

Minutes*

**Faculty Consultative Committee
Thursday, July 19, 2012
1:00 – 3:00
238A Morrill Hall**

Present: Sally Gregory Kohlstedt (chair), Avner Ben-Ner, Chris Cramer, Michael Hancher, Scott Lanyon, Russell Luepker, (Leslie Schiff for) Alon McCormick, James Pacala, Ned Patterson, (Janet Ericksen for) Jeff Ratliff-Crain, George Sheets

Absent: none counted for a summer meeting

Guests: Professors Dale Branton and Mary Kennedy (Senate Committee on Disabilities Issues)

Other: none

[In these minutes: (1) committee business; (2) resolution from the Committee on Disabilities Issues (training for all faculty, to be revisited); (3) committee business]

1. Committee Business

Professor Kohlstedt convened the meeting at 1:00 and turned to several items of Committee business.

-- She and Professor Hancher met with Amy Phenix, the president's chief of staff, and discussed among other things the Committee's annual dinner with the Board of Regents. It was agreed that the dinner could be held at Eastcliff every year.

-- She reminded Committee members of the trip to visit the Morris campus and asked if there are additional Committee members who wish to participate.

-- She asked Committee members to review the proposed questions for guests who have been invited to the Committee retreat at the end of August. Committee members discussed the questions; Professor Kohlstedt agreed to pare the list of questions to no more than five for any one guest.

2. Resolution from the Committee on Disabilities Issues

Professor Kohlstedt now welcomed Professors Branton and Kennedy to discuss a resolution from the Committee on Disabilities Issues; the resolution read as follows (between the * * *):

* * *

Proposed Resolution on Faculty Training in Disabilities Issues

MOTION

* 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 represents the views of, nor are they binding on, the Senate, the Administration, or the Board of Regents.

The University Senate supports uniform training for all faculty members at the University of Minnesota in fundamental aspects of disabilities issues and in the nature of reasonable accommodation.

COMMENT

The University of Minnesota is committed, in all learning environments, to a positive, inclusive atmosphere that encourages all members of a diverse student body to participate and learn.

The University is committed to the provision of reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities, as required by law.

In the absence of specific training, faculty members may be uncertain about the scope and limits of their responsibilities to students with disabilities.

Appropriate training would increase the confidence of faculty members in making appropriate accommodations.

Approved by the Disabilities Issues Committee on April 18, 2012

* * *

Professor Branton began by noting that he had chaired the Disabilities Issues committee for the last three years; while Professor Kennedy will be chair in 2012-13, he will take the lead on explaining the resolution because it was developed and adopted during his term as chair. His goal when he became chair, he related, was to make the committee more active; it had not brought many items to the Senate before and he expressed the hope that this Committee would give serious attention to the resolution.

The resolution is designed to benefit individuals with disabilities but also to help faculty members deal with individuals with disabilities for whom the University must provide reasonable accommodation. Professor Branton said he has learned that most faculty members are not well informed about individuals with disabilities or about dealing with the Office for Disability Services. There are unfortunate consequences as a result of that lack of information and the resolution is designed to address that gap in understanding and knowledge. (The consequences include wasted faculty time when disabilities issues arise in the classroom, resistance to legally-mandated accommodations, stress and anxiety related to negotiating and providing accommodations, over-accommodation by some faculty members unsure about the limit of their responsibilities, and academic isolation of students with disabilities, particularly those with hidden disabilities, because of the faculty member's discomfort in addressing disabilities issues.)

Many faculty members, faced with a student with disabilities, do not know what to do and may be resistant to providing accommodations. The Office for Disability Services indicates that the number one problem it faces is getting faculty members to provide accommodations, and the problems cause stress and anxiety. Education on the limits of faculty responsibility will help: They seek to help faculty members do a better job, reduce wasted time, and also reduce the isolation of students with disabilities.

