August 19, 2011

SUBJECT: Response to the Review of CCO & SA and SCP Report

Dear Houston:

I want thank you for the opportunity to clarify/respond to the report submitted by the external review committee. Overall, I thought the review reflects a good representation of the programs and supported several of the observations/challenges I have had over the years. I also believe there are some good suggestions provided. There are not many initial comments to offer, but clearly a few warranted.

- If not already, when the more generic term is being used throughout the report, Campus Center Operations should be used rather than Student Activities.
- As it relates to the observation that it seems that there is significant room for improvement with communication between Conference Operations and the Student Activities Program, I think this may have been misunderstood. The communication between the two departments is good; however, what needs to be improved is the ability for Campus Center Operations & Student Activities to be able to use the reservation scheduling system to use data independently of Conference Operations to produce its own reports and utilize data to produce worksheets for its student workers while using less administrative time.
- Although outside the specific purview of Campus Center Operations, it is definitely true that there is a need for more medium sized event spaces (equivalent to the Forum South Lounge – which we are also phasing out) on Grinnell’s campus.
- Other than the comment regarding no flexibility for the placement of the podium in JRC 101 (which is only partially true), I am unclear of the general statement that the space lacks setup flexibility. The podium can actually be placed in several locations within the space; however, there is not much flexibility for moving the AV cabinet, but why would one considering the location of the permanent screen (which is far from unusual).
- The total of the multicultural spaces provide far more space than most of our peers, especially within a campus center/college union. As individual spaces, they may seem small to the user; however, most are more than twice the space previously allocated to the individual groups. The larger group space is meant to be preference to JRC 209 when not used for classroom space. I agree that they are not visible or welcoming to someone passing by the space.
• As it relates to the recommendation for a tiered student management system, this is something I have always wanted to employ; however, the student confirmation of the subtle (actually, not so subtle at times) culture of enabling one another remains a huge challenge to this idea.

• There is a formalized pre-Harris Center event meeting that all event organizers must have with the director prior to the event.

• As it relates to the technical complexity of issues in the Harris Center and arranging for an outside evaluation of the Harris Cinema, this is regularly done by the vendors who both, installed and/or service the equipment in this space. There has been an on-going lack of trust from the recent SGA Films Chair that there has to be something wrong with the overall sound of the films. The sound is checked annually.

All in all, I believe the report to have provided some very useful insight and recommendations. I am looking forward to evaluating the information further to determine what might be best to assist with enhancing the services we provide. I sincerely appreciate the time and efforts put forth by each of the committee members, individually and collectively, to dedicate themselves to assisting us with reviewing and improving what we do.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael D. Sims
Director of Campus Center Operations & Student Activities