

STUDENT SENATE CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE (SSCC)

October 22, 2015

Minutes of the Meeting

[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: Election process and representation, Whose Diversity statement, Support the U Day update, gender-neutral bathrooms update, sustainability issues update, new business, Senate docket approval]

PRESENT: Rob Stewart (chair), Mariah Slocum, Patrick Duschane, Janet Mwanyika, Nicole Novitskaya, Thomas Keller, Colin Wray, Marina Farrow, Delaney Kohorst

REGRETS: Mack Liebl

ABSENT: Gabbi Brandt

GUESTS: Becky Hippert, Senate Office

OTHERS: Nicholas Goldsmith, president, Council of Grad Students (COGS)

1. Election Process and Representation: Robert Stewart, chair, welcomed Becky Hippert Senate Office. Hippert provided a handout of last year's representative numbers and appointments, to demonstrate how student senators are elected. A count of the total number of degree-seeking students is taken after the add/drop date every fall. That number is then divided by fifty, which is the total number of Senate seats available. Each unit is given representation based on the percentage of total eligible students enrolled in that unit. The numbers are then reported to the All Campus Election Commission (ACEC), who runs the elections to fill those seats. After the election results are provided to her, Hippert said, she contacts the individual from each unit with the largest number of votes. She also provides numbers to the system campus student body presidents, who then allocate those seats.

Hippert then sends each of the winners a welcome letter. Occasionally a student decides to leave the University or switches majors, said Hippert, in which case she goes back to the list and takes the student with the second highest number of votes. If a student is elected to serve on SSCC, they give up their college seat and the person with the second highest number of votes from that college is appointed. If someone drops and there is no second candidate, she does an open call for names, said Hippert. If a senator is going to study abroad for a term or has a class conflict, the Senate Office would ask them to find a proxy.

Hippert then talked about the organizational shift from a single graduate and professional student group (GAPSA) to two separate groups (PSG and COGS) and the ramifications for SSCC. She said that nowhere do the Constitution, Bylaws, or Rules list GAPSA by name.

SSCC membership is listed as having ten members: one from each of the four campuses, a chair and vice chair, and four from the Twin Cities, two of which are undergraduates and two graduate and/or professionals. She said the committee could decide to require one professional student and one graduate student. However, she added, typically professional students have not served. If SSCC decides to designate the seats that way, PSG would need to convince one of their student senators to serve on SSCC.

2. Whose Diversity? Statement: Stewart asked the committee if they'd like to provide a statement of support for the unofficial student group "Whose Diversity?," some of whose members were arrested in a demonstration in the President's Office last February. The group wanted to address issues that they felt disproportionately affected marginalized students, said Stewart. After dialoguing with the president throughout the day, the students were warned the building would be closing and they would need to leave. Some of the students did not leave when asked to vacate, and so were arrested for trespassing. They spent the night in jail and were released on bond the following day. In the criminal proceedings, said Stewart, the students accepted a deal for a deferred prosecution, which means they were put on probation, and charges would be dropped if they do not get into trouble. However, he said, the University is still seeking disciplinary action.

Nicholas Goldsmith, president, COGS, said that COGS is working on a position statement in support of the students. He said it was worth noting that the University rejected a request from the accused students for restorative justice at an informal hearing. The University chose to move forward with a formal hearing, he said. Stewart wanted to know if the committee would also like to draft a position statement asking the administration to stop all disciplinary proceedings. He believes the administration's stance is purely retributive with no benefit to the students, administration, or the University. The hearing is in December.

The committee agreed to prepare a statement of support for the Whose Diversity? students facing discipline, and to present it at the November Senate meeting.