The intent of the resolution is to educate faculty members in their legal and ethical responsibilities to students with disabilities and about working with Disability Services, save faculty time and stress, and promote a welcoming classroom atmosphere that is part of the diversity priority that President Kaler has announced. Professor Branton also explained that many of those served by Disability

Services have hidden disabilities (not obvious to others), that new disabilities are being recognized, and that the willingness of those with hidden disabilities depends on the sensitivity of the faculty member and the classroom atmosphere. The difference in learning when a faculty member is relaxed and accommodating is very significant. The other intended outcome is to promote equal opportunity for all students to participate in the classroom learning experience and to allow students without disabilities to interact with those who do and to learn what they have to offer.

The resolution is very general, Professor Branton observed, although they do have an idea about the appropriate content and delivery method. It should be minimally disruptive for faculty, but materials should be web-based and available to all faculty, printed materials should be available for reference when needed (e.g., when dealing with actual disabilities issues), the content should be fundamental, compact, and practical in nature and should emphasize and promote an ethical and welcoming learning environment for those with disabilities beyond the minimum legal requirements.

Professor Kohlstedt asked if they would like this training to be required for new faculty so there would not be need for remediation. They are open to thinking about that idea, Professor Branton said, and they would be happy if it were required for all new faculty. They would like to see it required of all faculty members, but there may be some who do not need it. It will also be important to have just-in-time information for times when a faculty member has a student with a disability and needs information immediately, Professor Kohlstedt commented.

Professor Schiff said that in addition to new faculty members, training could be required for all directors of undergraduate study because it would make them better able to do their jobs. The Provost's Council on Mental Health has a similar interest in getting information to faculty members. Professor Kennedy said that was a good point and they would have a beta version of material they could pilot with the directors.

Professor Pacala said he supported the general concept but his biggest question is whether there is any evidence that the education or training would have any effect on behavior. If the biggest problem is attitude, would the training change attitudes? What indication is there that this is the way to change behavior? There is no assurance, Professor Branton said, and this is only one approach. However, those who are resistant to providing accommodation often are so because they do not know what to do, how they can maintain standards, and where the boundaries and limits are. It is not so much a "bad" attitude as it is that faculty are stressed and busy. The training would provide them the information needed. Professor Kennedy reported that Disability Services has considerable data on faculty, staff, and students, and could mine that data in a before/after study, though this would take resources, as one Committee member pointed out.

They would like to change attitudes, Professor Branton said, and asked how Professor Pacala could envision being able to do so. There are instances when education can change behavior, Professor Pacala responded, and in other cases it does not. One can educate doctors about some things but in cases where education does not work, so one must resort to more draconian measures such as public reporting and quality-based measures. He said he liked the idea of a before/after measure. He repeated that he supported the resolution but is nervous about the "all" in the text. The training would be an extra module one must take and there would be a cost.

Professor Ben-Ner asked if a student with disabilities who did not receive satisfaction could complain successfully; he or she could, Professor Branton said. In that case, Professor Ben-Ner said, he

would welcome information that is short and pointed. Professor Branton said it would perhaps help if faculty members were informed that X minutes completing a module would save them four hours in dealing with a student with disabilities.

Professor Luepker said his first reaction to the resolution was negative, "another mandated activity." Then he realized that if the training were only required of new faculty, it could take 20-30 years to train everyone. So he has concluded that all faculty should receive the training. He went on to point out, however, that many who teach students are not faculty members; would they be covered? He commented that he has had students with disabilities and in the past had panicked about what to do because of his ignorance. He received much help from Disability Services, and all who instruct students deserve to learn about the issues and to know where there is help. Professor Kennedy said that Professor Luepker's reaction is a common one and that this somehow gets communicated to the students, which can make them feel uncomfortable or even marginalized. If faculty members knew that information is available, they would be calmer.

Professor Lanyon endorsed the idea of providing training to new faculty members. For himself, he said, he would be less interested in sitting through a general presentation than being provided information about the situation he has in front of him. He also suggested that department heads should be included in training, in addition to directors of undergraduate study. He added that when he receives something as a department head, he reads it with a different hat than when he receives a message directed to all faculty. Professor Branton said they would like the training to be for all faculty but do not want to have a negative impact. They definitely would like new faculty to receive it.

