



# ***THE SILENCING OF VOICES: INPUT THEATER AND THE PRIVATIZATION OF CAMPUS HOUSING AT EMU***

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## SETTING THE STAGE: “INNOVATIVE FINANCING”

- *“I hope that by exposing some of the swindles of innovative educational finance schemes, scholars, citizens, and cultural workers will oppose these stealth forms of privatization and defend democratic public spheres.” (Saltman, 2018, p. xvi)*

## SETTING THE STAGE: EMU-AAUP CONTRACT

- *“Recognizing the necessity for meaningful Faculty involvement in the areas of selection and evaluation of Faculty Members, curriculum development, and utilization of financial resources, the following procedures for the involvement of Faculty shall be used.” (mp. 418, p. 44)*

# SETTING THE STAGE: EMU-FACULTY SENATE BYLAWS

- Faculty Senate Bylaws:

*“The variety and complexity of the tasks performed by institutions of higher education produce an inescapable interdependence among governing board, administration, faculty, students and others. The relationship calls for adequate communication among these components and full opportunity for joint planning effort.” (AAUP, ACE, & AGB, p. 2)*

# SETTING THE STAGE: EMU-FACULTY SENATE BYLAWS

- Specifically:

## “Area 2. Internal Operations

- a. Advise the Administration and Regents in the framing and execution of long range plans
- b. Advise the Administration and Regents on decisions regarding existing or prospective physical resources
- c. Advise the Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs on Divisional Budget and division-wide resource issues
- d. Advise the Administration on university budget and resource issues
- e. Participate in the selection of the President
- f. Participate in the selection of the academic officers at the level of Dean and above
- g. Advise the appropriate authority on retention of the above-mentioned officers”

# THE PERFORMANCE: TIMELINE OF KEY EVENTS

- **2015-2016**: University Administrators communicating with Corvias
- **2017-early 2018**: Planning, cancelation of Corvias Letter of Credit
- **2018-2019**: EMU hires Reith, Jones, and Associates (RJA) for “Student Housing P3 Procurement”; RJA conducted a highly problematic study (methodologically and interpretively) concluding EMU needed to update the housing; results shared with the University Budget Committee (November, 2018); Initial Housing RFQ sent out (December, 2018); called for renovating dorms \$225M total (including \$40M Brown/Munson, and \$71M for the towers, from slides presented to APs on March 19, 2019).
- **2019-2020**: RFP not issued, Faculty Advisory Board on Campus Housing created by the Faculty Senate with experts across campus focused on analyzing current housing and recommending next steps; Recommendations shared with administration (September, 2020).
- **2020-2021**: Revised Campus Housing RFQ sent out June, 2020 (before the Faculty Advisory Board on Campus Housing) that called for demolition of seven dorms and the building two new dorms; Spring 2021 UBC was asked whether it believed EMU should go forward with an RFP on housing and the UBC recommended NOT going forward with an RFP; RFP sent to four developers; RFPs were due September 20, 2021; scored by the RFP review committee (October, 2021)
- **Currently**: The RFPs have been reviewed and presented to the President
- **Future**: ?

# TIMELINE OF MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

- Faculty Senate Resolution (1/23/19)
  - *“Faculty Senate, and other input bodies, cannot provide knowledgeable and meaningful input on the need to enter a partnership until we have:*
    - *1. evidence that student housing is dilapidated and requires significant immediate upgrade*
    - *2. the opportunity to tour of housing facilities at the end of January (1/30/19)*
    - *3. a more detailed and thorough exploration of the option of renovating the campus housing using University funding (either general fund or through borrowing)”*
- Faculty Senate concerns regarding the now rescinded “March 2019 Facilities Report” (4/4/19):
  - 1. A lack of balance or response to the resolution above or the noted positive condition of the current housing facilities
  - 2. Detailed concern for the methods used to study campus housing (sample not representative of our students), and shifting/inaccurate interpretation of the results (over 90% of respondents found housing acceptable or above)
  - 3. False statements from other data sources citing over 10% of students who don’t come to EMU is because of housing. When FS analyzed the data from 2018 it found only 1.4% of responses were because of dorm conditions (just above the 1.2% who said weather)
  - 4. The report did not address the concerns identified above.
- Creation of the Faculty Advisory Board on Campus Housing (9/19)

# FORMATION OF THE FACULTY ADVISORY BOARD ON CAMPUS HOUSING

- September, 2019
- The Faculty Advisory Board on Campus Housing consisted of seven members with expertise in:
  - Built environment design and construction,
  - Community engagement and development,
  - Historical perspective and development,
  - Privatization, performance management,
  - Downsizing/contracting out government services,
  - Forensic accounting,
  - And data analysis.

