

SENATE COMMITTEE ON STUDENT AFFAIRS  
MINUTES OF MEETING

March 28, 2012

Morrill Hall Room 238A

[In these minutes: Boynton Health Services update; Housing and Residential Life update; excused absence for voting resolution]

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

PRESENT: Joyce Holl (Co-Chair), Silvia Canelon (Co-Chair), Anthony Albecker, Ken Deal, Marcus Guith, Sam Ketchum, Elena Machkasova, Rachel Nguyen, Amber Peifer, Brandee Polson, Katie Roehl, Gabi Schmiegel, Carlos Torelli, Kendre Turonie, Michael Vargas, Amelious Whyte

REGRETS: Gina Dominechetti, Lauren Schrader, Michael Stebleton

ABSENT: Kristy Eder, Marissa Kramer

GUESTS: Laurie McLaughlin, director, Housing and Residential Life; Mitchell Menigo and Kate Dobson, Minnesota Public Interest Research Group; Ferdinand Schlapper, director, Boynton Health Services (BHS)

OTHERS: Thomas Bilder, BHS; Lisa Erwin, Vice Chancellor of Student Life, Duluth

Joyce Holl convened the meeting, welcomed those present, and called for introductions.

**Boynton Health Services Update**

Ms. Holl next introduced Ferdinand Schlapper, director, Boynton Health Services (BHS). Mr. Schlapper indicated he was recently hired as the director of BHS, and briefly discussed his background and experience. He stated he has worked in college health for 25 years and was most recently Director of Health Services at Boise State University.

He then provided a PowerPoint presentation discussing the value of creating a healthy environment on campus. He noted four national challenges to creating this environment, but stated they serve to create opportunity. The challenges are:

- The national health care landscape
  - Nation spends \$7.5 million per capita on health care, but life expectancies are less than in countries that spend less on health care
  - Approximately 50 million people in the United States are uninsured
  - Double digit increases in health premiums

- The United States has a low ranking in equity of services and health outcomes
- The need for campuses to manage mental health care and safety issues
- Public questioning of the value of higher education
- Resource and funding cuts – the pressure to “do more with less”

With regard to health care reform, he stated that 50% of our health problems are created by personal health choices. And the national health care should look to university health care programs like the University of Minnesota’s as a model.

He stated further that it is important to recognize the connection between health and educational outcomes. Educational outcomes are improved by creating healthy environments on campus. Healthier students and campus communities:

- Create capacity to flourish
- Facilitate learning
- Promote academic achievement and success
- Improve retention rates
- Promote engagement of students
- Enhance sense of interdependence and community

Mr. Schlapper noted some programs that help create healthier campus communities are strong mental health programs and tobacco free campuses. He emphasized the need to focus on health care using public health and preventative medicine before problems become acute or chronic.

Mr. Schlapper stated he is looking at strength’s based strategic planning with full transparency, and involving all stakeholders such BHS, students, and administrators. This will help create shared ownership in achieving a healthy campus environment.

He then described some current BHS initiatives.

- Creating healing environments through the use of art and music
- Tobacco free campus initiative - Over 600 universities nationwide are smoke-free.
- Student veteran services
- BHS health screening program
- Step Up, Bystander Intervention – designed to create a sense of community and hold one another accountable
- Improved access and convenience to health care – working toward 24 hour rolling horizon of access

Mr. Schlapper also discussed the necessity of engaging students. He noted that e-mail is no longer very effective, and BHS is working with students to help identify the most effective way to engage them.

He stated the importance of supporting students with a proactive, preventive focus including early outreach and follow up with case management. He indicated the opportunity to demonstrate how to solve the health care crises is what brought him to the University of Minnesota.

Professor Elena Machkasova asked how BHS works with students who already have a primary care provider. He stated that BHS tries to make its system as flexible as possible for student convenience. They help students and parents make the transition from their current provider to BHS when they begin attending the University. Additionally, the Student Health Benefit Program (SHBP) provides worldwide access to health care.

Brandee Polson asked if there are “in network” and “out of network” providers in the SHBP. Mr. Schlapper responded that it is a tiered system and this helps to educate students about health insurance plans.

Ms. Holl asked Mr. Schlapper to provide an update on the implementation of the hard waiver into the SHBP. Mr. Schlapper stated the waiver has been approved at all administrative levels and would be implemented next fall. The waiver serves to spread the risk and holds down cost. The waiver does not prevent students with health care coverage equivalent to the SHBP from opting out of the SHBP. There is a comprehensive campaign to inform students about the hard waiver, and the information is part of the registration process.

Anthony Albecker noted the gap in health insurance coverage for students transitioning to graduate school and asked if there are resources available for these students. Mr. Schlapper responded that BHS tries to insure continuity in health services, but stated he would check with Gary Christenson about specific services that are available.

