

1980

Board of Trustees Student Affairs Committee

University Of Maine System

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UNIVERSITY OF MAINE
BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Hastings Lounge, Gorham Campus
University of Southern Maine
October 27, 1980

Student Affairs Committee

PRESENT: Chairman, Elizabeth Russell. Staff: Robert Binswanger,
Mary Ann Haas, Robert Woodbury, Constance Carlson, USM students.

Dr. Russell presided over an Open Forum which had been scheduled to provide an opportunity for USM students to discuss topics of interest to them. Discussion focused on the needs of commuter students, student advising, and students' role in evaluation of faculty for tenure.

Commuter students. It was pointed out that many activities at USM are designed primarily for those who live on campus. Since 7,000 of the institution's 8,000 students are commuters, it was suggested that more should be done to bring these students into the mainstream of campus life. There was discussion of the need for an appropriate meeting place for commuters, many of whom are married and have families of their own. President Woodbury reported that the Trustees have been focusing on the needs of the so-called non-traditional students and that USM has begun to implement the recommendations which emerged from the Board's ad hoc Committee on Student Life.

Student advising. The students present discussed their experiences with the USM system for student advising. There was consensus that the quality of student advising varied substantially among the academic departments and a number of students expressed dissatisfaction with the system to one degree or another. Undeclared majors and transfer students, particularly, tended to encounter problems. Departments which require student participation, specifically music, theater and art, were reported to provide excellent advising services and the Intown Learning Center was also highly rated in this respect. One student reported that he and some other undergraduates had established a students' association to help those interested in law school, since no advising was available for those who expected to pursue a career in law. Students in the association share the information they have gathered and try to help each other but they are concerned for the lack of expert advice and counselling. Another student reported that a new Advising Information Department had been established with offices at the Portland campus and that this Department which includes a Career Counselling Office, is proving very helpful to students.

Student evaluation of faculty. There was brief discussion of the students' role in the evaluation of faculty for tenure which is accomplished at the University through the course evaluations required of the students. Dr. Russell noted that these evaluations make a valuable contribution to the potential for improvement of faculty teaching. The students said they were interested in having access to the results of their evaluations as

a source of information about the way individual courses are taught. Dr. Russell reported that students at UMO often conduct a separate evaluation and these results are shared. President Woodbury pointed out that course evaluations can be useful to students as a source of consumer information on the individual courses, to faculty as feedback for improvement of teaching quality, and to administrators as one of the tools for assessing performance. He said it would be important, however, to keep these distinctions separate and that it might be necessary to use more than one evaluation instrument to achieve the best results.

Before the session adjourned, Dr. Haas responded to a comment made during the course of the discussion by a student who wondered whether student concerns actually received serious consideration by the decision-makers. Dr. Haas pointed out that there has been a chain of events which has led to positive change and these events have been initiated by students themselves, primarily through discussion of the issues which are of concern to them. She indicated that the basic research for the Report of the Trustees' Committee on Student Life came from the issues raised by students and aired in the meetings of the Student Affairs Committee and in the Forums the Committee has hosted regularly on all campuses over the past several years. Dr. Binswanger reported that there were more voting student members than Trustees on the Board's ad hoc Committee on Student Life, and the Trustees who served on the Committee have been vocal in their commendation of the students' positive and worthwhile contribution to the study.

Dr. Russell thanked the students for their participation in the Forum and the session was adjourned.

JoAnne R. Magill
Clerk of the Board