

DISABILITIES ISSUES COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING
FEBRUARY 16, 2010
Room 238A

In these minutes: [disabilities services report; formation and charge of subcommittees; disabled student cultural center report;]

[These minutes reflect discussion and debate at a meeting of a committee of the University of Minnesota Senate; none of the comments, conclusions or actions reported in these minutes represent the views of, nor are they binding on, the Senate or the Administration or the Board of Regents.]

PRESENT: Dale Branton (Chair), Mary Muwahid, Sherry Gray, Julia Robinson, Kimberly Simon, Carla Tabourne, Michael Silverman, Frank Symons, Amber Mayer, Miriam Krause (for Mary Kennedy)

REGRETS: Donna Johnson, Susan Rose, Joanna O'Connell, Mary Kennedy, Peggy Mann Rinehart, Victoria Nelson, Rebecca Anderson

ABSENT: Joanie Tool, Becca Gerken,

GUESTS: Luka Krmpotich,

Professor Branton called the meeting to order, welcomed those present, and asked them to introduce themselves. Professor Branton noted that Donna Johnson, Director of Disability Services (DS), was unable to attend the meeting, but had submitted a written report updating the committee on her office's work. He also noted that Ms. Johnson submitted a list of the trainings her office had provided since July 2009. These documents were e-mailed to the committee prior to the meeting.

Formation and Charge of Subcommittees

Professor Branton provided the committee with an outline for establishing three subcommittees to determine:

1. The type of training regarding disabilities that is available and how well it is being delivered to faculty and staff.
2. The type of formal orientation students are provided regarding disability issues.
3. The needs of the members of the University community with disabilities, and the effectiveness of DS and other service providers in meeting the needs of the University community

The outline follows:
Subcommittees

- I. Subcommittee for Faculty Training
 - a. University Level

- i. What specific training is required of all university employees regarding issues of disability?
 - ii. What specific training is required of all faculty regarding students with disabilities?
 - b. College Level
 - i. What specific training is required of all faculty and staff regarding issues of disability?
 - ii. Is a specific statement about disability required (and enforced) on course syllabi? What statement is used?
 - c. Department Level
 - i. What specific training is required of the faculty and staff regarding students with disabilities?

Suggested Strategy: We should ask the college office to provide a list of departments in a spreadsheet, indicating whether each has formal disability issues training for faculty/staff.

II. Subcommittee for Student Orientation

- a. University Level
 - i. What formal orientation are students provided regarding issues of disability?
- b. College Level
 - i. What formal orientation are students provided regarding issues of disability?

III. Subcommittee for Needs and Services Assessment

- a. How can this committee monitor the needs of the members of the University community with disabilities in order to advise Disability Services?
 - i. Pulse Survey
 - ii. Input from specific groups that may have special needs.
 - 1. Veterans
 - iii. Work with Disability Services to identify groups that have special needs.
 - 1. Faculty
 - 2. Others?
 - iv. Student Survey?
 - v. Information about outstanding cases from Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action
- b. How can we monitor the effectiveness of Disability Services in order to best serve our advisory role and effectively advocate for resources?
 - i. Work with Disability Services to develop an evaluation process that provides direct feedback to the Disabilities Committee from:
 - 1. Those who register and are served.
 - 2. Those who investigate registration but do not follow through

Professor Branton noted that it should be relatively easy to determine the type of training that is available because DS maintains this information. The more difficult issue is determining what training is required of faculty, staff, and students. He wants to examine this at the college level by asking the college offices to provide lists of departments and indicate whether each has formal disability issues training for faculty/staff. Committee discussion followed about how best to word the request to the departments in order to capture all of the training that may be occurring. Professor Julia Robertson noted that it would be important to include the teaching assistants in the request. Sherry Gray noted that the Humphrey Institute does not have any specific disability training requirements, but it has a diversity committee that provides some training. Ms. Gray suggested that the request should leave room for “an other category” that asks, “Does your department or college have other programs and how many people are being reached by these programs?” Kimberly Simon noted that departments might interpret the word “required” to mean a legal requirement for training and this could result in an inaccurate response. She stated a better question might be if the department is “mandating” participation.

Professor Branton expressed the concern that the committee get a real answer with indicating how many people participate in training regarding issues of disability. Ms. Gray suggested further wordsmithing of the request take place through Google docs.

Professor Carla Tabourne asked who could provide the type of information the committee is seeking. Ms. Simon responded that the dean's office or a human resources staff person for the department may have information on the training that is taking place. Committee discussion followed about how to ensure the request for information was received simply as a request for information and not viewed as monitoring. Ms. Simon suggested DS could help craft a request, and that a checklist approach might be helpful. Professor Branton stressed he wanted to be transparent about why the committee was asking for information – in order to assist in educating the University community on how to understand and accommodate those with disabilities. He also noted he did not want the requests to be burdensome or intrusive, and that the outcome of subcommittees' work is intended to benefit all members of the University community.

It was suggested that the committee use survey monkey to conduct an online poll with five or less questions. Professor Branton stated again that he wanted to ascertain if there is anything required by departments that all staff regularly participate in. Ms. Simon stated that the request should ask departments what they are doing to educate faculty, staff, and students on disabilities issues and to provide examples. Ms. Gray stated she could make a two-minute video of a committee member reassuring survey takers of the purpose and intention of the survey. The video could accompany the survey. Ms. Simon stated she would be willing to assist with this.

Professor Branton asked the committee members if they had any suggestions with regard to the student section of the outline. Committee members noted that the request needed to account for the dual roles many students have as students and student-employees. The committee determined that it would not be problematic for students to answer the survey twice (once as students and once as employees) because the survey is gathering information about groups not individuals.

