

DISABILITIES ISSUES COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING
MARCH 23, 2011
Morrill Hall Room 238A

[In these minutes: provost's committee on student mental health; disabilities services update; committee business]

[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, the Administration or the Board of Regents.]

PRESENT: Dale Branton, Amber Mayer, Miriam Krause, Joanna O'Connell, Kimberly Simon, Michael Silverman, Sherry Gray, Julia Robinson

REGRETS: Susan Rose, Mary Muwahid, Rebecca Anderson, Carla Tabourne, Donna Johnson, Peggy Mann Rinehart

ABSENT: Frank Symons, Becca Gercken

GUESTS: Barbara Blacklock, Disability Services Program Coordinator; Betty Benson, Associate Director of Disability Services

Professor Dale Branton called the meeting to order, and asked for introductions. He then turned to Barbara Blacklock, Disability Services Program Coordinator and Betty Benson, Associate Director of Disability Services for their presentation on the Provost's Committee on Student Mental Health,

Provost's Committee on Student Mental Health

Ms. Blacklock provided background on the genesis of the Provost's Committee on Mental Health and an overview of the committee and its accomplishments. She stated that in 1999 Disabilities Services (DS) found that the largest group of students it was working with had psychiatric disabilities as a primary disability. DS decided to take a systematic approach to identifying the barriers and opportunities for college students with psychiatric disabilities. In 2001, Ms. Blacklock and Dr. Benson received a grant from the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education/U.S. Department of Education to conduct The Needs Assessment Project: Exploring Barriers and Opportunities for College Students with Psychiatric Disabilities (Project). The purpose of the project was to gather comprehensive data on the needs of college students with psychiatric disabilities, to identify the real and perceived barriers facing these students on college campuses, and to identify strategies for removing these barriers. They had twelve partner institutions on the Project. The Project:

- Conducted 39 focus groups at 13 colleges and universities across the country.
- Gathered data from 282 stakeholders: college students with psychiatric disabilities, faculty, administrators, disability service providers, and campus and community

mental health providers.

- Convened three advisory committee meetings. The committee was comprised of 11 local and national stakeholders and experts in the field of psychiatric disabilities.
- Completed research subjects protection programs applications and renewals for seven colleges and universities.
- Disseminated project findings through, the DS's web site, articles and conference presentations.
- Developed a campus assessment tool.

Ms. Blacklock went on to state that the focus groups on each of the campuses identified the same barriers to students' with psychiatric disabilities doing well in college:

- Stigma and stereotypes,
- Complex nature of psychiatric disabilities,
- Organizational and institutional barriers,
- Limited student resources and insurance, and
- Limited access to information and services.

Four strategies individuals tried or found effective to overcome the barriers were to:

- Improve coordination and collaboration,
- Ensure access to resources and training,
- Use the principles of Universal Instructional Design, and
- Reduce student isolation.

When the grant ended the project findings were disseminated through DS, and DS sought individuals on campus to implement the identified strategies for overcoming psychiatric disabilities. This resulted in a group of eight people from different offices who created the Network on Student Mental Health. They presented the executive summary of the Project and the need for increased collaboration on campus to the Provost, and asked for his support in the creation of a campus wide committee. The Provost's Committee on Student Mental Health was formed in 2005. Representatives from fifteen offices across the campus are members of the committee for example: Boynton Health Promotions, Boynton Mental Health, Police Emergency Management, Office for Student Affairs, and Disabilities Services. The committee is charged with:

- Raising awareness about issues related to student mental health,
- Effecting policy change,
- Improving conditions on campus for students with mental health conditions, and
- Serving as a model of collaboration for the campus and other universities.

Ms. Blacklock emphasized the importance of the committee's collaborative approach in supporting access to education for students with mental health issues. She stated that one of the committee's major accomplishments is the development of the student mental health website www.menatlhealth.umn.edu. It benefits students with mental health issues by conveying that they are welcomed as qualified students. She went on to state that disability affects everyone. It is diversity and can enrich the community.

Ms. Blacklock also pointed out the consequences of not having a campus-wide committee including:

- Excessive use of staff time and resources,
- Increased job stress for faculty and staff,
- Reduction in graduation rates,
- Personal loss for students,
- Potential legal action, and
- Campus tragedy.

The benefits of a campus wide committee are:

- A coordinated system of delivering mental health services to students,
- A coordinated system of mental health resources that provides support for faculty and staff,
- Implementation of campus wide strategies to reduce stigma,
- Proactive response to campus issues, and
- Increase in the number of campus allies.

Miriam Krause asked if the results of the Project had been published. Ms. Blacklock stated she would send them out to the Disabilities Committee.

Dr. Benson went on to discuss the focus of the Provost's Committee since 2005. She noted that the Provost's Committee's work is grounded in the Project, and anchored in coordination of services at the University of Minnesota. The Provost's Committee initially spent time developing priorities. Next, it worked to coordinate services through the development and launch of the mental health website in 2006-07. Dr. Benson demonstrated the website to the committee members. She pointed out central areas of the website with information for handling crises. She also noted the featured topic section where the Provost's Committee places current information. For instance, when the 35W bridge collapsed, this section had information on dealing with tragedies. Dr. Benson also pointed out the sections of the site about student training on assisting other students and President Bruinink's comments on stamping out stigma.

Ms. Blacklock noted that the Provost's Committee receives marketing assistance from Boynton Health Promotions. Boynton assisted in the marketing campaign when the website was launched.

Professor Branton asked how the Provost's Committee is funded. Dr. Benson responded that there are multiple sources of funding. The Vice Provost's office funds operation of committee. Vice Provost Billie Wahlstrom has also provided development time for the website and faculty training. The stamp out stigma campaign was funded by grants. Boynton Health Promotions provided marketing staff time.

