

## **Committee on Student Affairs**

Draft Minutes of the 61st Meeting of the Committee on Student Affairs held on 23 January 2018 at 2:30pm at Room 7341.

- Present : Prof Karl Tsim (Chairman), Prof Siu-Fai Leung, Prof Lam-Lung Yeung, Prof David Banfield, Miss Chloe Chan, Mr Ka-Shing Chan, Mr Kwong-Hoi Tsui, Prof Robert Wessling (Member and Secretary)
- Apologies : Prof Chi-Ying Tsui, Prof Emily Nason, Prof Jin Wang, Miss Jasmine Ho
- Resource Person : FMO: Mr Jerome Hon
- In Attendance : SAO: Ms Grace Ling, Ms Helen Wong, Mr Donny Siu, Ms Daisy Kwan  
HKUSTSU: Mr Timothy Poon and Mr Terence Wan

### **Welcome**

1. The Chairman welcomed new member – Prof David Banfield from LIFS.

### **Confirmation of Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising**

2. Minutes of the 60th Meeting of the Committee on Student Affairs (CSA) was confirmed without amendments.
3. In relation to CSA requesting furthering information on terms of reference, powers and compositions of the Task Force on UG Hall Allocation Policy Review (TF):
  - a. Prof Lam-Lung Yeung, Head of the Student Housing and Residential Life Office (SHRLO) reported that Prof Wei Shyy appointed him to handle the TF in Oct 2017, which Prof Robert Wessling, Dean of Students (DST), had been actively involved with throughout 2017 to revamp the Hall Allocation Policy (the Policy). The composition of the TF included student representatives from the Students' Union, popularly elected student representatives, Residence Masters, and DST, with the SHRLO as resource person. The TF was to review the Policy, including the composition score system and to discuss and make recommendations on policy changes to the University.
  - b. Members enquired on the appointment and the powers of the TF. Prof Yeung explained the composition had been the same since the previous DST. Appointment was made by DST, to whom members report.
  - c. Prof Yeung further shared that proposed changes to the Policy made by the TF would be submitted to the University Administrative Committee (UAC) for approval before being announced to students in March when application for hall commence. To date, TF members had already agreed on a draft and an open forum for all UG and PG students would be held in February to collect further comments for inclusion. Prior to submission to UAC, the revised proposal would also be tabled at the Deans' meeting for final comments this year.
  - d. There were no further enquiries. Mr Kwong-Hoi Tsui proposed to move the item. Item was moved with no objection.

### **Students' Union (SU) Proposal for Student Election Campaign (Pro-P) 2018**

(Mr Timothy Poon, Mr Terence Wan and Mr Jerome Hon joined the Committee for the discussion.)

4. After the Chairman provided background to the item, members received SU's revised proposal for the Pro-P for 2018 from SU representatives Mr Timothy Poon and Mr Terence Wan, who

were key members of SU's monitoring team (CSA/61/1). There were three key changes to proposal: (i) horizontally-arranged counters instead of a U-shape arrangement, (ii) allocation of counters via lucky draw with swapping instead of bidding, and (iii) resumption of evening chanting at the Atrium.