Next, the committee discussed section three of the outline regarding establishing a subcommittee for needs and services assessment. Professor Branton noted several sources of information for monitoring the needs of those with disabilities including the Pulse Survey, input from specific groups such as veterans, working with DS, and information from Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action. Professor Branton also noted the sensitivity that could be present around assessing the services available for those with disabilities at the University of Minnesota. Professor Tabourne suggested instead of asking if individuals received the services they need from DS, the committee could broaden the question to ask where individuals received services and if the services were helpful.

Ms. Gray asked if it was the role of the Disabilities Issues Committee to provide oversight of DS. Professor Branton stated the committee's charge is to advise DS on policies, programs, and services for students, and employees and to review policies and

practices in light of the deployment of resources and effectiveness in meeting the needs of the University community. Ms. Gray asked if DS requests and tracks evaluations of its services. Professor Branton stated he previously spoke to Ms. Johnson about how DS evaluates itself, but he was not sure if DS requests or tracks evaluations. He stated he would follow up with Ms. Johnson on this issue. Professor Branton stated that he wants to be supportive of DS and he does not want to create a system that only hears from those with complaints. Ms. Simon noted that the committee will need DS's help in gathering the necessary information and it is important to work with them.

Next, Professor Branton asked for volunteers to populate the subcommittees. It was decided that the subcommittee for faculty and staff training could be combined with the subcommittee for student orientation. Ms. Gray and Professor Robinson volunteered to co-chair this subcommittee. Kimberly Simon, Miriam Krause, and Amber Mayer also agreed to join this subcommittee. Ms. Simon said she would take the lead on gathering information about staff. Professor Branton volunteered to chair the subcommittee on needs and services assessment. Professor Frank Symons, Professor Michael Silverman, and Professor Tabourne volunteered to assist Professor Branton with this subcommittee.

Professor Symons stated that his department handles a lot of survey information. And he suggested consulting with the Office of Measurement Services if the committee decides to create a survey. He also discussed the need for simplicity in creating surveys. Professor Branton stated he would summarize what had been agreed upon and send it out the committee. He asked the subcommittees to gather their information by the March meeting. Ms. Mayer asked how the subcommittees would meet. Professor Robinson stated it would likely be via Internet.

Ms. Krause noted that there is a Provost's Committee on Student Mental Health and stated that the student organization, Active Minds is giving a presentation at their meeting. She asked if the Disabilities Issues Committee is working with the Provost's Committee. Professor Robinson suggested that Professor Branton contact the Provost's Committee and Ms. Krause suggested that they be invited to the next Disabilities Committee meeting. Professor Branton stated that he was familiar with the Provost's Committee and expressed some reluctance to invite them because their mission differs from the Disabilities Committee's, and he does not want to impede the work of the subcommittees. Professor Silverman noted that even if the committees differ in their missions, it might be helpful to have an exchange of committee members. He volunteered to attend a meeting of the Provost's Committee.

Disabled Students Cultural Center Update

Luka Krmopotich, programming co-director for DSCC, provided the committee with an update on the DSCC's activities.

- The DSCC gave its Student Services Fees presentation and is waiting to find out if the its budget request will be granted. The DSCC's budget request was slightly more than last year.

- Professor Alex Lubet spoke at the DSCC February lunch and learn regarding the Disabilities Studies program he is starting at the University.
- The DSCC is taking part in the cultural celebration at Coffman Union on February 16. They will be demonstrating assistive education technology.
- The DSCC is partnering with Interdisciplinary Perspectives (IPID) on a presentation about teaching deaf students around the world.
- Active Minds will give a presentation at the March lunch and learn.
- In March or April Matt Sanford will be leading an adaptive yoga session.
- In April the DSCC is partnering with Professor Lubet on a discussion regarding autism in the Somali community.
- The DSCC is also beginning a Disability Mentorship Program. Gene Shelburg, one of the founders of the DSCC, will be speaking at the program kickoff.
- The DSCC recently elected officers for its Board.

Miriam Krause asked Mr. Krmpotich if it would be possible to receive notice of DSCC events earlier so that she can publish them in her department's newsletter. Mr. Krmpotich responded that they try to provide the information one month prior to the event so that it can be publicized in the DS report.

Amber Mayer asked if the DSCC surveys students regarding their experiences with DS. Mr. Krmpotich stated he was not aware of any surveys, but he would ask the DSCC Board if they are interested in collecting this information. Professor Branton asked whom the DSCC would survey. Mr. Krmpotich replied they would use their list serve that includes about 250 individuals or they could work with a DS specialist.

Mr. Krmpotich asked the committee to assist him with a concern impacting individuals with low vision and no residual sight. The construction for the Central Corridor Light Rail Transit project is impacting the bus schedules and causing road and side walk closures. This presents issues of safety and interferes with effective, efficient navigation around campus for those with disabilities. He asked the committee to contact the appropriate individuals within University Parking and Transportation and request that they provide detailed information on the bus route changes and road and side walk closures to individuals with impaired vision. Mr. Krmpotich noted that signs at bus stops provide some information, but they are often written in standard size print and placed too high to be visible.

Professor Branton stated he would alert Victoria Nelson, Assistant Director of Parking and Transportation Services, about the issue. Ms. Simon also suggested the committee should contact DS about the situation. Professor Branton asked Mr. Krmpotich if he

would be willing to speak with Parking and Transportation Services or DS if they needed additional information about the problem. Mr. Krmpotich assented. Ms. Simon suggested the University should create an audio hotline that individuals could call to receive updated information on bus schedule changes and construction related closures. The committee agreed that this would be an effective solution.

Hearing no further business, Professor Branton adjourned the meeting.

Dawn Zugay
University Senate Office