# THE WORK OF THE ADVISORY BOARD

- The Advisory Board met throughout the 2019-2020 academic year and:
  - Gathered and reviewed numerous documents related to housing
  - Spoke at length to key stakeholders
  - Was in the process of creating the final report when the COVID-19 pandemic started

# ADVISORY BOARD: KEY CONSIDERATIONS (ABBREVIATED)

- For decades, the University has used revenue from housing to balance the general fund rather than investing the needed maintenance and capital improvements for campus housing.
- The EMU community needs to continue discussing housing regardless of whether privatization is part of the conversation. An open discussion should include multiple issues including:
  - Projected demand (both in beds and types)
  - Physical needs analysis for each building
  - Alternative options, such as partnering with another University or a small-scale project
- Campus housing is **NOT** the same as off-campus housing.
  - Better integration to campus life more positive outcomes
  - Rules governing campus living are different than living off campus (Federal and State)

# ADVISORY BOARD: OBSERVATIONS (ABBREVIATED)

- Strong interest in creating living-learning communities
- Persistent communication breakdowns resulting in parallel conversations
- Housing would be self-sustaining (including capital projects) if margins were placed in a capital escrow account rather than the general fund
- Student occupancy has ranged from 3,928 to 3,176. Perhaps a plan for 2,500-3,000 beds would be the best way forward.
- EMU has spent \$31M on capital improvements in campus housing since 2007.
- Two consultants have been hired on campus housing (Scion and RJA)
- If a public privation partner is explored, more input from across campus is needed.
- Issues/differences between Wayne State and EMU

## ADVISORY BOARD: RECOMMENDATIONS (ABBREVIATED)

- The Board recommends that no decision on campus housing be made until we understand the impact of the current health crisis on the demand for student campus housing.
- The Board recommends a thorough examination of the issue of campus housing with key stakeholders and faculty experts integrally involved.
- The Board recommends the creation of a master plan for campus housing, based on the findings from recommendation two, to guide decisions on campus housing over the next 10 years.

# CONCERNS OF THE ADVISORY BOARD ARISING IN THE WAKE OF COVID-19

- Private partners not really “partners” when it comes to doing right by students  
([full report available here](#))
  - Internally
    - EMU refunded housing once dorms closed (this was the right thing to do and EMU could because housing was not-yet privatized)
    - EMU refunded dining once campus was closed (the private partner, Chartwells did not, and EMU had to foot the bill)
    - No parking refunds for students from the University’s Parking “Partner”
  - Externally
    - Pressure on Wayne State University (and the Georgia State system) to fill dorms from it’s housing “partner” Corvias (...“the University does not have the unilateral right under the SCA to institute a policy that would for example, either (i) limit the number of students who can occupy the student housing, or (ii) reduce the semester housing fees (due to a shortened semester or otherwise) for which the Concessionaire has a contractual right to receive per the SCA.”)

# SILENCED INPUT

- As laid out in the documents at the beginning of the presentation, the Faculty Senate is the input body related to issues across colleges and specifically related to the issue of housing “utilization of financial resources”
- The Faculty Advisory Board on Campus Housing was created by the Faculty Senate to explore the issue of housing and its recommendations were presented to and affirmed by the Faculty Senate before sharing the input with the President and the Provost.
- The Board recommended deeply studying housing through the pandemic, including various stakeholders, to create a campus community vision for what we'd like to see moving forward.

# SILENCED ADVICE

- The University Budget Committee (UBC) is a 27 member body consisting of:
  - 14 administrative representatives
  - Nine faculty representatives
  - Three student representatives
  - One staff representative
- The University Administration and Faculty Senate disagree on whether the UBC is an input body (a discussion for another time).

# SILENCED ADVICE: THE UBC

- Voted to recommend the President not move forward with a Request for Proposals on campus housing (May, 2021)
- Members provided a one-page document outlining a possible way forward through self-funding renovations (May, 2021)

# THE RESULT OF THE INPUT AND ADVICE?

- The Administration sent out an RFP June, 2021 (contrary to the Faculty Senate and UBC recommendations)
- The RFPs were submitted by developers September 20, 2021
- The RFPs were evaluated in October, 2021
- The RFPs currently reside with President Smith who is deliberating whether to recommend moving forward with housing privatization to the Board of Regents
- We are hosting this event today
- If the President recommends moving forward then the Board of Regents will likely address the issue in their December meeting

# INPUT THEATER

- The faculty are particularly concerned with the primary role played by the consultant and the upper administration in crafting and setting priorities in the RFP without incorporating the input and advice of faculty and other stakeholders shared throughout the process.
- It appears that “input” was in name only and not in the interest of generating the best ideas of how the campus can best move forward on housing or to adjust previous plans to privatize campus housing.
- *“Fundamentally, what is desirable and intended by the sections that follow is to ensure mindful participation by the Faculty with the ultimate decision-making resting in Eastern Michigan University management, but with an assurance of **procedural regularity and fair play.**” (mp. 418, p. 44)*

# REFERENCES

American Association of University Professors (AAUP), the American Council on Education (ACE), and the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB). (1966). *Statement on the Government of Colleges and Universities*.

Saltman, K.J. (2018). *The swindle of innovative educational finance*. University of Minnesota Press.