

University of Maryland Senate  
Student Affairs Committee

**Minority Report**

Bill ID 11-12-12

Proposal to Change the Committee on the Review of Student Fees Operating Procedure

***Introduction***

On March 5, 2012, the Senate Student Affairs Committee (SAC) voted (7 for and 5 against) to recommend three items for consideration in response to Senate Bill 11-12-12, submitted by Graduate Student Government President Anna Bedford and Student Government Association President Kaiyi Xie.

We respectfully and strongly dissent from the majority decision of the Committee. In addition, we would like to emphasize that of those members who attended and voted on March 5, upon some members' reconsideration due to various issues surrounding the meeting and the votes (discussed infra), if the same vote were taken today, the proposed changes would not pass out of Committee.

**We recommend:**

- **that the three SAC recommendations in response to Bill 11-12-12 be returned to SAC for additional deliberation and analysis.**
- **that Bill 11-12-12 be recommitted to the SAC for additional consideration.**
- **that the SAC include additional avenues of student input in the deliberative process on Bill 11-12-12.**

***Overview of Concerns***

This report highlights three broad concerns:

1. Inadequate Committee proceedings
2. Insufficient fulfillment of the SEC charge
3. Incomplete proposed recommendations

***Concerns with Committee Proceedings***

The Student Affairs Committee failed to sufficiently evaluate all concerns surrounding the proposed recommendations due to two reasons: timing and confusion. We believe that it is simply undisputed by anyone on the Committee that this meeting lacked one essential element—time. Pressured by a lack of time, the Committee hastily voted on many matters, including actions to proceed following the meeting. Members were confused about the options moving forward and thus could not effectively choose whether to submit recommendations, request an extension, or schedule an additional Committee Meeting.

In its entirety, the final meeting of the SAC was unnecessarily constrained by time. The meeting and discussion was cut short by 25% due to the Chair's tardy arrival. Many Committee members' schedules prohibited the meeting from lasting past the 12 pm ending time, leaving the Committee without quorum and thus a true ability to act after only 45 minutes. Of the 45 minutes, the initial 15 were spent discussing the fee review process at peer institutions (an agenda item previously left unaddressed due to time constraints at a prior meeting). The remaining 30 minutes had to be divided between proposing recommendations, discussing improvements to recommendations, approving recommendations, and procedural measures. As soon as the time constraint arose as an eminent issue, the remainder of the meeting time was spent discussing options for further action.

While we reviewed past meetings, the Committee thought about the objective to make recommendations. While we made recommendations, the Committee thought about the objective to meet time constraints. While we worried about time constraints, the Committee thought about what to do when we ran out of time. Never did the Committee's objectives address the current matter at hand. Never did the Committee have enough time to fully consider revisions. Never did the Committee finish proposing recommendations.

Though the Committee's decision to put forth the recommendations was made with a constitutional majority, we believe that this decision was flawed due to insufficient information and understanding. It was the general sentiment that it was better to have something rather than nothing in the final few minutes of the Committee, before quorum disappeared. This did not leave sufficient opportunity for those opposed to bringing forth the recommendations to state their objections, and it was also clear to all members of the Committee that members still had much to discuss on the issue.

We believe that in a truly democratic process, a small majority ought not trump the rights of a minority to further discuss the issues, especially when much of the Committee has not been given the chance to fully understand the situation and alternatives. The principles of shared governance dictate that in order to fully flesh out an issue, sufficient time must be given to the actual analysis of the issues after fact-finding is completed. During this meeting, little to no chance was given to synthesize together the information collected previously over many months. In fact, due to time concerns, the Committee was led directly to making recommendations. Little guidance from Committee leadership was offered regarding the fact that there were viable alternatives to the action the Committee took. In fact, the Committee chair vocally stated her support for sending forth the recommendations in their current form. As a result, not all Committee members understood that other alternatives remained. Just because some supported the three recommendations that resulted from this meeting, this does not mean they considered the issues completely resolved.

The final Committee Report of the majority states: “After reviewing these policies and analyzing the various data collected, the committee considered possible recommendations.” We find it incredibly far-fetched to claim that in the sole post-fact-finding meeting, which was cut short by 25%, any actual analysis of the data took place. With the knowledge that the Committee was short on time, Committee members leapt to moving potential recommendations to the floor.

### ***Fulfillment of SEC Charge to SAC***

In order to completely and effectively fulfill a Committee charge, sufficient consideration and deliberation, as is consistent with the democratic process, should be given to all aspects of the proposal. Recommendations should not be taken simply as individual items, but as sums of the whole. The amount of time and effort dedicated to researching and gathering information on current policies is critical, but attempting to synthesize such information in such a limited time frame is unrealistic. Shortchanging deliberation in an effort to fulfill a charge is not completing the given charge at all. This harms further consideration of the unresolved recommendations by insinuating that the Committee had contemplated such recommendations and decided against advancing them.

### ***Concerns with Proposed Recommendations***

Each of the three recommendations was approved with large majorities. However, the crux of the issue lies in the fact that Committee members were not expecting that there was time for only 3 recommendations, and no more time to proceed further with discussing others. Thus, support for the 3 current recommendations is not analogous to support for *only* these 3 recommendations—there were many questions left unanswered that merit discussion. Thus, we feel that these three recommendations, *prima facie*, are insufficient in addressing the issues brought up in Bill 11-12-12 and addressing the Senate Executive Committee’s charge.

### ***Additional Recommendations***

We feel that the following have not been addressed in the current recommendations:

- The definition and role of a student fee (what normatively does and does not constitute an appropriate use of fee monies).
- Sufficiency and type of financial information available to unit-level fee review bodies.
- What constitutes a sufficient unit-level fee review body.
- The transparency and operating rules of the actual Committee for the Review of Student Fees (CRSF).
- The procedures of electing a chair of CRSF.

We feel that the aforementioned are essential to a complete discussion on Bill 11-12-12. The fact that the SAC did not adopt or reject any of the aforementioned, even though they were featured prominently in the fact-finding phase of the Committee's actions, elucidates truly how limited in scope the 3 recommendations are. In fact, the SAC failed to even broach these topics in its meeting due to time constraints.

### ***Conclusion***

Despite an initially vague charge, the substantive and detailed research in conjunction with the lack of any discussion or stance on the aforementioned recommendations is clearly indicative of the incomplete assessment of the proposal and issue as a whole.

### ***Signatories***

Whitney Beck  
Madison Ferraro  
Stephanie Graf  
An Hoang  
Brandon Levey  
Kaiyi Xie