Mr. Schlapper also noted the importance of helping transitioning students to find new health care providers, and become aware of community services. Amelious Whyte agreed that it would be beneficial to consider providing this type of information.

Ms. Polson inquired if part-time graduate students could take part in the SHBP. Mr. Schlapper responded that they could not. He explained that if part-time students could voluntarily enroll in the SHBP, the plan would struggle with adverse selection, resulting in the depletion of the most important factor in the success of a health care plan, having a strong pool of enrollees. Therefore, the university would have to mandate that all part-time students be required to enroll in the plan to spread the risk across all students. Faced with this “all or nothing” scenario, most universities (including Minnesota) choose not to impose this requirement on their part-time students, making them ineligible to enroll in and utilize the SHBP benefits program.

Mr. Schlapper invited committee members to send him any further questions.

## **Housing and Residential Life Update**

Laurie McLaughlin, director, Housing and Residential Life provided the committee with copies of her PowerPoint presentation. She began by providing a brief overview of housing and residential life on the Twin Cities campus.

With regard to housing facilities, she stated:

- There are eight residence halls and three apartment facilities. The current capacity is 6,300. The University owns ten of the facilities and has a lease agreement with University Village.
- There has been tremendous growth in private student housing complexes around the University.
- Two family student-housing cooperatives –The majority of students living in these facilities are graduate and professional students. The coops manage these properties on a day-to-day basis.
- Forty-eight townhomes serve as transitional housing for faculty and staff.

She next discussed Housing Programs and Services.

- Residential Life – this is the focus of the student development programs
- Facilities – staff are in charge of maintaining facilities on a day-to-day basis as well as structural improvements
- Conference & Event Services – Housing and Residential life recruits youth and adult conferences. This brings in additional revenue during the summer months.
- Business Operations/Finance
- Technology Support & Service
- Off-Campus Listing Service – This provides an opportunity for off-campus properties to list vacancies and students can access the service at no cost.

Ms. McLaughlin also discussed the following points about housing operation.

- Housing & Residential Life is an auxiliary (self-supporting) service. It receives no tuition dollars.
- FY12 operating budget is \$40.5 M – It is based on student payments for rooms.
- Housing and Residential Life fully funds depreciation.
- Housing and Residential Life employs 120 non-student staff and 450 student staff.

Ms. McLaughlin then discussed the importance of providing on campus housing. Some of these factors are:

- Increased Academic Success (GPA, Retention, Graduation Rates)
- Community Involvement
- Student Growth & Development
- Student Satisfaction
- Supporting the Recruitment of Highly Qualified Prospective Students

She went on to state that housing plays an important role in academic success, particularly in a student's first year, and the University has an institutional commitment to providing housing to all first year students.

Ms. McLaughlin then provided the following facts and statistics about on-campus housing.

- Approximately 87% of the first-year class lives on campus (2011-12).
- In order to meet the May 1<sup>st</sup> housing guarantee for first year students, approximately 250-300 students are placed in expanded housing.
- Due to the high demand for on-campus housing, only 75-100 incoming transfer students have the opportunity to live on campus. This results in numerous complaints.
- Approximately 42% of students living on campus come from the Twin Cities metro (2011-12); 17% from non-metro MN; and 34% from out-of-state.
- Of the students living on campus, 7.8% are international students (2011-12).
- Room & Board Rates: Currently, Minnesota's room and board rates are eleventh lowest in the Big Ten.
- Housing & Residential Life currently provides 25 Living Learning Communities for first-year students. These are developed in collaboration with colleges and other offices on campus. The goal of these communities is to bring students with interests together. One example of this is the Students Crossing Borders program that pairs domestic and international students.

Next, Ms. McLaughlin discussed Student Life programs and initiatives. Some of these included:

- StrengthsQuest – Residential Life staff and community advisors have taken the StrengthsFinder assessment. It helps students to increase self-awareness and is used for such things as community advisor conversations, and conduct hearings.
- Residential Curriculum – This is designed for Residential Life to be intentional about programming and the messages it provides to students.
- Student Development Outcomes – These are used with student employees to help them establish goals and develop language about the job skills they have learned.
- Sustainability Initiatives – These include facilities renovations and student education about conservation and sustainability.
- New Living Learning Communities – Some examples are STEM Diversity House, Hmong House, Huntley House for African American Men.

Ms. McLaughlin then discussed the new Fourth Street student housing and dining project, and provided the committee with a handout demonstrating the project. She stated it is located on University Avenue and Fourth Street. It is a traditional residence hall with 600 beds. It is designed with a modified sweet-concept, and has a residential dining facility and community space. It does not, however, have on-site parking for students. She also noted that it has a Greek life component, and is being designed to meet Minnesota B3 sustainability standards. Some aspects of sustainability include a green roof and a grey water reclamation system.