Professor Sheets inquired if students with undisclosed disabilities disclose them to the Office for Disability Services. Not always, Professor Branton said, and if they do not, the faculty member has no obligation to make accommodations. What is the faculty member's obligation to respond if a student claims a disability not disclosed to Disability Services or to anyone, Professor Sheets asked. Are the faculty asked to be diagnosticians? Is that part of what is meant by creating a welcoming environment? Professor Branton said that if a student claims he or she has a disability, but has not contacted Disability Services, the faculty member has no obligation to make accommodations. With respect to a welcoming environment, however, some students do not want to disclose a disability, but a faculty member can make it easier for the student to disclose and receive accommodation. If faculty members can be more relaxed about unusual behaviors, that would help, even if they are not legally required to provide accommodation.

Providing more resources would be helpful to the faculty, Professor Cramer said. A decision to make some form of training mandatory is typically only taken in response to a perceived liability issue (or some other major risk): The University may worry that it could be sued because it does not have a system in place. He said he believed the effort would receive a more positive response if it were to provide information and let people know where it is. That might also allow the material to be made available to others who teach, such as TAs, temporary faculty, etc., who are not as easily tracked in the University system. There are departments that track those appointments, Professor Branton said, and his worry is that people will know the information is there but will not look at it. They would like to have faculty exposed to it once so that they know what the materials are.

Professor Hancher offered three comments. First, the discussion so far suggests that the focus of the proposal is on students; if that is the case, the wording should make that clear. Second, the resolution should speak to education, not training. Third, the faculty do not do all the teaching; others teach as well and they should be included in the scope of the resolution. Professor Kennedy said, apropos of the third

point, that it came up at their committee and they decided to target the faculty first. As for the first point, the committee has staff and student members and the focus was not solely on students. Professor Branton said if the suggestion was to broaden the coverage of the resolution, he agreed.

Professor Kohlstedt suggested that a revised version of the resolution be brought to the August meeting of the Committee. Professor Cramer asked if there is a Disability Services office on the Morris campus; Professor Ericksen said that there is and that it would be a good idea to be sure that the activities of such offices around the University are coordinated.

3. Committee Business

Professor Kohlstedt returned to Committee business matters.

-- The Committee has received from the provost a proposal to change the remuneration for the Morse-Alumni and Graduate-Professional teaching awards; instead of a recurring augmentation, there would be a one-time award (proposed at \$15,000) that could be used for purposes that were not completely clear in the language of the proposal. There have been discussions about the equity of the current award (someone might receive it at a relatively young age but someone else might receive it later in a career; the first person would receive significantly more money). The Committee agreed that the language about how the money might be used is vague and needs to be clarified with the provost.

Committee members also questioned the two different titles that would be granted, one for faculty members and one for P&A staff members who won the award. Professor Kohlstedt agreed to contact the leadership of the P&A Consultative Committee to inquire about their views on the two different titles.

-- Professor Kohlstedt noted the five topics that have been proposed for discussions at Senate meeting in celebration of the Senate centennial. She asked Committee members to suggest panelists for each of the topics. The five topics are online and e-education, private-sector collaborations, economic future of public research universities, structural reorganization and tenure policy, and the future of governance.

Professor Luepker asked if these will be internal events or if there will be a public event noting the centennial. The topics are internal and not of great interest to the public. Professor Kohlstedt responded that there will be one major public event in January that will include the president, the provost, a member of the Board of Regents, and Professor Fred Morrison. The entire Board of Regents, journalists, legislators, and others will be invited.

-- The Committee agreed to begin using Moodle for some of its business.

-- Committee members reviewed the list of issues pending for the year. Professor Kohlstedt asked for comments and suggested additions or deletions.

Professor Kohlstedt thanked everyone for attending and adjourned the meeting at 3:00.

-- Gary Engstrand