

DISABILITIES ISSUES COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING
February 15, 2012
Morrill Hall Room 238A

[In these minutes: equity and diversity evaluation; disability services update; disabled student cultural center update; resolutions re: assessment and disabilities education]

[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, Chrispin Behnke, Hayley Bemel, Sherry Gray, Donna Johnson, Mary Kennedy, Brian McAdams, Peggy Mann Rinehart, Julia Robinson, Kimberly Simon, Frank Symon, Carla Tabourne,

REGRETS: Joanna O'Connell, Amber Mayer, Clare McCormick, Susan Rose, Joanie Tool

GUESTS: Chad McGuire, Disabled Student Cultural Center (DSCC); Rosemary White Shield, director of evaluation, Office for Equity and Diversity

Professor Dale Branton called the meeting to order and asked for introductions.

Evaluation Discussion

Professor Branton introduced Rosemary White Shield, director of evaluation, Office for Equity and Diversity and indicated that the Disabilities Issues Committee has had two areas of focus: 1) improving the level of education about disability issues and 2) developing a means of evaluating the resources being used in Disability Services. He indicated further that the Committee would like to hear Ms. White Shield's philosophies and provide feedback on the Committees interests.

Ms. White Shield briefly described her background and experience, prior to beginning her position at the University of Minnesota five months ago. She then discussed her approach to evaluation. She stated that although she is trained in traditional quantitative and qualitative methods of evaluation, in her research she found that these approaches did not always bring forth all of the evidence that could provide a complete picture of the subject being evaluated. She, therefore, developed a non-western paradigm for evaluation and this has been the area of her research and scholarship.

In her position at the University of Minnesota, she was asked to envision and increase the presence of diversity at the University. To do this, she is building a model that encompasses both western and nonwestern paradigms of research and evaluation, that is agile in structure and substance, will be attentive to equity and diversity, and promote

inclusiveness, excellence and efficiency, and new ways of discovering what is known and what would like to be known. This is the equinox model. She stated further that one aspect of her work is building evaluation frameworks for all of the units at the University including Disability Services and applying the equinox model to system-wide initiatives such as the curricula audit. She has also been asked to examine how the University of Minnesota measures diversity and equity.

She noted that because the equinox model is holistic in its construct and is non-linear, it cannot be represented in a two dimensional graphic, and OED has engaged designers to represent the model as a multi-dimensional teaching tool.

She went on to discuss how the “empowerment evaluation” model from Stanford University is informing the operationalization of the equinox model. Some features of empowerment evaluation are that it is designed to “help people help themselves,” and relies on reciprocal relationships of action and use. It is also more community focused. The evaluator works in concert with the program, and program staff are participants in the program. In contrast, the classic evaluation is similar to an inspection, which is done to the program. The evaluator is apart from the program and makes the decisions.

Next, Ms. White Shield noted the benefits of empowerment evaluation:

- Builds sustainability in a time of limited resources
- Allows for continuous improvement
- Builds a culture of learning
- Focuses on assets not deficits – It looks at the strengths of the community

She stated further that the equinox model is designed to be unit and program specific. Engage program directors and staff. Look at why programs exist and assumptions about why the program exists. Look at short and long term outcomes, select data collection methods, types of methods to analyze the data, how to communicate results (data visualization).

She stated her approach is to tailor the methods and analysis to the program being evaluated. She then listed several western methods of quantitative and qualitative evaluation and their benefits.

She did not share nonwestern paradigm methods of evaluation, but noted their benefits. Some of these include: focus on the discovery of knowledge already present, congruity with communities world views, value systems and cultural strengths, reliance on the researcher’s or evaluator’s lived experience to inform the result, increased capacity for nonlinear conceptualization, and removal of western bias in research and evaluation.

Throughout the equinox model evaluation experience she asks participants to be aware of one guiding question. “How does what I am doing support all members of the community in fairness and liberty to pursue those self-defined ends that are most fulfilling in a strength based culturally responsive manner.

