

# **SENATE COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL CONCERNS**

## **MINUTES OF MEETING**

February 16, 2015

[In these minutes: Food sourcing and distribution discussion; Alcohol tax discussion]

[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:** David Golden (chair), Jayne Blodgett, Laura Duckett, David Fuhs, Zan Gao, BreAnn Graber, Deborah Hendricks, Sandeep Kataria, Michael O'Day, Naomi Scheman, Catherine Solheim, Eric Svingen, Abeer Syedah, Curtis Williamson, Kjerstie Wiltzen

**GUESTS:** None

**REGRETS:** Rachel Schurman

**ABSENT:** Katie Benson, Felicia Christy, Brenda Kayzar, Anne Sumangil

### **1. FOOD SOURCING AND DISTRIBUTION FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSION**

Members discussed what action, if any, that they would like to pursue after the December food sourcing discussion:

- Mr. Kataria mentioned that there is funding available for a survey.
  - One of the objectives of the survey would be to assess if faculty, staff, and students feel they can eat healthy while on campus and then determine what some of the barriers are, if they feel they cannot.
  - Include questions related to the following:
    - year in school
    - zip code of the current address to determine access to grocery stores
    - What types of dietary concerns do you have? Gluten free? Vegetarian?
  - Offer incentives to those that complete the survey such as: free admission to cooking classes, gift cards, etc.
  - Members discussed the controversy around using the body mass index (BMI) as data within the survey.

- Laura Duckett and David Fuhs volunteered to work on the survey.
  - UMD recently sent a survey that will be shared with the group.
- Eating behavior Among Teens (EAT) is a group that could potentially have information that would be valuable to this discussion.

Mr. Golden closed the discussion and moved on to the next item.

## **2. STATE TAX ON ALCOHOL**

Mr. Golden used a PowerPoint to highlight the following to explain the Alcohol Policy and Abuse Prevention Committee's (APAP) support of raising the state tax on alcohol:

APAP Goal:

- Eliminate the negative impact of alcohol use on the U of M community

APA Objectives

- Eliminate alcohol poisoning deaths and the need for hospitalization among students
- Eliminate underage alcohol consumption and high risk-drinking
  - Decrease availability of alcohol to students
  - Increase Minnesota's alcohol tax
  - Eliminate drink specials near the University
  - Limit campus venues that serve alcohol

Cost of Excessive Drinking in the US

- 80,000 deaths
- 2.3 million years of potential life lost
- 3rd leading preventable cause of death
- Most excessive drinkers are not alcohol dependent
- \$223 Billion in social and economic costs
  - \$1.90 per drink
  - \$746 per person
  - ~\$1 per drink in social costs – mostly absorbed by government and private industry
- Annual alcohol-related mortality and morbidity among U.S. college students
  - 1,800 deaths
  - 500,000 injuries

- 600,000 assaults
- 70,000 sexual assaults
- Estimated Costs of Student Drinking: University of Minnesota
  - \$1.3 million
  - Costs included:
    - Counseling
    - Security
    - Vandalism
    - Instructional costs
- What is the magnitude of the impact of an increase in alcohol tax?
  - Approximately a nickel per drink (small increase) expected to result in:
    - 7% decline in motor vehicle fatalities
      - Approximately 125 fewer nationally among college students
    - 9-32% decline in sexually transmitted infection rates

Mr. Golden then asked members if they would be interested in supporting this endeavor and they responded with the following questions and comments:

- What are the taxes on alcohol used for currently? Programs that will reduce high-risk drinking and abuse, though this has not worked out as planned.
- Where do students under 21 obtain alcohol?
  - Students under 21 most commonly obtain alcohol from older students.
  - Youth have been shown to be price sensitive.
- Overall, 35% of students engage in binge drinking.
- Typically when a tax is increased, the seller increases the price of the product.
- Are there things that the University could be doing that is not being done? Could the University do something rather than urge the state to do something? Will this bring about the cultural change that is needed to reduce binge drinking behavior?
- Some members expressed the opinion that this could require an education component to gain widespread support.

In the interest of time, Mr. Golden asked professor Scheman for an update regarding fossil fuel divestment. She informed members that a fossil fuel free fund is being developed by Blackrock Investment Firm and could be available in the next year. They will potentially have an update from Mr. Mason at the next meeting.

Hearing no further business, Mr. Golden adjourned the meeting.

Jeannine Rich

University Senate Office