3. Support the U Day Update: Mariah Slocum and Janet Mwanyika said they are almost finished with a resolution for the committee to review, asking the Provost and the administration to support Support the U Day by strongly encouraging faculty to excuse absences for participating students. Mwanyika said that Provost Hanson sent a letter last year encouraging faculty to make Support the U Day an excusable absence, but is more apprehensive this year. The goal is for the Provost to make this request annually. Stewart said he met with FCC Chair Colin Campbell and he said FCC would most likely be in strong support. Stewart will get on their schedule at some point throughout the year after the committee has worked on the language of the resolution. Hopefully, added Stewart, a joint effort will lead to the Provost and vice chancellors stressing the value of student participation to their deans in meetings, who then stress it to their chairs. Stewart said he met with Erin Dady, special assistant to the president, Office of the President, and she agreed that the more students that show up to lobby on Support the U Day, the better it is for the University. Stewart said the Educational Policy Committee would also consider writing a letter of support if the Provost writes a letter encouraging participation.

4. Gender Neutral Bathrooms: Tommy Keller reported that he met with Stef Wilenchek, director of the GLBTA Programs Office, who didn't have much to request right now in terms of Senate action for transgender students. She said she was happy with the work the University is doing. More single cell bathrooms are being converted to gender-neutral bathrooms, reported Keller. The Office of Facilities Management (FM) was allocated a budget of \$250,000 to convert the bathrooms, and hope to complete 250 of the 420 possibly convertible with that money. Keller also said that Wilenchek was excited that the University started to ask freshmen on their housing application whether they wanted to be identified as male/female/transgender and if they wished to room with someone who identifies as male/female/transgender.

Colin Wray, vice chair, stated that the MCSA secretary is very involved in this issue on the Morris campus and is working to get a resolution passed for more converted bathrooms. Delaney Kohorst stated that the new Wellness Center at Crookston will be finished in fall, and there's supposed to be a gender-neutral shower space in the upstairs of that building.

Keller suggested that perhaps the committee could approach this issue in a more comprehensive, multi-pronged matter by addressing many of the issues related to identity and gender.

5. Sustainability: Keller said that he has been meeting with MSA representatives and that he's learned sustainability is a complicated issue at the University. He said change involves facilities management working with receptacles, but it also involves the food providers. The impression he got was that the representative for Aramark, the University's food provider, is very supportive of providing organic recycling materials, but Aramark wants to know if the University has a policy. Keller stated that the University does not. MSA is trying to work with policy so that how the food provider contracts are written will be affected. He will be attending an MSA sustainability committee meeting.

Keller said that one of the student senators at Morris met with their sustainability coordinator, who said that what distinguishes Morris is the communication between campus governance and the Morris Office of Sustainability. He felt the committee was approaching the issue backwards. Wray wondered if a conference call with the Office of Sustainability would be valuable. It was agreed that the committee will continue to do research and talk about this issue.

6. NEW BUSINESS: The following items were brought up as new business:

- MNCAP: Mwanyika stated that while the group knew Carlson School of Management did not participate in the MNCAP program, she has also learned that there is a bigger problem to address. Mwanyika felt that there was negligence on the part the admissions office, who she felt was not promoting the program. The next steps will be to talk with the EAD chair and talk with admissions to see why they are not more actively promoting the program.
- Stewart reported that one thing the Social Concerns Committee might be addressing is the undergraduate admission application questions about criminal record. He said that

last year, Student Senate passed a resolution regarding the inclusion of the criminal record question on applications. In response, the Provost's Office approved a change to what is asked, but the new questions are not that different from the old question, Stewart said. Per Stewart, the application used to ask, "Have you ever been convicted of a crime other than a minor traffic offense?" Now the two questions are, "Have you ever committed a felony?" and "Have you ever been found legally responsible for criminally sexual conduct either as a juvenile or an adult?" Stewart said that the new questions don't address the concerns the committee had last year at Senate. The Provost's Office said they were going to assess the new language and its effects after they'd been in place for at least one admissions cycle. Stewart was on the Provost's committee last year and said he feels that really the only reason the questions are on there are for potential liability, and as a point of reputation, that everyone does it so we must do it. The committee agreed they would work with the Social Concerns Committee after the applications season is over, to press the Provost's Office for their assessment.

6. Senate Docket Approval: It was agreed that the following items would be discussed at the Senate meeting in November: Sustainability and Whose Diversity.

Having no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Patricia Straub
University Senate Office