Ms. White Shield stated further that the equinox model standards are in line with the University accreditation standards. The Higher Education Commission developed a set of beta standards that Ms. White Shield used in the equinox model. These beta standards will be published in spring 2012.

Professor Branton opened the floor for questions and discussion. Chrispin Behnke noted that the graduate occupational therapy program he is involved in emphasizes participatory analysis, and has many similarities to the equinox model described by Ms. White Shield.

Professor Carla Tabourne asked how the equinox model takes into account the reality of situations where there are insufficient funds to meet individual needs. Ms. White Shield responded that there must be efficient multiple perspectives on how to report data and understand what needs are. She recognizes that there are limits on time, resources, and money and she must consider how to achieve the highest degree of excellence and increase attention to equity and diversity within those limits. She further stated that with the application of different strategies new perspectives arise. The non-linear approach of the equinox model allows situations to be viewed from new angles and allows the introduction of new perspectives in a respectful manner. She assured the committee that she maintains the highest ethical standards and her goal is to ensure the data is authentic and credible.

Donna Johnson commented that the Provost's Committee on Mental health, was able to achieve a great deal because of the stakeholders that were brought into the project, and the efforts that were made to look at all sides of the issue.

Professor Branton stated the Disabilities Issues Committee is charged with advising Disability Services as to their effectiveness and allocation of resources, but the committee does not feel it has a basis for doing this. He stated further that the Committee wants to gather some statistical feedback 1) on how those served by Disability Services feel about the services received and 2) about those who contact Disability Services and choose not to be served. He then asked how the equinox model fit with those concepts.

Ms. White Shield responded that the equinox model encompasses both western and nonwestern methods of evaluation and has a large capacity for quantitative methods. She is working with Disability Services to build an evaluation framework. Part of the process is identifying stakeholders that inform the results. But they are at the beginning of this process. She hopes to engage the Committee as a stakeholder that can help provide information. She also wants to gain as much information as possible from the community served.

Ms. Johnson commented that simply asking "are you satisfied?" does not provide much information. They must "dig deeper." She stated the first step in the evaluation process with Ms. White Shield is identifying Disability Services' expansive purpose. She noted that its purpose is much more than that of a compliance office, but emphasized that the evaluation process has just begun.

Professor Branton stated that he would like the Disabilities Committee to generate a list of questions to be answered by those who are receiving services and he would like to know how the Committee could be a part of developing the evaluation framework. Ms. White Shield responded that in her role she acts as a coach or mentor to the director and key staff and she would need to meet with Ms. Johnson to determine how best to receive and gather information.

Disability Services Update

Peggy Mann Rinehart, reported on two technology projects in which Disability Services is involved, 1) a pilot evaluation of e-text books and 2) web accessibility software.

The University of Minnesota is involved in a pilot project to evaluate the use of e-text books. It involves 700 students using textbooks in eleven classes. Ms. Mann Rinehart's involvement is in looking at the accessibility of e-text books for students with disabilities. Vice Provost McMaster and Vice Provost Wahlstrom are sponsoring the group. Two goals of the project are to explore and understand how students (with and without disabilities) access, and navigate text directly from the publisher, and how they navigate texts through provided "course load" software.

The project has a three-pronged protocol. The first is a participatory action component. The second is identifying students with a variety of disabilities and working in a focus group with each of the students to determine if they can participate. The third prong of the evaluation is the professional evaluation – a standard look at the site.

Ms. Mann Rinehart stated that the pilot is the first of this type of e-text evaluation. The report generated from the pilot will address what the e-materials need to do and inform the development of e-text materials for the University and publishers.

Next, Ms. Mann Rinehart discussed the web accessibility software. She noted that Disability Services is partnering with the College of Education and Human Development on the project. She went on to explain that the software identifies areas of a website that are problematic for those with disabilities and tells the web developer how to make them accessible. She explained further that the software scans the website and informs the web developer where all of the "tags" should be. She noted that this is the first software that assists in correcting accessibility problems.

