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INTRODUCTION

What is a Student Advisory Committee?

Student Advisory Committees (SACs) are student groups established within departments to promote communication and interaction among students, faculty, staff, and administrators. They should be designed to

- promote academic and social activities
- encourage collaboration with other student organizations
- provide service opportunities
- perform and facilitate the Faculty Retention, Promotion, and Tenure (RPT)
- to facilitate the course evaluation process
- build campus community at the University

The SACs were created to provide students more opportunities to provide input at the department level. Involvement in the RPT process affords students the opportunity to have a voice in the retention and promotion of faculty within their department.

SACs are both a social and an academic organization within their department and as such they advance involvement opportunities, encourage participation in departmental activities, and work together with others to build campus community.

HOW TO ORGANIZE A SAC

SAC Structure

- A. A SAC Chair will be chosen or elected from the students in each department, division, or program of the university according to the direction of the SAC Advisor.
- B. It is recommended that each SAC have eight (8) to twelve (12) members on the committee with various members appointed to leadership positions (Vice-Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, etc.) as needed.
- C. Each department, division, or program at the University may have up to two (2) SACs, undergraduate and graduate, as needed.
- D. Non-majors are allowed in SACs which are non-major related, i.e. Bennion Center, Honors, LEAP.

Setting up a SAC

- A. All elections and appointments for SAC officers will be held at the beginning of each school year. Officers should be in place by the end of the third full week of fall semester.
- B. In addition to the chair, a chair-elect position should be created in each SAC. This officer will serve the duration of the current academic year and as the chair in the following academic year.
- C. The SAC Chair (or a SAC member designated by the chair) will run the elections for the SAC Chair-elect.
- D. If the SAC Chair position should be vacated during Spring or Summer Semester the Chair-Elect should

immediately become the Chair for the remainder of that academic year. If the Chair position should be vacated during Fall Semester, the Chair-elect should immediately become Chair for the remainder of that school year and an election should be held for a new Chair-elect.

Recruiting new SAC members

A SAC should try to have broad representation in its department. SACs can use, but are not limited to the following ideas to recruit members:

- Request departmental faculty, staff, and advisors, and administrators to encourage students' participation in the SAC. This may include handing out SAC materials in advising sessions, announcements in class, and posting information on boards with each department.
- Personal contacts and invitations from the SAC chair or another member of the SAC encouraging students to get involved.
- Use the internet and advertise on the department website.
- Plan activities and service projects that will encourage students to get involved.
- Hold Open Houses in the department (some funding is available for open houses through ASUU).
- Produce a newsletter discussing current events in the department and encouraging student participation.

- ASUU will provide general advertising during the SAC election period encouraging students to get involved in their respective departmental SAC.

A SAC will be more effective by encouraging participation from a broad cross section of students in its department.

SAC Registration

SACs should register with ASUU each year by the end of the first week of October (see Appendix for a copy of the registration form). Registration forms can be obtained from the ASUU Office, Union 234 or online at www.asuu.utah.edu.

After the new officers are elected, the SAC Chair should take their completed registration form to ASUU.

Registering will

- Give the SAC official University recognition
- Allow the SAC to receive ASUU funding and University discounts
- Enable the college's senator to contact the SAC
- Provide ASUU with the contacts to keep the SAC informed of training sessions, pertinent issues, and activities.

SAC Training

After the SAC is organized, two training sessions are required in order to provide the SAC with necessary information to function properly.

The first training session will be held at the beginning of the Fall Semester and will include an overview of duties and expectations, registration of the SAC with ASUU, and leadership training

The second training is presented during the Spring Semester by the Office of the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs. This meeting is designed to acquaint and familiarize students with the RPT process.

ROLE AND PURPOSE OF SACS

Promotion and Organization of Departmental Activities

One of the primary functions of SACs is to promote and encourage involvement within their department. The Student Advisory Committee should encourage active student participation, develop activities in which students can participate, and assist with organizing and facilitating programs which foster departmental interaction. SACs should promote both academic and social activities. Here are a few ideas for getting involved:

- Sponsor student-faculty activities, i.e. picnics, lectures
- Plan social activities, i.e. BBQ, Bingo, etc.
- Cocontact similar departments at other universities and arrange a social, a research exchange, or other activity.

- Contact the Bennion Center (581-4811) and schedule a department-wide service project.
- Hold a Book Sale/Exchange.
- Publish a newsletter outlining current departmental concerns, faculty “profiles,” and opportunities for student involvement.
- Sponsor demonstrations or lectures of student and/or faculty work or research.
- Have a “preview meeting” for upcoming classes for the following semester and invite professors to present an informal overview of their classes.
- Organize a seminar for students, including information on careers in the major, career placement, and/or graduate school.
- Hold panel discussions concerning student issues.
- Set up a freshman mentoring program or assist with the department orientation program.