Dr. Benson returned to the demonstration of the website. She pointed out a recent survey of faculty to determine how they would like to receive training – in person or on-line. Faculty and staff training can be scheduled on the website. Professor Branton asked who conducts the training for the faculty. Ms. Blacklock responded that staff time has been

donated by Dr. Benson and herself, University Counseling and Consulting Services, Boynton Mental Health Services, and International Services. Amber Mayer asked how many trainings have been conducted. Ms. Blacklock responded that about 15 have been conducted, and the length of the training is tailored to the group. Professor Branton asked if participation is voluntary. Dr. Benson responded that it is voluntary. Professor Julia Robinson asked what information is provided. Dr. Benson stated that faculty are informed that DS is a resource for students with diagnosed mental health conditions, and they can refer students to DS. Dr. Benson noted that the majority of their referrals come from faculty. Ms. Mayer asked if information about DS is provided during welcome week. Dr. Benson stated that it is part of welcome week, and DS also has a committee working with student organizations to provide DS information when these organizations sponsor events. Kimberley Simon commented that it is important that the information is reaching students, faculty, and staff. Sherry Grey stated that a lot of international students are currently under stress due to world events in Japan and the Middle East, and asked if there is a way to communicate with international students via the Mental Health website to help address the situation. Dr. Benson stated that ISS e-mails these students. Ms. Grey also suggested that the Learning Abroad Center should know about the mental health resources created by the Provost's Committee.

Dr. Benson next pointed out the list of the Provost's Committee's major accomplishments. Some of these include:

- Student Mental Health Website,
- Mental Health Services Syllabus Statement,
- Development and provision of collaborative faculty/staff training in-person and online,
- Facilitated changes in the University policy on Reasons for Legitimate Absences to include bereavement, and
- Developed and maintained campus partnerships

Professor Branton asked Dr. Benson how she views the relationship between mental health work and DS. Dr. Benson responded that 42% of students with disabilities have mental health as a primary diagnosis, and this percentage rises to over 50% if it includes secondary diagnosis. Beyond those with mental health diagnosis, DS sees many students under serious stress. They make referrals to University Counseling and Consulting Services and to Boynton. Mental health is woven throughout the work of the DS office.

Dr. Benson also noted the Provost's Committee's work on the Stamp Out Stigma campaign with the DSCC, and the Faces of Disabilities campaign.

Disabilities Services Update

Dr. Benson provided the Disabilities Committee with an update on the work of Disabilities Services.

- Donna Johnson, Director of Disability Services, Dave Fuecker, Associate Director of UReturn, and Jim Meland, Director of Employee Assistance, Human Resources met with Kathy Brown, President Bruininks' Chief of Staff and named

Vice President of Human Resources (July 2011), on March 17, 2011 to provide an update on the Employee Threat Assessment Team.

- Ms. Johnson and Anitra Cottledge, Assistant Director of the University's Women's Center co-chaired the development of a leadership institute for undergraduate students sponsored by the Office of Equity and Diversity. If funded, the institute will begin Fall 2011.
- DS and the Medical School are seeking Institutional Review Board approval to administer three surveys: 1.) medical students, 2.) medical residents and fellows, 3.) medical school faculty and administrators to identify barriers for medical trainees with invisible disabilities as part of the Marcus Foundation Faculty Education Grant.
- DS is redesigning its web site. The home page will feature photos and stories of 10 students, faculty, staff and guests of the University of Minnesota who have disabilities. The purpose of the campaign is to illustrate the variety of users of DS and to highlight the benefits of a diverse campus community.
- Disability Testing Center will begin working with departments to encourage them to provide testing accommodations in their own departments. The purpose of this is to build capacity within departments.

Subcommittees Discussion

Professor Branton reported that the Subcommittee for Needs and Services Assessment has gathered information on the Pulse Survey and will be following up on this. The Subcommittee for Faculty Training and Student Orientation indicated they had not had an opportunity to meet due to the Spring Break interruption. Professor Joanna O'Connell suggested using Google Docs or Moodle to assist the subcommittees in meeting between Disabilities Issues meetings. Ms. Simon noted that her office had not yet migrated to Google so she would not be able to use Google Docs. The committee agreed to use the Moodle platform and Professor O'Connell said she would help set it up.

The committee next discussed what should be included in the letter to the colleges regarding the training provided on disabilities issues. Professor Branton noted it should be simple and designed to find out what training is required and what training is routinely available in an optional form. Professor O'Connell suggested the letter could ask if there is any training available and if not, what format is best for the unit. Professor Branton noted it was important that the colleges understand the committee is not concerned with enforcement, it is just gathering information, and has a goal of achieving uniform training across campus.

Professor O'Connell noted that the questions should be sent to deans, faculty, and staff because there would likely be different responses at different levels. She suggested enlisting Arlene Carney's help to disseminate the questions. She also noted that currently there is not unit wide training for faculty in her department.

Ms. Simon noted the economic climate at the University and urged the committee to address funding sources for the planned training. She also noted that it is important to seek administrative support in order to have staff participation in training.

Professor Branton asked Professor O'Connell about the status of the transgender restroom access issue that she had contacted him about. Professor O'Connell responded that Pat McNamara originally began work on the issue and the subcommittee considering the problem has surveyed the restrooms, created a Google map, and is at the point of presenting a request for accommodation to Facilities Management. But Ben Falter, the individual at Facilities Management who was leading the subcommittee on this issue, is no longer there. Professor O'Connell stated she would continue to follow the issue and let the committee know when she receives a copy of the accommodation request.

Hearing no further business, Professor Branton adjourned the meeting.

Dawn Zugay
University Senate