

FGLI Committee – Meeting Minutes December 15, 2017

Attendance:

Ariel Adler '20
Bob Coughlin, Financial Aid
Jen Gagne '19
Teshia Levy-Grant, Equity & Inclusion
Ryan Nelson '19
Tenzin Ngodup '20
Melisa Olgun '20
Dean Mike Whaley, Student Affairs
Jen Wood, Student Affairs

Since our last full committee meeting in October, each of the three sub-groups has met to discuss FGLI issues in their focus area. This meeting was an opportunity for each of these sub-groups to provide updates to the full committee. Notes from each of these groups are below:

Group #1

First Gen Support and Mentoring

This group will review and recommend improvements to First Gen support and mentoring programs, including the First Things First (FTF) pre-orientation program, Connections mentoring program, etc.

Dean Teshia gave the report on behalf of the group. She reports that some of the students hired to work in the Resource Center are focused on FGLI concerns as part of their regular duties. The group has discussed the best logistics for clothing and coat drives including: timing, collaborating with donors, and potential locations that would be more comfortable than Usdan café's very public atmosphere. The group has also discussed challenges with dining meal plans and point utilization. The group has discussed the challenge of accessing services without outing oneself as FGLI. The group also discussed the costs of textbooks and other educational materials as well as how the reserve system at Olin might be improved to better meet the needs of FGLI students. Academic Affairs is conducting an audit of the costs of courses (fees and/or educational supplies associated with a course). Academic Affairs is also considering some training for faculty to build awareness about how fees and costs may create barriers for some students. Finally, Dean Teshia indicated that the group is collecting feedback on FTF 2017 in order to begin planning the 2018 program.

Group #2

Financial Aid for Low Income Students

This group will work with Bob and Michelle in Financial Aid to understand the implications (costs, impact, equity, etc.) of some of the issues and ideas raised by the FGLI Committee and Fin Aid staff. The group may also help Bob and Michelle prioritize

enhancements as well as discuss the balance/trade offs between more aid for enrolled students and admitting more students with need (i.e. how to allocate finite resources).

Bob Coughlin gave the report on behalf of this group. Bob indicates that the group began their work by looking at communications strategies for clarifying various aspects of students' financial aid packages. He indicated that the Fin Aid Office is planning to facilitate workshops on debt and how to make decisions about taking on educational debt. Ariel suggested that information on loan/debt capacity would also be helpful. The group discussed the workshops currently providing information on the financial aid process – specifically, thinking about best delivery method (in person and/or via web) as well as the timing of when such information would be most helpful.

Bob indicates that the group will meet again after winter break to review and prioritize potential financial aid policy changes. Bob indicates that the institution has increased the Fin Aid budget pretty substantially in recent years (i.e. the move to “prior-prior year” methodology for this year increased the discount rate from 32% to 36%, costing Wes ~\$2M more this year). Bob indicates that the group will review issues and suggestions from past meetings when they convene after the break. Dean Mike suggested that all FGLI Committee members might be invited to the next meeting as there is significant interest in this work, and Bob readily agreed.

Dean Wood asked if Fin Aid has a sense of how many students pay all or a portion of their expected family contribution. Bob says that the data is hard to get from currently available information.

Bob indicated that Fin Aid is collaborating with the Gordon Career Center (GCC) to get all student campus jobs into Handshake (software used by the GCC). This will help Fin Aid to understand how many jobs are available and to better track work-study utilization. The software will also improve students' ability to easily find campus job opportunities.

Group #3 Communications

This group will review and improve/enhance communications with all students (but especially FGLI students) about available resources and support mechanisms/programs.

Dean Mike and Dean Wood gave the report on behalf of this group. Dean Mike and Dean Wood met with Frankie Pereira '20 at the Resource Center, who, along with Alba Alvarado Sandoval '20, is working on a student peer-to-peer website as a resource for FGLI students. Dean Wood and Dean Mike are reviewing and updating the information currently available on the FGLI website (link below) to be sure it includes listings of all of the resources available and reflects up-to-date information for students. They expect to have the revised draft of content finished by the end of winter break. Dean Mike

indicates that the formal website will complement the new site that Frankie and Alba are developing. http://www.wesleyan.edu/inclusion/first_generation.html

Melisa suggested exploring both formal and informal textbook resources available online, and indicated that we may have to assess copyright compliance for some of these resources. It was also suggested that a link to Wesleyan's meal plan calculator might be a useful resource.

The sub-groups will continue their work over the winter break and early in the spring term. Dean Mike suggested that the full group meet again prior to spring recess for updates and all agreed.

Respectfully submitted,

Dean Mike Whaley
VP for Student Affairs