SENATE POLICY COMMITTEE ON SCHOLARSHIPS, AWARDS AND BURSARIES

February 20, 2017 ~ 10:30 am – 12:00 pm
Maggie Benston Centre ~ Room 3107

MINUTES

Attendees: S. Spector (Chair), M. Bhakthan, M. Chua, D. Coburn, J. Derksen, J. Hinchliffe (secretary), R. Khan Hemani, D. MacAllister, C. Percival, K. Stewart, P. Tupper

1. Approval of the Agenda

The agenda was approved as presented.

2. Approval of the Minutes of January 16, 2017

The minutes were approved as presented.

3. Old Business

a. Major Entrance Scholarship (MES) Review

Committee members were asked to come to the meeting having considered the following three questions, to further the discussion:

(1) What goals should the MES program be trying to achieve? Think of your top two or three.
(2) What does success look like for the MES program? For example, X% of recipients should receive their renewal.
(3) What are the underlying principles of the MES program? For example: the program should support SFU’s strategic enrollment priorities.

M. Bhakthan provided a presentation where a breakdown of the percentages of students who enrolled after being offered the Major Entrance Scholarship (MES) was compared to those students who were not offered the MES. He explained this was an aggregate report of all faculties and will forward the presentation to the SPCSAB members for their review.

The chart concluded that it did make a difference in certain cases. The percentage of accepted offers and enrolled students were higher in the Shrum group of students than the other student groups reviewed but overall, money wasn’t always a factor for a student’s decision. A request came from P. Tupper asking for student data just below the cut-off for automatic scholarships as a comparator to those just within the threshold, to see what the uptake of offers would be. This could help determine
if there is a clearer difference between those students whom were offered scholarships compared to those that were not. M. Bhakthan indicated that further data would be provided.

A question was posed as to what happens with the MES monies if no scholarships are accepted? M. Bhakthan explained that monies not utilized would be absorbed by other items within the SBA budget to ensure that all funding was used for the year.

A Tableau Report was then presented showing various scholarship types and students’ assessment outlining their academic continuance for renewal of scholarships. Information included how domestic MES recipients did after their first and second term. Most students (approximately 75-80% of students) who received higher value entrance scholarships (Shrum and higher) met the 3.50 CGPA requirement after their second term.

This provided information on one level- that the majority of students seem to be doing well and do achieve the 3.50 CGPA. However, the challenge has been, as feedback provided by these students through a survey conducted by Financial Aid and Awards tells us, they are so focused on meeting the continuance requirements that they don’t have time to be engaged and get involved in community work. Some of this sentiment along with other relevant feedback was also demonstrated in a national survey conducted through the Academica Group. Why are we creating these barriers for students?

The Tableau report for international students on full ride scholarships (full tuition plus living stipend) outcomes was discussed. A lower percentage (50-60%) met the 3.50 CGPA renewal requirement and another 21% were between 3.33 and 3.49 CGPA after first term. Discussion ensued and it was explained that it is more challenging for international students in terms of their transition to university and to a new country. The members agreed our program is falling behind in terms of flexibility and nimbleness, whether it’s financial or engagement related support in comparison to our competitors, such as UBC.

Question was posed, should we be giving out less scholarships and higher amounts?

What are the renewal criteria for other institutions? Our competitor, UBC, has about 100 major entrance scholarships, of which some are full-ride not just for international students but for domestic students as well, and requires a 3.00 CGPA to maintain it; this is much lower than SFU. UBC also created a transition bursary (equivalent to the scholarship disbursements) by appeal, which gives students who fall below the academic eligibility requirement up to one year to get back on track with their academics to get back their scholarship. What are our goals? How do we handle the students that just missed the criteria? Should we make the continuance CGPA 3.00 or 3.33 from 3.50? A B or B+ average is not a bad average. Many institutions work on a percentage scale for grading rather than discreet cut-offs. For example if a student has 3 A-s and a B, it impacts the average and we need to be cognizant that the 3.50 CGPA is difficult to maintain and two terms isn’t long enough to see the potential of a student.

P. Tupper circulated a document and explained the formula he used to calculate if we are on the right track of adjudication, who should and shouldn’t be offered the MES.
Discussion followed – should SFU be considering scholarships for those students in need as well? There was some discussion to consider additional funding in a scholarship package based on need, but not have it be a requirement in the adjudication decisions.

All agreed our scholarships are not flexible, are too boxed and not very transparent. Further discussions and some foundational development of the program has been initiated. A sub-committee of SPCSAB will be convened over the Summer to review potential policy and program recommendations before bringing it to SPCSAB to discuss. The goal is to have changes to the scholarship program be in place for students entering in Fall 2018 onwards. Sub-committee will consist of Stephen Spector, Paul Tupper, Colin Percival with Rummana Khan Hemani and Manoj Bhakthan.

4. New Business

a. Awards for adversity - challenges in adjudication (For Discussion Only)

Awards for overcoming adversity; there are 4 donor funded awards and about 40-50 applicants; small awards with four different terms of references.

Discussion ensued with the focus on whether these types of awards should become bursaries instead as most students applying are in financial need and don’t necessarily want to be recognized for overcoming adversity. It is also difficult to adjudicate and compare circumstances.

All agreed the parameters of some of these smaller awards are restrictive and warrant a change in policy as well as a discussion with SFU University Advancement regarding how to discourage any future awards of this nature.

There was discussion on how to present and reword the language in the terms of reference whereas a student must meet the criteria of the award plus possess x, y and z eligibility requirements. The members requested a couple of sample applications to review and prepare for a future SPCSAB meeting, Manoj will supply sample applications with the terms of reference.

b. External Entrance Scholarships administered by FAA - eligibility for in-course scholarships (For Discussion Only)

M. Bhakthan gave a brief overview of this agenda item explaining that according to our scholarship regulations, students receiving external entrance scholarships, sometimes of a significant value, are not eligible for any other University administered in-course scholarships until the entrance scholarship is fully paid out. This is based on the current regulation that states “A student holding an ongoing Simon Fraser University Entrance Scholarship is not eligible for any other University administered scholarships until the entrance scholarship is fully paid out. This policy applies to any term in which an entrance scholarship is deferred.” Should this apply to externally funded but SFU administered and adjudicated scholarships?

- No consensus from the members. One member asked whether student can receive the scholarship in name only and not have to receive the funding given the regulations. It seems
students may accept the scholarship for the prestige not the money; if this was considered, then should it not be open to all entrance scholarships? All agreed further discussion is needed and a consultation with SFU University Advancement would need to happen. Would donor be ok with a student receiving the honour without the monetary requirement associated with it? What policy changes would need to be made to have this happen, if approved? Any other things that need to be considered? Manoj to follow up.

Meeting adjourned at 12:00 pm
Minutes prepared by R. Balletta