President, Internal Vice President, External Vice President, and Comptroller. Serving as an officer of the GSO has many benefits, such as networking with members of the University leadership, faculty, and staff, as well as outside of the University, and gaining incredible experience in leadership and academic administration. We encourage you to consider running for a position.

If you are interested in running for an officer position, please reach out to the Executive Board and talk to us about the positions. We will be more than happy to provide more information and answer your questions or concerns.