DSCC Update

Chad McGuire provided the committee with an update on DSCC's work. Highlights included:

- The DSCC recently submitted its \$20,000 fees proposal to the Student Services Fees Committee. The money supports a \$15.00 an hour salary for the DSCC co-directors, food, speaker's fees, and hosting events.
- The DSCC and the Deaf Ambassadors are sponsoring a hip-hop artist who uses sign language.

- Once a month the DSCC sponsors a speaker. The most recent speaker discussed writing resumes and interviewing in the context of individuals with disabilities.
- DSCC is discussing hosting an event where participants are invited to experience an approximation of a disability. This event might be set up in Coffman Union.
- DSCC turned down a request for funds from a group of individuals who wanted to reconstitute wheel-chair basketball and needed money to repair the chairs. The request was denied because none of the individuals was disabled, and they did not provide sufficient support for their request.

Discussion of Evolving Approaches to Long-term Goals of the Committee

Professor Branton provided the committee with the following document with his suggestions for focusing the committee's goals.

Needs Assessment Subcommittee

The chair proposes that the immediate focus of the needs Assessment Subcommittee will be on:

1. Development of a list of questions that we would like answered by those who are served by Disability Services
2. Development of a list of questions that we would like answered by those who investigate Disability Services but do not chose to declare their disability

These should be completed and ready for brief discussion and approval at the March meeting. The committee would then present the questions to Disability Services for consideration in developing a formal system of evaluation.

Education Subcommittee

The chair proposes that the immediate focus of the Education Subcommittee will be on:

1. Development of a brief outline of fundamental topics about which all faculty members should be educated. Care should be taken to restrict the outline to key issues and information that could form a universal foundation for a better informed faculty in consideration of the need for a program that will be possible to achieve and one what will be palatable to a time-burdened faculty.
2. Development of a list of fundamental information resources that should be available to all faculty members and about which all faculty members should be aware. As in 1. There must be an emphasis on *fundamental*" set of current or proposed resources.

These should be completed and ready for brief discussion and approval at the March meeting. The Committee would present the results to DS/OED for discussion.

Committee Resolutions:

The chair proposes to formulate to committee resolutions for approval at the March meeting:

1. A resolution proposing that a survey assessment of those who contact/use disability services be developed and the results of those surveys be presented to the Senate Disability Issues Committee on a regular basis.
2. A resolution proposing that fundamental education in disability issues be universally provided to all faculty in a manner that is verifiable.

The chair would circulate the proposed resolutions electronically for comment and provide them to OED in advance for discussion. The goal would be to be able to act on the proposed resolutions at the March meeting.

Professor Tabourne expressed the concern that Professor Branton's proposals to develop lists of questions for those served by Disability Services would preempt the evaluation work that Ms. White Shield is beginning with Disability Services. Professor Branton responded that the subcommittees began their work prior to the time Ms. White Shield was hired. He further indicated that developing a list of questions that the committee would like answered by those who are served by Disability Services is a small goal and the committee would work in conjunction with Disability Services.

He then asked the Education Subcommittee members to develop a brief outline of fundamental topics about which all faculty members should be educated, and a list of fundamental education resources. He went on to state that it is the consensus of the committee that there should be a universal, compact training for the faculty. He asked committee members to bring back this outline of topics for discussion in March.

He further stated that he would draft the resolutions that he proposed and circulate them via e-mail prior to the March meeting. The committee would then discuss the resolutions with the Office of Equity and Diversity.

Professor Julia Robinson commented that she supported creating a set of goals or objectives. Professor Branton emphasized that he wanted to work with OED on these objectives.

Ms White Shield responded that it would take time to understand what the committee is seeking to do and how it will fit into her work.

Kimberly Simon stated that in light of Ms. White Shield's presentation, she was concerned about passing a resolution that proposes a survey assessment. She does not want the committee to preempt the process that Disability Services is beginning, and believes the committee should be patient and continue its conversation with Disability Services.

Professor Branton responded that he did not want the committee to be paralyzed. Professor Robinson stated she sees goal creation as a starting point that can be revisited in six months.

The committee then briefly discussed whether it was feasible to recommend mandatory training on disability issues.

Hearing no further business, Professor Branton adjourned the meeting.

Dawn Zugay
University Senate