

2011 Annual Meeting Minutes

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-Alex Kulenovic (Analysis of Economic and Political Situation Facing Public Higher Education, bottom of Notes)

Attendance:

Alex Kulenovic, Ben Taylor, Catt Chaput, Chris Power, Corey Sloane, Craig Slatin, Dale LaBonte, Ellen Martins, Ferd Wulkan, Frank Olbris, Greg DeLaurier, Hollywood Aman, James Ryan, Janet Benn, Jim Scafidi, JimTarr, John Wooding, Julie Sanabria, Ken Haar, Manny Pintado, Marie Hedrick, Marilyn Frankenstein, Max Page, Mike Fox, Nicole Ouimette, Paola Ozuna, Patrick Burke, Ron Weisberger, Ryan Manita, Stasha Lampert, Tara Kirby

1. Overviews

a) Ferd presented: PHENOM – 10 New Things PHENOM Did This Year (see below)

b) Alex presented: Analysis of Economic and Political Situation Facing Public Higher Education (see below)

3. Discussion: Is a Statewide Student Association in PHENOM's interest and should we put resources into bringing SGA leaders together to form one? There was widespread agreement that Yes to both. There was a recognition that SGA's sometimes align themselves with campus administrations and that an SSA would have different politics from PHENOM.

The following people said they were interested in working on the SSA project: Patrick, Hollywood, Paola, Nicole, Stasha, Catt, Ryan, Tara, Corey, Mike, Marie, Manny

4. Discussion: PHENOM and the national Campaign for the Future of Higher Education

After a short presentation, there was a unanimous vote in support of endorsing the campaign and strong interest in working on the November national meeting to be held in Boston. There was a sense that PHENOM had a lot to offer as a model for other states. There was interest in nudging the campaign to be more explicit about focusing on *public* higher education and to involve students more prominently.

The following people said they were interested in working on the conference: Marilyn, Julie, Ron, Tara, Ken, Frank, Stasha, Catt, Hollywood

5. Election of 2011-12 Board

Final nominations were accepted. All nominees who were present had the opportunity to talk about themselves.

A question was raised concerning the status of someone who was moving from student to alum partway through the year. The meeting voted unanimously that if someone was in a status for 2/3 of the year, that should be determinative.

Elected to the Board were:

Greater Boston: Stasha Lampert (student, UM), Hollywood Aman (student, Bunker Hill CC), Marie Hedrick (alum, UMB)

Central: Kim Selwitz (alum, Framingham State), Matt Costello (student, Fitchburg State)

North: Jim Tarr (student, UML), Ryan Manita (student, Middlesex CC), Craig Slatin (faculty, UML)

Southeast: Ron Weisberger (faculty, Bristol CC), Mike Fox (alum, UMA)

West: Paola Ozuna (student, UMA), Ken Haar (faculty, Westfield State), Max Page (faculty, UMA), Patrick Burke (student, Westfield State)

[The election for the West was complicated by a tie, by someone withdrawing after being elected, and by the rule that no more than 2 Board members can be from the same campus.]

6. Budget for FY 2012

Treasurer Ken Haar presented the budget as proposed by the Executive Committee. It is more conservative in projecting revenue than last year, increases Alex's hours to full-time, and provides for a new ½ time organizer starting in January if finances permit. Several amendments were proposed and approved which adjusted the following figures:

Individual contributions from \$15,000 to \$11,000

Membership dues from \$1,000 to \$660

Honoraria from \$1,000 to \$700

Online sales from \$200 to \$70

The budget was then unanimously approved. It projects total income of \$94,430 and total expenses of \$97,148.75.

There was interest in attaching a column of "goals" to the income part of the budget.

7. Strategic Priorities for Next Year

The meeting counted off into 4 groups, each of which spent 10 minutes discussing legislative priorities, education/PR priorities and organizing priorities. Highlights were presented to the entire group; notes were collected; the Board will use them to help develop a program for the year.

8. Announcements

a) Board will work on an endorsement policy for PHENOM, with the goal of being able to broaden PHENOM's support for other causes without diluting our work or taking much organizational time.

b) Tax Policy – Marilyn is interested in PHENOM having a more in depth discussion about taxes.

c) The UMass Board of Trustees is voting on a 7.5% fee increase on June 8. There will be a protest led by the "Fund UMass Boston" group.

d) Dale invited people to join the MTA GLBT caucus in this year's Boston Pride march

e) There will be a hearing June 8 on the Transgender Rights bill.

9. Evaluation and Next Steps

a) People liked the meeting, the dinner and the location. The brainstorming requires a lot of follow-up.

b) The new Board started figuring out when to meet over the summer. The outgoing Board will be invited once a date is set.

c) A new PHENOM newsletter was distributed for people to take to their campuses and communities.