A committee member asked what type of training is provided for community advisors. Ms. McLaughlin stated it is an extensive training program, and she would send committee members the training schedule.

Another committee member asked whether there were any concerns about having the new housing facility on frat row. Ms. McLaughlin stated she understands this concern and hopes that Residential Life will establish a good relationship with the chapter houses. She stated there would need to be a conversation about how to manage the situation for everyone.

Mr. Whyte noted that Sanford Hall is also located near the fraternity houses and this has not been problematic. He also discussed the NCHIP learning collaborative's work on high risk drinking. And stated one aspect of this program has been helping the Greeks make their parties safer and creating a culture of proper monitoring.

### **Resolution Regarding Excused Absence Policy for Voting**

Ms. Holl provided the committee with copies of the Minnesota Public Interest Research Group (MPIRG) resolution<sup>1</sup> seeking to change the existing administrative policy on make up work for legitimate absences to include voting in local state and national elections as an excused absence. She also noted that committee members had received copies of the existing administrative policy prior to the meeting. She then introduced Mitch Menigo and Kate Dobson, students working with MPIRG.

Ms. Dobson provided SCSA members with the proposed resolution and frequently asked questions document. She stated that research shows if you are over 60 you are three times as likely to vote as 18 to 24 year olds. And she stated the MPIRG initiative is designed to help get students to the polls. She stated research shows that the number one barrier to students voting is a lack of time. She indicated further that she had spoken to President Kaler about the excused absence proposal, and he stated that now is the time when habits like voting are formed, and it is important to form the voting habit.

---

#### **<sup>1</sup> Concerning: Excused Absence for Election Day Voting**

Author: Mitch Menigo & Abrahm Neuser, Minnesota Public Interest Research Group  
Spring Semester, 2012

**Whereas**, we believe that voting is a basic right guaranteed to voting-age students at the University of Minnesota; and

**Whereas**, state statute 204C.04 gives every employee who is eligible to vote the right to be absent from work without risk of penalty during the morning of the day of that election; and

**Whereas**, an election is defined as a regularly scheduled state primary or general election, an election to fill a vacancy in the office of United States senator or United States representative, or an election to fill a vacancy in the office of state senator or state representative; and

**Whereas**, many students encounter difficulties in scheduling time allotted for voting due to various constraints including but not limited, to commuting, academic and extracurricular commitments; therefore be it

**RESOLVED** That the Committee of Student Affairs compel the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities to enact this policy that would ensure students to vote without academic consequence.

Mr. Menigo stated MPIRG is asking the committee to change the existing administrative policy to include voting in local, state, and national elections as an excused absence. He stated the University needs policies that encourage voting particularly among portions of the student population such as commuters. He stated that Vice Provost Jerry Rinehart was receptive to the proposal and encouraged MPIRG to speak with the SCSA. Additionally, the chair of the Political Science Department expressed support for the principle MPIRG is promoting, and stated he believes his colleagues in the political science department would also be supportive.

Mr. Whyte asked if there is anything in the State statute that provides students with the ability to vote, and asked whether MPIRG has sought to change the state law. Mr. Menigo indicated MPIRG had not approached the State Legislature regarding the issue, but was focused on changing the University policy prior to the November 2012 elections.

A committee member asked whether students would be excused from homework or assignments under the proposed resolution. Mr. Menigo stated they would not; voting would just be included in the list of legitimate absences for which makeup work could be done.

A motion was made to support the MPIRG resolution. Mr. Whyte suggested including the name of the impacted policy in the resolution. Vice Chancellor Erwin stated that the policy applies to all of the campuses except Duluth, and suggested that this be clarified in the resolution. Vice Chancellor Erwin noted further that the Duluth Student Association would also be considering the issue of excused absences for voting. Ms. Holl asked to be informed of the result of its discussion.

The motion passed unanimously.

### **Old/New Business**

Mr. Whyte noted that at a previous meeting Vice Provost Rinehart had offered SCSA members the opportunity to take the StrengthsFinder assessment and stated that those who would like to take the assessment should contact him and he would provide them with codes. Amber Peifer commented that the Law School administration is interested in having its students take the StrengthsFinder.

Ms. Canelon asked the committee whether it would like to see the final version of the revised Student Conduct Code at its April meeting, or if it would be satisfied to review it via e-mail. Mr. Whyte and Vice Chancellor Erwin noted that the Student Conduct Code would be going to the Student Senate the following day. The committee agreed that they would be satisfied to review it via e-mail.

Hearing no further business, Ms. Holl adjourned the meeting.

Dawn Zugay  
University Senate

