

12/07/2021

Student Senate

For Immediate Release



FALL 2021 CONSTITUENCY REPORT

To the Valparaiso University Community,

One of the constitutional duties of the Student Body Vice President of Valparaiso University is to have the Student Senators of the Student Senate draft and submit constituency reports each quarter of the academic year. Student Senate had a later start this semester, so this report will act as a semester report. This not only serves as a meaningful line of communication between Student Senators and their constituents, but it also serves as a way for the greater campus community to know the concerns of the Student Body. This report compiles the reports from the Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, Senior, Commuter, Transfer, College of Arts & Sciences, College of Business, Christ College, and the Campus At-Large constituencies. College of Engineering and College of Nursing and Health Professions seats were vacant at the time of submission.

In these reports, there were specific issues to each constituency, but I will be addressing the common themes. Arguably the largest and most consistent themes in each report were dining, parking, and campus safety. I will begin by addressing the issues circulating dining. In virtually every report, our Student Senators have reported that dining still continues to lack and does not address the issues that are brought to them. Some of these issues are making the spread more friendly to international students and cultures, the hours of Founders not being very accessible for many students, especially on the weekends, and the food being undercooked. Some specific concerns come from students wanting more variety in what is being served, but especially on the weekends when only a few stations are open. Student Senate's Dining Committee has begun addressing a lot of these concerns in their regular meetings with Parkhurst staff and in the new addition of the monthly Dining Town Halls. There has been some improvement with Parkhurst installing QR codes on tables so that students can submit issues with food in real time so that Parkhurst can address the issue as soon as possible.

The next issue that was seen in just about every report is parking. The Freshman constituency brings up the issue of student safety with having to park in Lot 37 on Lincolnway and walking to their residence halls. They address how the bus is not an efficient way to go back and forth from the parking lot and their halls, so it becomes dangerous for students to walk, especially at night.

Safety issues regarding parking also come from concerns of sorority women having to park in Lot 43 and having to walk at night, feeling unsafe. Our senators have also pointed out that students would like more Emergency poles placed on campus, especially in areas where people continuously feel unsafe, such as walking from Lot 37 or Lot 43. Besides student safety, students remain frustrated with the lack of parking spaces, especially for commuters. Lot 43 next to Guild-Memorial Hall continues to come up in this discussion because of it servicing GM, the Sorority Complex, Commuters and staff, while also serving as parking for sporting events. This leads to many students having to park elsewhere on campus because of the disproportionate categorization of spaces in this lot and lack of parking in the rest of this area of campus. Limited parking issues are also brought up by Commuter students needing to park near the East Lawn, Urschel Hall, or behind Neils Science Center.

A third common theme among these reports is campus resources. This topic ranges from campus resources that are lacking to campus resources that could be doing better to advertise to make sure students know they can use them. One of these resources that students have brought up is the Student Health Center's short hours of operation, making it extremely difficult for many students to get the medical attention they may need. Another concern is non-Valpo students using the Christopher Center's study rooms and having them be consistently filled. Commuter students have brought up the lacking facility support for their population. They find their current commuter space in the Center for Student Involvement insufficient for their needs. They would like more space to store their food across campus. Transfer students have found it difficult to find out about many of the resources the campus has, like the Career Center, facilities at the ARC, and many of the academic resources the university offers, too. This is a consistent problem found in many reports, too, that these resources aren't being utilized to their full potential because of lack of advertising and awareness on campus.

Lastly, a consistent theme is issues that students are finding with the university as a whole, like lack of diversity in faculty and staff, the rising cost of attending Valpo (even with the Tuition freeze), transparency and accountability from the University, and academic overload. Student Senate, along with the Black Student Organization (BSO), and the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion have made strides in trying to address the issues of lack of diversity in faculty and staff, and how to better support underrepresented students on campus. Students want to see meaningful change and solutions to come from these talks, and this is where students need to have accountability. The student body also needs transparency from the University. Our senators have reported that, for example, during the water main break, they wished they had more information and updates from the university. This goes for other decisions and occurrences happening on campus, as well. Students still feel their voices are not being heard, or at least not being taken seriously. Student Senate has created many lines of communication over the past couple of years, and with student representation increasing on committees across campus, they

still need to feel that their issues are being taken into consideration and taken seriously. This comes into the conversation of increasing workload and burnout, too, where students need faculty to understand their point of view when it comes to workload. The issue of lack of student engagement in student organizations also boils down to the issue of being overwhelmed with work trying to come back to a sense of normalcy from a pandemic-strapped semester.

This report is a general overview of student experiences on campus. I am happy and willing to share more college specific, or class specific, information and concerns if desired by an individual. Student Senate is made up of four senators representing each class, two senators representing transfer students, two senators representing commuter students, two senators representing the student body at-large, and a senator representing each college on campus. These senators specialize in the concerns and issues facing their constituencies and would be happy and willing to speak to any student, faculty, or staff member wanting to know more about student experiences and concerns on campus. Student Senate's mission is to actively speak out for student interests and concerns, and this report serves as a pinnacle of this mission to make student concerns more available and present.

Sincerely,

Benjamin Jacobs
Student Body Vice President
senate.vp@valpo.edu