These are only a few ideas of ways to get the faculty and students interacting more frequently. It is strongly encouraged that SACs interact with student organizations in their department as well as other SACs through out the University. An example may include working with the ASUU Presenters Office to bring in a renowned lecturer or working with the Bennion Community Service Center to involve your SAC in a service learning project.

Promotion of Interdepartmental Communication

Student Advisory Committee members can serve an important role by acting as a liaison between the various groups that make up the community of their department. Members gather pertinent information about departmental activities and notify students through newsletters, classroom announcements, e-mail lists, etc.

Each department is unique as to the type of activities it promotes to enhance scholarship in its discipline. SAC members should be well informed about these activities in order to communicate opportunities that will enhance their fellow students' educational experience. SACs can help advertise departmental or discipline specific activities, or sponsor their own.

Equally important, members are responsible for making department administration aware of important issues raised by students. The SAC should appoint students to all departmental committees where appropriate and should promote student participation on all levels of department committees.

Course Evaluations

The SAC works closely with their department in preparing and distributing course evaluations. According to University Policy & Procedures (refer to PPM 9-7:14 in the Appendix), the chair of the student advisory committee meets with the chair of the department at the beginning of the year to develop a policy for course evaluations for the year. The policy adopted shall be one mutually agreeable to the department administration and the SAC. The policy

shall state the criteria for determining which courses are evaluated and a mechanism by which they will be evaluated (see policy example in Appendix).

All departments will use the Standard University Evaluations form and it is the responsibility of the SAC and the department administration to determine the department specific questions that will be added to the back side of the evaluation form.

Community Outreach

Students at the University have a unique opportunity to use practical applications of their academic knowledge and provide a service to the community. Each academic discipline can identify certain areas of expertise that would be of benefit to individuals or programs in the community. SACs can help promote service learning opportunities in their discipline. The Bennion Center can be of assistance in identifying outreach opportunities.

Retention, Promotion, and Tenure

Faculty quality in no small way determines the quality of an institution and the education it provides its students. Evaluation of faculty during the probationary period and post-tenure is an important part of monitoring faculty quality, and student input and advice plays a crucial role in this evaluation. The department SAC is the most common and effective means of providing this evaluation. The evaluation is especially important in the years leading

up to the tenure decision, commonly must decide whether to award tenure or end the probationary period with a terminal contract. Tenure is a guarantee of permanent position for faculty with the University, intended to protect academic freedom from political pressures. At the same time, it initiates a long-term contract between a faculty member and the University to work to the mutual benefit of each.

In each department, an RPT (Retention, Promotion, and Tenure) Advisory Committee is formed to make recommendations and vote on the retention, promotion, and tenure of faculty members. Prior to the convening of the department RPT Advisory Committee, the department chair requests the department Student Advisory Committee submit in writing their recommendations on the candidates proposed for tenure, stating as specifically as possible, the reasons for each recommendation. (For an outline of the RPT timeline see the Appendix.)

RPT recommendations should be completed and submitted to the departmental office no later than April 15th. The department chair shall forward to the department RPT Advisory Committee the recommendation submitted by individual faculty members, the department SAC, and any statements submitted by the candidates for tenure. If the SAC fails to report its recommendations within the time limit designated by the department, such recommendations are deemed conclusively waived. The SAC report becomes part of the permanent file and will be read by all subsequent review levels. The faculty member has access to this file and will be able to review the SAC report. After

discussion and vote by the RPT Advisory Committee, the case is then reviewed by the department chair, the College Dean, the Academic Vice President, and finally the President of the University, who makes the final decision to award or deny tenure, retention, or promotion. The SAC should receive a memo and/or copy of the recommendation from the Dean of the College or Academic Vice President indicating the outcome. The Student Advisory Committee may appeal the Vice President's recommendation. The Department Chair should inform the SAC of the final decision made by the President of the University.

EXPECTATIONS OF SACS

Each SAC has a responsibility to see that the students in their department as well represented. In providing that representation there are a number of expectations that should be realized. The following are the basic expectations for a SAC:

- **Be a liaison between the students, faculty, and student government.** Make sure that the students are aware of the course offerings, educational opportunities and activities in the department and on campus. The SAC can be a tool in sponsoring events for their department and receiving funding through ASUU. Let the students know that their input is paramount to providing a good line of communication with the faculty and department.