5. Members had a lengthy hour-long discussion with the student representatives on the three proposed changes, expressing concerns and seeking clarifications.
6. It was noted that the three proposed changes were indeed a request to reverse the University's ruling two years ago, after a Task Force was appointed to review an incident during the Pro-P 2016 where a student was arrested by the police and prosecuted for common assault. Prof Lam-Lung Yeung, who was appointed to chair the Task Force, interviewed involved students. Students were of view that the incident had happened due to malfunctioning of the monitoring team – the penalty imposed and how it was imposed upon detecting violation.
7. Prof Robert Wessling was concerned that there were no effective consequences to disruptive behavior as we handle different cohorts of students every year. Students were reminded that student societies functioned as institutional units and not individuals. They shall bear the consequential sanctions imposed on executive committee members of past sessions due to misconduct. Prof David Banfield agreed in principle but requested for further data on student societies' behavior during Pro-P 2017 as basis to evaluate if there was good behavior that merit the lifting of the concessions.
8. Mr Jerome Hon and Ms Grace Ling supplemented the data regarding Pro-P 2017 for the Committee's reference:
  - a. There were 17 minor violations such as placing decoration or promoting outside designated area, and slightly higher than allowed dimensions for big decorations.
  - b. Three house associations were on probation due to the 2016 incident, which was likely the reason for a more peaceful Pro-P in 2017.
  - c. Evening chanting was banded after the 2016 incident as students indicated that other peers and senior students not running for election, along with non-current university members, e.g. graduates, were present to cheer for students running for election. These cheers would turned into coercion when competition became fierce. There was high potential for situation to escalate to confrontations and bodily conflicts. The University hence decided to restrict chanting to the afternoon, during lunch hours, with the presence of adequate staff and absence of non-current university members whilst not disturbing classes.
9. In relation to evening chanting at the Atrium:
  - a. Members discussed the noise level at the Atrium during chanting, as one member noted he felt that Pro-P 2017 felt substantially less noisy to him when chanting was at the Piazza. The Chairman shared that noise level at the Atrium would go up to above 100dB during past chanting sessions, which HSEO had advised to be unsafe.
  - b. Student representatives argued that noise level during congregation were also high and pledged that chanting was a tradition that was valuable to students and urged CSA members to reconsider allowing chanting at the Atrium. They also pointed out a heat stroke incident in 2017, where a student was sent to the hospital.
  - c. It was noted that there were never any noise complaint during the Congregation. The sound level was not at a sustaining high level for an entire hour which could result in hearing loss of the greater university population.
  - d. Mr Hon shared that FMO strongly object to evening chanting. Over the past five years when evening chanting was arranged, there we no evidence of it ending at the agreed time. It typically overran for 2 hours to 9pm. It also drew in non-current or non-university members that could escalate competitions to bodily conflicts. These outsiders would also confront FMO colleagues, acting to restore order, using foul languages and other gestures.
10. The Chairman assured student representatives that the Committee had always been supportive of student activities and had no intention to prohibit chanting. This discussion was to facilitate the arrangement of the Pro-P so that it would be a well-regulated, well-monitored, incident-free

student activity that minimize disturbance to the rest of the University community, particularly for members working within close proximity to the Atrium.

11. In relation to horizontally-arranged counters instead of a U-shape arrangement, it was explained that the U-shape arrangement was preferred by FMO to ensure sufficient space between the escalator, from LG1 and G/F, and student activities to minimize potential hazard that may occur during peak hours when the Atrium became crowded. It was a flexible layout that facilitate student's monitoring activities, with the placement of a video shooting stand. The arrangement also allowed 2-sided decoration of student counters for better exposure.
12. In relation to allocation of counters via lucky draw with swapping instead of bidding:
  - a. It was noted that the bidding arrangement was suggested by FMO in response to complaint from student societies about bribes and coercion to trade or reduce the size of their counters. Sample cases were tabled for member's reference. Money collected from the bids would be hold by SU as deposit to cover fines charged due to violations. The full amount, less fines, would be returned to societies after the Pro-P. The arrangement was carried out in 2017.
  - b. Student representatives noted that bidding went up to over \$20,000 last year and it was not appropriate use of student money and may hinder participation from student societies that were short of resources.
  - c. It was explained that the initial proposal was to collect a maximum of \$5,000 for each successful bid. However, SU changed the agreed arrangement during the auction to have societies paid the full bid. It was also noted that historical bribes mentioned earlier could go up to over \$20,000 for front row counters.
  - d. FMO also expressed concerns towards swapping. It was noted that when societies of similar nature got too close in proximity, competition typically heated up with higher tendency for confrontations when spirit went high.
13. One student member shared his view as past participant of chanting at the Atrium, which he thought it had helped him grow in perseverance and persistence. Another student member shared that if students thought that chanting was a good activity for them, they should be allowed to chant. Nonetheless, both agreed that student activities should not jeopardize safety. Considering the goods of the greater University community, conducting chanting sessions at the Piazza would likely be a better arrangement than chanting at the Atrium. Other faculty members agreed and added that students and student societies in general should not feel intimidated or felt they had to pay their way to do what they had the right to do via bribes and none shall be subjected to coercion.
14. The effectiveness of the student Monitoring Team was further discussed:
  - a. A faculty member suggested SU to take a pro-active role to increase transparency of its internal procedure. For example, information of the members of the monitoring team should be publicly available along with their roles and duties to avoid any misconceptions that they were acting in secrecy and spying on other students.
  - b. It was also suggested that members of the monitoring team should also be invited from all student societies and appointment should be made openly and transparently to gain confidence from students.
  - c. Student representatives agreed to the suggestions and would work to increase the transparency of their operation.
15. Student representatives pledged to CSA members to trust them and that student societies were more organized now as they were more aware of the consequences of misconduct and would like to improve from their past. External secretaries of various house associations had come to common consent that they would actively work against influence and coercion of past ExCo members to minimize disruptions. This was the reason for requesting for evening chanting at the Atrium, spreading the chanting sessions out during the day and the evening. They also understood the concerns of the greater University community. A student member also stood by student representatives' efforts in minimizing impact and conflict between student societies.
16. The Chairman and faculty members expressed confidence to the good wills of the student representatives and reiterated the Committee's wish for the goods of our students. It was,

