

## **STUDENT SENATE CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE (SSCC)**

### **MINUTES of the MEETING**

September 17, 2015

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

**[In these minutes:** Welcome, Charge Review, Prioritization of Discussion Group Findings, Bereavement Policy Update, Excused Absences on Support the U Day, Gender Neutral Bathrooms, GAPSA & Committee Bylaws, System Campus Issues]

**PRESENT:** Rob Stewart (chair), Mack Liebl, Mariah Slocum, Janet Mwanyika, Nicole Novitskaya, Patrick Duschane, Thomas Keller, Colin Wray

**ABSENT:** Delaney Kohorst, Gabbi Brandt

**1. Welcome and Introductions:** Robert Stewart, chair, welcomed committee members and all committee members introduced themselves.

**2. Charge Review:** Stewart reviewed the charge and explained the role of the Student Senate at the University. He also encouraged consultative committee members to talk with their Senate committee peers and encourage senators to apply to serve on committees.

**3. Prioritization of Discussion Group Findings:** Stewart discussed the various issue-specific preliminary planning meetings, where attendance ranged from three to nine students per meeting. The intent of these meetings was to discuss and prioritize issues of concern that the Student Senate might act upon this upcoming year. The planning meetings focused on the following categories: environment, diversity, health, finances, safety, and academic concerns. Not all of the planning meetings had occurred at the time of this SSCC meeting, but the following concerns had so far been brought forth:

- Academic concerns:
  - Making it easier for departments to provide credit-bearing internships.
  - Finding ways to get credit for experiential learning.
  - Post-Secondary Enrollment Options (PSEO). Some students end up hitting the 60 earned credits threshold whereby they are required to pick a major. However, many have not been in college long enough to truly know what they want to major in. Can the threshold be changed?
  - Mid-term grades and getting feedback from faculty before the end of the term.
- Environmental, a phased effort:
  - Phase 1: Composting on the Twin Cities campus. This could also be a system-wide effort.
  - Phase 2 – Morris is recognized as being environmentally aware and conscious. Are there ways to make some of those practices system-wide?

- Phase 3 – Divestment and endowments. Review companies that sustain and support the institution. Morris had previously sent a letter requesting divestment of fossil fuels. Ellery Wealot will follow up to see what happened with that effort. Randy Croce, Social Concerns Committee chair, and Stewart met to talk about fossil fuels divestment. Stewart stated that, per Croce, divesting would cost the university more than two million dollars annually in fees.

In addition to the phased plans, it was mentioned that MSA has a sustainability committee. Thomas Keller has been in contact with the chair of that committee and will meet with the chair to see what progress their committee has made. Keller will also talk with Wealot about efforts at Morris.

- Diversity
  - International students concerns: Enough issues were raised that it was agreed a subcommittee should probably be formed before further discussion occurs. This will be discussed at a later meeting.
  - The Minnesota Cooperative Admissions Program (MnCAP) is an agreement in place with several two-year colleges that guarantees transfer into participating colleges at the University. Carlson School of Management does not participate. Janet Mwanika stated that many students of color use this program to get in to the University, so to have Carlson excluded from participation affects the number of minority students in the School. This should be looked into. **Action Item: Talk with the Equity and Diversity Committee about this issue.**
  - The lack of diversity at Duluth also came up for discussion. Students believe that the multicultural center does a good job, but their offerings and assistance could be better publicized. An intercultural communications class is transformative, but only offered once a year and always has a long wait list. Duluth used to have a “diversity floor” in one of their residence halls that was solely for students of color. However, someone complained and the floor was dissolved.

**4. Bereavement Policy Update:** Stewart informed the committee that the Student Senate passed a resolution to add changes to the Make-Up policy last spring, clarifying when exactly excused bereavement absences might be used, as well as travel time considerations for international students. The resolution went to the Educational Policy Committee (SCEP) this fall, which SCEP voted on and approved.

**5: Excused Absences On Support The U Day:** Mr. Stewart explained that Support the U Day is an opportunity for University students to lobby at the state capital on issues that affect students. Efforts in previous years tried to make this an excused absence for students because participating students could be adversely affected by a recorded unexcused absence. Last year the Minnesota Student Association (MSA) requested and received a letter from the Provost in which the Provost strongly encouraged faculty to excuse this absence. Stewart stated that this year the Provost seems less inclined to influence faculty in this matter. He has been in contact with MSA representatives and Erin Dady, special assistant, Office of the President. He may talk with system campus representatives to see if they would be interested in pursuing this endeavor jointly.

Stewart has also had conversation with Faculty Consultative Committee (FCC) chair Colin Campbell to try to garner more faculty support.

**6: Gender Neutral Bathrooms:** The Transgender Commission has identified over 110 gender-neutral bathrooms on Twin Cities campus. Around 250 have been identified on campus as potentially gender neutral. Mr. Keller has agreed to meet with Stef Wilencheck, director of the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Ally Programs Office to discuss SSCC support of these measures. SSCC will also coordinate with the Social Concerns Committee and possibly involve the Morris campus in discussions.

**7: GAPSA And Committee Bylaws:** GAPSA, the Graduate and Professional Student Association is no longer in existence, as it has been replaced by two organizations: COGS and PSG, yet the bylaws have not been rewritten. Membership rules need to be changed to reflect these new groups. Kyle Kroll and Nicholas Goldsmith expressed interest in being part of this discussion.

**8: System Campus Issues:**

- The Duluth campus is undergoing a parking evaluation through a third party contractor. Once their feedback arrives, the group can respond to the results. The last study was several years ago and did not evaluate parking from a student perspective. In this study they are hoping to get a more comprehensive view of parking needs.
- First year students at the Duluth campus have new IDs. Previously the IDs on all campuses looked the same. Now they say UMD and read vertically rather than horizontally. Duluth students feel this is another way there is a line drawn between campuses.
- The Morris campus officially filled its entire Senate for the first time in some while.
- Students from the St. Paul campus feel disconnected and that the Minneapolis campus gets funding priority. The students feel that infrastructure improvements like the student center at the St. Paul campus should be considered.

Given that more preparation is needed for the Senate meeting in November, an additional meeting was scheduled for October 8, 1:00 p.m. Having no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Patricia Straub  
University Senate Office