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10 NEW THINGS PHENOM DID DURING 2010-2011

1. Candidate Forums

- Hoped to do one for gubernatorial candidates, but
- Did for two legislative races. This was a great opportunity to force politicians to address higher ed issues in depth.
- Winner of the 2nd Franklin House race was very impressed with us and has been a strong supporter since – she co-hosted a PHENOM house party.

2. New Forms of Education/Agitation

- Walk Across the State
- A lot of publicity for PHENOM and for public higher ed
- Had events and talked with a lot of people on the way.
- A bit of fanaticism goes a long way.
- We were able to use the Walk to engage with quite a few legislators.
- Flash Teach-Ins
- Part of bigger coalitions:
 - Rally and Teach-In to Defend Public Sector
 - Fight against anti-immigrant amendments
 - Citizens for Public Schools conference

3. Filed our own legislation

- Finish Line idea came from PHENOM students
- Has gotten lots of interest

4. House Parties

- Fund raisers
- Great discussions
- Comfortable, friendly environment

5. Higher Ed Summit

- First time ever getting all the major advocates together. Only PHENOM could pull this off.
- Unity was thin and did not result in serious coordination

6. Creation of Public Higher Ed Caucus

- recognition of PHENOM's role

- and presentations by Max and Nancy Folbre
7. Pro-Active Interaction with Media
 - Channel 22 hour roundtable
 - Editorial Boards
 - Radio show WMUA
 8. Revenue Campaign
 - Big step for PHENOM – came in large part out of last annual meeting
 - Brought lots of people to hearing; are seen as the campus wing of campaign
 9. Major role in BHE Student Leadership Conference
 - How we met some of you
 - Lindsay as keynote
 - PHENOM helped shape agenda
 - Our workshop
 - Potential for next conference – SSA
 10. More connection on national level
 - Campaign for Future of Higher Education
 - NEA Conference

ALEX'S OVERVIEW FOR PHENOM BOARD MEETING 6-4-11

The good news: This year was probably rock bottom. The state has passed very austere budgets for the past few years and higher ed has seen deep funding cuts, the worst of which was this year, the proverbial cliff many have been talking about, when stimulus funds finally ran out. From here, we will finally be talking about funding increases again rather than cuts. Meaningful, if small, legislative victories will be relatively easy to achieve. This will also help our organizing, as energy will be high and we will have forward momentum to keep people motivated. In many ways it will resemble the situation when we started this four years ago. Except that four years ago we did not have PHENOM.

The bad news: The recovery is still questionable, if not short-lived. No one is talking about dramatic reinvestment, only slight increases, which we know from experience will be wiped out in the next economic downturn. There is an emerging consensus among policy elites that this is the new normal, that serious reinvestment will not happen, and that higher ed must explore other funding avenues, i.e. privatization. Most of the serious thought and energy among government and campus administrations is in this direction.

A new dawn of higher ed activism: Despite, or perhaps because of, this hostile consensus, activism around higher ed affordability and access is only growing and the issues involved are becoming more mainstream. We see this mostly outside the U.S., but significant actions have happened in this country as well. On a large scale, this has yet to hit Massachusetts, but that is mostly up to us. At the same time, the polls and the editorials all show that our issues are increasingly on everyone's minds, whereas they were virtually ignored just a few years ago. Now that student loan debt has surpassed credit card debt, higher education access, and the issues of shrinking opportunity connected to it, will be among the most important fights of the coming decades.

What PHENOM must do: Use the next few relatively good years to really organize the campuses. Make alliances with every possible campus-based, community-based, statewide, and national organization remotely connected to our issues and founding principles. Focus on increasing the breadth, but especially depth, of our organizing to increase grassroots capacity. Meetings with policymakers should be viewed in the context of educating them on the issues, not influence or alliance-building, as we are clearly losing the privatization argument and only growing our grassroots power will have a meaningful impact; hence most of our political energies should be directed at our base on the campuses and on the public. We must also continue to shape the way the issues are presented by the media by continuing to have meetings with editorial boards and running letter-to-the-editor campaigns, as well as more aggressively getting our message out through interviews, editorials, and public events. The purpose of this strategy, and our organizing and coalition-building, should be to promote the cause and the issues, not the organization (though that will be a side-effect). As such, the more organizations we can incorporate into our events, campaigns, and strategies, the better. This will be a difficult effort that will take a lot of work, the re-engagement of many activists who've become discouraged or otherwise disengaged, and the recruitment and training of many new ones.