however, impossible for staff, least to say students, to regulate and avoid non-current university members from interfering negatively on student activities and instigating conflicts between student societies. The Committee would need to be cautious when considering the impact of such issue.

(Mr Timothy Poon and Mr Terence Wan were excused from the meeting.)

17. The Chairman and members agreed to first vote on the three proposed changes and then on SU's original proposal as tabled in the last meeting.
18. Prof Lam-Lung Yeung moved to accept the three proposed changes from SU. Members voted and there were 2 support, 5 against and 1 abstain. The three proposed changes were not accepted for consideration.
19. Miss Chloe Chan recapped the key elements of the proposal tabled in the last meeting, as requested by the Chairman, for members' consideration:
  - a. Pro-P would run from 1 Feb to 27 Feb w/ considerations of the Chinese New Year. Polling period would be three days from 28 Feb to 2 Mar.
  - b. Counters would be allocated in a U- shape as preferred and allocated via bidding (starting price at \$1,000 – \$2,000 with each bid set at \$100).
  - c. Counter size shall be 2.5m by 2.5m by 3.8m in height and size of big decorations at 2.5m in length by 1.5m in width and 4m in height.
  - d. Chanting to be held at the Piazza in the afternoon only in area agreeable to FMO.Also, CSA members' suggestions to the monitoring team would be included.
20. Prof Banfield moved to accept SU's proposal as outlined above. Members agreed to the proposal unanimously and asked Ms Chan to work with FMO and SAP to incorporate other details.

(Prof Wessling, Mr Hon and Ms Ling were excused from the meeting. Ms Helen Wong joined.)

### **Reports on the REDbird Award Program and HKUST Connect 2016-17**

21. Members received report from Ms Helen Wong on the REDbird Award Program (CSA/61/2) and on HKUST Connect (CSA/61/3) for 2016-17.
22. Members enquired on the attrition rate of the REDbird Award Program, which Ms Wong noted had been on the rise. Ms Wong shared that the program had been revised according to student's feedback to start in November rather than September, to avoid competing choices available from Schools and to allow students to make a conscious decision. It would be better for students to opt out during application if they could not commit to the program.
23. Members enquired on the evaluation mechanism for HKUST Connect. Helen shared that evaluation was conducted for structured service-learning programs and trips, and not for one-off community service. Feedback was collected from both students and community partners, where applicable. Students would evaluate the training, not the service.
24. Prof Banfield proposed to endorse the reports. Members endorsed the reports unanimously.

### **Report on the Student Enrichment Activities Fund 2016-17**

25. Due to time constraint, members would consider the report on Student Enrichment Activities Fund 2016-17 (CSA/61/4) via email circulation.

*[Insufficient replies received via email circulation. Members to reconsider the report in next meeting.]*

There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 4:46pm.