

Senate grievance table hears student concerns

Students can voice their complaints directly to the Student Senate

By Kristina Rudinskas
Student Activities Reporter

Some people don't like to hear you complain. They don't have the time or energy to deal with your problems. But the Student Senate grievance table is here to lend an open ear.

"It's really something people don't utilize," Senator Jenna Wasson said. "Students don't know the purpose of it."

Students come to the table to fill out a complaint form. Last term Senator Jeff Kershner received about seven grievances from students. Concerns varied from classes and campus parking spaces to library hours and printing fees, he explained.

"It's not guaranteed that we can fix it," Senator Mike Price said. "We just have more avenues open to us."

The senators submit the requests to ombudsman Tamir Kriegel, who distributes the complaints to the appropriate senators. They have 30 days to act on them and contact the person who filed the complaint via e-mail or phone.

"It's important because people in the Senate need to know students' feelings on things," Senate Vice President Kent Black said.

Each senator whose focus area is academic or athletic spends two hours a week at the grievance table. EMU and PFC Student Senators spend an hour a week at the tables. Only 5 percent of those dissatisfied file a complaint, but most never come to you, Price explained.

The table's location varies, but

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Jenna Wasson
Student senator

it can usually be found in the EMU Lobby. Sometimes they move the table to high-profile places, such as in front of the bookstore or the dorms.

The grievances give the Senate ammunition to take to the administration, Senator Michael Olson said. He received 15 requests last quarter and admits it is a slow, methodical process with no guarantee of a solution.

"People will be upset about certain things and don't see the Student Senate as a place to deal with their problems," Olson said. "As elected representatives of the student body, it's our obligation to be interested in the concerns we're faced with."

Black and Kershner admitted that some grievances have been ridiculous. They recalled requests last year asking that a particular flavor of ice cream be served in the EMU; another student complained about tight-fitting pants. The Senate can't solve everything, but they will give it a shot.

"The average student doesn't know what we do," Wasson said. "Any student can come to any meeting and speak on a topic. Students have an opinion, and we want to hear it."

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By Patty McConnell

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