

[In these minutes: Support the U Day, Discussion with President Kaler]

STUDENT SENATE CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE (SSCC) MINUTES

JANUARY 24, 2013

[These minutes reflect discussion and debate at 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: Adam Matula (chair), Ben Baglio, Gyaltsso Gurung, Joe Inhofer, Nathaniel Schwab, Evan Vogel, and Moshe Volovik.

ABSENT: Brandon Breuer, Nicole Conti, Vivek Nagaraj.

GUESTS: Matt Forstie, President Kaler.

1. CHAIR'S REPORT

Adam Matula reported that the Legislative Advocacy Update will be held on January 29 and the Centennial Conversation is January 31

2. STUDENT ASSOCIATION/ASSEMBLY UPDATES

Joe Inhofer said that RSA will be meeting next week but has a retreat at the end of the month.

Evan Vogel noted that MCSA is completing its resource allocation review process and is forwarding items to the Student Senate for spring semester.

Gyaltsso Gurung noted that CSA will be participating at Support the U Day and has challenged each CSA member to bring two outside people to the event.

Nathaniel Schwab said that MSA has a leadership banquet on February 9 and is planning for Support the U Day. It is working on guidelines to allow more students to vote in elections, medical amnesty, and a light rail fare-free zone.

3. DISCUSSION OF SUPPORT THE U DAY

Matt Forstie from MSLC joined the meeting to provide an update on Support the U Day. At this time there are 118 people registered system-wide, but outreach efforts are trying for another 200. MSLC representatives have posters and promotional materials to use at each campus.

Buses will leave from each campus early on February 7 for an arrival time of 11 am-12 noon. The rally will begin at noon and last 30 minutes. It will feature President Kaler, Regents, legislators, students, and possible Governor Dayton. Then there will be small groups of 2-5 students meeting with legislators for 15-20 minutes.

Q: How is this event being promoted?

A: This is being handled differently at each campus. For the Twin Cities, kick-off is this week and will involve emails, updates, and web alerts. A personal connection is most important so student groups should work together to increase registration.

Q: How is advertising handled?

A: Each MSLC can request advertising from Matt, as well as having materials sent to each campus from University Relations. Morris will be canvassing the campus and Rochester will be sending emails.

Q: How will legislator meetings be handled?

A: They will try to schedule students with legislators from their district.

Q: Pre-event workshops will be held in the Twin Cities. Will these be offered at the coordinate campuses as well?

A: Some campuses will offer similar events.

Q: What resources will be provided on the day of the event?

A: A folder, University materials on the request, maps, and talking points.

Q: Will excused absences be provided?

A: A letter from the Provost will be included in each folder and all faculty will receive an advance communication about the event and student absences.

Q: What can SSCC do to support this event?

A: SSCC can follow the CSA example and have every member sign-up two extra people.

Q: Will late registrations be allowed?

A: Yes.

4. DISCUSSION WITH PRESIDENT KALER

President Kaler joined the meeting and expressed appreciation for student service in governance, which can be an interesting activity. He then discussed the following topics.

Legislative Support

The legislative session will be active due to the support for the University from the Governor.

Q: There is a conversation on Facebook regarding the tuition freeze and it not being able to be a long-term solution. Will tuition rates have to be increased by double digits after the two-year freeze?

A: No one can predict what will happen in three years, but the University wants to have a conversation with the state about continuing support that is required for the University and how a level of support can continue that will allow tuition increases to be mitigated for some students past this biennium.

Green revolving fund

Evan Vogel said that a sustainability is a priority at the University, not just at Morris, and many people are looking for ways to cut expenses. A green revolving fund creates a pool of money which is set aside to pay upfront costs to implement projects. Savings from the projects are then used to pay back the fund. Morris has this fund. Could it be implemented system-wide?

President Kaler said that the University is committed to sustainability and is always looking for ways pay for projects. He would be willing to review documentation on this topic.

Advocacy

President Kaler stated that it is very important for students to support the University's request. He encouraged students to attend hearings at the capital, tweet, send postcards, write to hometown legislators and editors in hometown newspapers, and thank Governor Dayton for his support.

Tobacco-free campus

President Kaler said that a tobacco-free campus has been discussed since he arrived at the University. There have been three main arguments against this proposal - that this is an urban campus with many international people, smoking is an addiction for employees, and funds should be put into cessation programs instead of regulations. He does not believe that a ban could not be enforced. He is willing to listen to all arguments, and if there is strong support, then he would be willing to move forward with a ban.

Opportunity Minnesota

President Kaler said that the University is proposing an initiative to help health sciences graduates with their student loan debt, so he would support a similar proposal for all students. However, he does not want to include it in the University's proposal as it has already been sent to the legislature and was endorsed as is by the Governor.

Light rail fare-free zone

President Kaler stated that a light rail fare-free zone is a great idea but its implementation depends on Metro Transit. Tickets would not be checked between the stadium and West Bank, but ridership still needs to be counted so the proposal is not as easy as it sounds. He does believe that campuses buses will be more convenient for East Bank-West Bank crossings.

Q: Will campus connector buses be reduced?

A: No.

Q: What factors will influence implementation?

A: Cost will be the biggest factor since the University does not want to have to subsidize light rail or increase student bus passes to cover free riders.

Medical Amnesty

President Kaler noted that medical amnesty is a good idea and is a way to involve Boynton, campus police, and Minneapolis police in discussions. Since reporters are still breaking the law themselves, issues need to be balanced to make sure that all parties are being dealt with appropriately.

Administrators

President Kaler noted that the University has been working on the number of administrative changes for 18 months and eliminated two offices in that process. It is also trying to change titles to distinguish the work being done by people. The publicity from the Wall Street Journal article was a misrepresentation of the facts, but hurt the University's reputation.

Q: Does the University communicate about its cost savings?

A: It tries but this is not the data that interests most reporters or legislators. Most people also do not ask why there are so many administrators or how their salaries are actually paid.

Evaluations

President Kaler commented that student evaluations are used in the promotion and tenure process. If they are consistently fair to good, then few changes are made. If evaluations are poor, then a faculty member speaks with their department chair. Research production can help, but it does not overcome poor teaching evaluations. Course assignments are made by department chairs and the best teachers are usually assigned to large, impactful courses.

5. OTHER BUSINESS

With no further business, Adam Matula thanked all members for attending and adjourned the meeting.

Becky Hippert
University Senate