- **Advocate students issues.** The SAC is the students' representative voice at the department or program level. When students have problems with members of the faculty or administration, with university policies and procedures, or with academic and social issues, the SAC should help the students marshal problems and issues through the appropriate university bodies to a satisfactory resolution.
- **Sponsor/Coordinate activities.** The SAC has the ability to put together events or activities that will benefit the students in their department. Funding can be provided through the department, through the department, through ASUU with the help of the Senator in the particular college, and through fundraising efforts of the SAC. Through the SAC orientation in the fall, the SAC can find out exactly what can be funded through ASUU and how the process works.
- **College Student Council.** In making sure that the students are represented, monthly meetings with members of the Senate, Assembly, and the SAC should be held. These meetings are chaired by the College Senator and will be a way of keeping open relations with the student government and letting them know the needs of the students. Any students may be invited to attend and should be encouraged to do so. To find out who your Assembly or Senate members are contact the ASUU Office at 581-ASUU (2788).
- **RPT Process.** The SAC has a vital role in the Retention, Promotion, and Tenure process for the faculty at the University of Utah. It serves as the voice

of the students when members of the faculty are up for promotion or tenure. The SAC will be the vehicle in making sure that the voice of the students is heard.

- **Review of tenure.** The SAC has an important role in providing input in the review of the tenure process. The SAC serves as the student voice to the departmental committee that is charged with reviewing a tenured professor.
- **Course Evaluations.** Members of the SAC are responsible for handing our course evaluations each semester. These evaluations are one of the most important elements of the RPT process. It provides the students with a voice in how their courses are being taught and their needs.

OBTAINING FUNDING FOR YOUR SAC

Departmental Funding

Departments provide funding for all costs related to processing evaluations and RPT and provide funding costs of SAC elections, if any. Departments will generally work with SACs to provide funding for student needs which may include work space, telephone service, meeting rooms, supplies, photocopies, activities, and other needs.

ASUU Funding

ASUU may provide general funding for advertising of general SAC elections at the beginning of Fall Semester.

Each SAC is eligible for funding each semester for an open house in its department. SACs may submit legislation through its ASUU Senator to request funding for other activities (please see ASUU for funding restrictions).

To access ASUU funding you must do the following:

1. Work with your ASUU Senator to draft and submit legislation to the ASUU Senate. Only ASUU Senators may submit legislation to the ASUU Senate. (For SAC open house money, skip to line 4.)
2. Have your Senator present legislation before the ASUU Senate. SAC representatives must attend the Senate meeting at which the bill is presented, in order to answer questions about the bill.
3. Up to two (2) weeks are required for presidential review of Senate-approved legislation.
4. Once legislation is approved by the Senate and signed by the ASUU president, fill out an expenditure request form in ASUU (see appendix for a copy of this form).
5. Allow three (3) business days for processing. For open house funding, allow two (2) weeks for processing.
6. Check back with ASUU before spending any money to make sure the expenditure request form has received all the appropriate signatures (ASUU will not reimburse SACs for monies that were spent or committed prior to receiving all necessary signatures). The ASUU Finance Board Chair or the ASUU accountant can answer any questions you may have regarding SAC funds.

7. After all signatures are received on the expenditure request form, a SAC may commit and spend the allocated money.
8. Save all receipts for reimbursement and possible audit. Take receipts for reimbursement. Allow three to six weeks for a reimbursement check.

Fundraisers

SACs may hold fundraisers to raise money for SAC expenses not funded by their departments or ASUU. Some suggestions include:

- Selling food and beverage items in the department student lounge.
- Providing services to the public that are in the field of interest in which the students are studying.
- Use vendors to provide fund raising activities.

With each fund raising activity, make sure that there is coordination with the department to ensure that University Policies are followed.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Why do I need to register my SAC?

In order to be eligible for any kind of funding through ASUU the SAC must be registered. It is also a way of giving the necessary information to ASUU so that they know which SACs have been established each year, and who should be attending the SAC orientations and trainings.

2. How do I register my SAC?

Go to ASUU (located in the Union, room 234) and fill out the registration sheet. SAC registration may also be completed by visiting the ASUU Website at <http://www.asuu.utah.edu>.

3. What is RPT?

RPT stands for retention, promotion, and tenure. This is a process which professors must complete in order to be promoted and granted tenure at the University.

4. Why is RPT important?

Many students are not aware that the input they give in course evaluations is taken into consideration when faculty members are up for promotion. Students play a vital role in the RPT decisions. RPT is the SAC's opportunity to represent the students and let their voice be heard. It is the process through which we can best represent the desires of our students concerning University faculty.

5. How do I obtain funding for an open house?

Each semester SACs may be eligible to receive funding for an open house. The money can be obtained by completing an expenditure request form in the ASUU office (see Appendix for a copy of the form).

6. How do I obtain funding for events we are sponsoring?

You first need to talk to the Senator of your college and talk to them about the event and what funding you would need. They can then sponsor your bill and take it to the senate for a vote. Be sure to plan ahead as the process can take some time.

7. If I have questions, whom can I contact?

Students should first contact the Academic Affairs Director at the ASUU Office (581-ASUU) or the Student Senator that represents their academic college. Students can also contact the Department Chair or SAC Advisor in their department.

The representative from the Office of the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs is Les Cook. He serves as the University's SAC Advisor and can assist with additional questions you may have about SACs. Les can be reached at 581-7069 or at lcook@saff.utah.edu.