

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON STUDENT AFFAIRS  
MINUTES OF MEETING  
February 18, 2015**

[In these minutes: Student Services Fees Process resolution discussion; Whose Diversity? protest discussion; Student Parent Help Center overview; ]

[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: Patricia Jones Whyte (chair), Thomas Bilder, Theresa Enekwe, Peter Haeg, Rebecca Houske, BreAnn Graber, Nicholas Goldsmith, Kyle Kroll, Kyungbin Lee, Nitish Mittal, Michael Stebleton, Megan Sweet, Carlos Torelli, Kendre Turonie

GUESTS: Sara Carvell, Associate Director, OSA; Susan Warfield, program director, Student Parent HELP Center

OTHERS: Jacob Froelich, Andrew McNally, Peter Phaiah, Corbin Smyth

REGRETS: Shivani Kushwaha, Matthew Loomis, Jillian Ryks, Cecelia Stevens, Amy Thie, Lanqiu Wu

ABSENT: Brandt Tharp

**1. STUDENT SERVICES FEES RESOLUTION DISCUSSION**

Dr. Whyte called the meeting to order and asked for introductions. She then introduced the first topic for discussion, a draft resolution on Student Services Fees. She began by saying that it was brought to her attention that the resolution contained some errors and misrepresentations. For this reason, the resolution will not be voted on at this meeting. She asked members to pay attention to the details and comment in regard to possible additions and any methodological errors.

An ad hoc subcommittee of SCSA student members Rebecca Houske, Kyle Kroll, and Nitish Mittal authored the resolution and accompanying report. They analyzed data from a survey they wrote, which was provided to undergraduates and graduates via the Undergraduate and Graduate and Professional Student Updates, and social media. The following is from the report:

These sources sent students to a link to a Qualtrics survey hosted by the University. The survey received 307 responses, 37% of which were undergraduate students and 63% graduate and professional.

Mr. Kroll clarified that they intended for the resolution to only refer to the Twin Cities process. They explained that from the survey they conducted they found that overall students are dissatisfied with the fee and the fee process. He highlighted the following points:

- Graduate students expressed that they felt they are subsidizing undergraduate student groups.
- Need for accountability for use of the funds.
- Streamline and standardize the presentations.

Dr. Whyte pointed out that administrative unit and student organization student services fees were not differentiated in the resolution. She said that this needs to be separated and explained that student services fees are not the only source of funding for administrative units. Ms. Sweet added that most student organizations have several sources of funding, not just student services fees. Dr. Whyte then asked the members for observations regarding the report:

- Mr. Bilder asked who this resolution has been discussed with.
  - Mr. Kroll responded that they have only discussed this with student government members. He believes that many units would be opposed to a renewal process occurring each year. Dr. Whyte responded that an opportunity for response needs to be given.
- Mr. Froelich pointed out that there is a clause that involves the “coordinate campuses” and he does not believe that the clause represents the views and opinions of the students on the system campuses. Ms. Graber asked that this clause be removed, as they have a very different process.
- Ms. Sweet commented that she is concerned with the language and some of the facts that are inaccurate and opinion based. She stated the following:
  - The resolution was not vetted with the OSA of the TC campus.
  - There was no cost/benefit analysis done, and in many cases the recommended changes could result in the loss of wages to student employees.
  - It is a very complicated process and additional monitoring would be very costly.
  - She questions the validity of the survey.
  - Administrative units are on a two year review cycle and student groups are on a 1-year review cycle.
    - Dr. Whyte reminded the committee that this was presented as a draft and was not intended for implementation.
- Ms. Carvell requested that focus groups be conducted and she would assist with this process. She appreciated that the results were shared with her, but she does not believe the respondents had the proper context or understanding of the process. For example, the Stadium Fee is not funded by SSF. She believes that the respondents need to be able to give informed responses.
- Mr. Goldsmith pointed out that some questions introduce bias, and commented on areas of concern.
- Professor Torelli said that he is concerned with how students were reached. He said that the validity seems to be very low, and it is not representative of the student body. He suggested that they obtain a random sample, though it will be a smaller sample it will have less bias.
- Members agreed that increased publicity of SSF information could remedy some of the misconceptions.

Dr. Whyte concluded the discussion by saying the draft will incur extensive edits and will be brought back to the committee next month.

## **2. PROTEST DISCUSSION**

Dr. Whyte asked members if they wished to discuss the recent protest conducted by Whose Diversity?

- A member commented that he would have liked to see the group involve student government in the changes they are seeking. He felt that the response that was given legitimized their protest tactics.
  - Ms. Warfield commented that student government is powerful, but many students are not aware of the channels that are available to them. Many non-traditional students do not have the time to be involved and often do not realize it is a way to voice their concerns.
- Mr. Goldsmith said that he is concerned with the ability of the student government to address some of the demands of Whose Diversity? Specifically, GAPSA and MSA have expressed concern regarding the use of racial descriptors
- Professor Stebleton said that he appreciated the sentiment of the request made by the group to keep the Post Secondary Teaching and Learning Department open, but he added that there seemed to be some misinformation. For example, the first year program in CEHD will not be closed and the Dean has emphasized that this is not a change that will adversely affect their commitment to diversity.

Dr. Whyte closed the discussion and introduced the next speaker.

## **3. STUDENT PARENT HELP CENTER OVERVIEW**

Ms. Warfield, program director, Student Parent HELP Center, explained that this center has been historically for undergraduates. Statistically, undergraduate parents have been shown to be at-risk for non completion or delayed graduation. The services include:

- Centrally located computer lab and lounge
- Weekly parent support group
- They co-manage a child care assistance grant from the State of Minnesota, which stipulates that it is for undergraduates.

They do not turn a graduate student in need away, but they do not promote their services among graduate students as they are a very different population. On the national level, graduate students tend to be older and it is more common, so they are not an underrepresented population. There have been changes in recent years as students are entering programs directly out of their undergraduate programs. The funding is not available for graduate students as dictated by the state grant.

In the past, they provided sensitivity letters to graduate students in the case of professors not including a sick child as a legitimate absence. Ms. Warfield recently participated in campus climate discussions to create a family supportive and inclusive climate.

Dr. Whyte asked for her opinion on the availability of affordable childcare. Ms. Warfield responded:

- Faculty, staff, and students would agree that there is not enough affordable childcare. The three centers are usually fully booked. The childcare grant is only for undergraduates.
- The University Childcare Center often has a long wait list.
- There was a service available to help find people find child care, according to their specifications. They also helped people find elder care and both programs were cancelled. They were seen as unused tools, but the feedback received from past users indicated that it was more efficient than other search programs. In this case, it was a step in the opposite direction of creating a family-friendly campus.

Hearing no further business, Dr. Whyte adjourned the meeting.

Jeannine Rich  
University Senate Office