

DISABILITIES ISSUES COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING
NOVEMBER 12, 2003

[In these minutes: Review of Committee Charge, Brenda Jo Brueggemann, Return to Work Initiative, Needs Assessment Project: Exploring Barriers and Opportunities for College Students with Psychiatric Disabilities]

[These minutes reflect discussion and debate at a meeting of a committee of the University of Minnesota Senate or Twin Cities Assembly; none of the comments, conclusions or actions reported in these minutes represent the views of, nor are they binding on, the Senate or Assembly, the Administration or the Board of Regents.]

PRESENT: Harold Pickett, chair, Kathleen Ball, Harvey Carlson, Maureen McManus, Karen Nelson, Bobbi Cordano, Julie Sweitzer, Marilyn Bruin, Virgil Mathiowetz, Patrick McNamara, Ken Myers, Christopher Johnstone

REGRETS: Elizabeth Lightfoot, Roberta Juarez

ABSENT: Felicia Hodge, Carrie Bloss

OTHER(S): Victoria Nelson, Harvey Johnson

GUEST(S): Barbara Blacklock and Betty Benson from Disability Services

I). Dr. Pickett called the meeting to order and asked that those present introduce themselves.

II). Dr. Pickett noted that in conjunction with the reorganization of the Senate structure, Professor Judith Martin, chair of the SCC, requested that all Senate committees review their charge and make suggestions for changes. Copies of the charge were distributed to members for their review. Members discussed the charge and recommended the following changes be made:

DISABILITIES ISSUES COMMITTEE

The Disabilities Issues Committee recommends University policies, procedures, [programs](#) and services concerning faculty/academic professionals, students, and staff with disabilities.

Membership

The Disabilities Issues Committee shall be composed of at least 7 faculty members, 2

academic professional members, 2 students (at least one graduate and one undergraduate), 2 civil service staff members, and ex officio representation as specified by vote of the Senate. Faculty, academic professional, and student members shall be nominated by the Committee on Committees with the approval of the Senate. Civil service members shall be appointed by the Civil Service Committee.

Duties and Responsibilities

- a. To advise the president and administrative offices, including the Disability Services Office and the University ADA Coordinator, on policies, programs, and services for students and employees.
- b. To promote compliance with laws relating to students and staff with disabilities.
- c. To review policies and practices in light of legal compliance aspects, deployment of resources, and effectiveness in meeting the needs of the University community, and to recommend changes.
- d. To inform the University community to the special concerns of its members with disabilities and of the available resources.
- ~~e. To bring concerns to the Senate, as appropriate.~~
- e.f. To recommend to the [University Senate](#) and the Senate Consultative Committee ~~such~~ [resolutions](#), actions or policies as it deems appropriate.

On a separate note, a member recommended the Committee develop procedures for the last couple meetings of each year to do strategic planning for the next academic year. By establishing such procedures it would help to focus the work of this Committee. Another member suggested that an annual report be written each year as one more way to keep the Committee focused and on track.

III). Dr. Pickett called on Professor Virgil Mathiowetz, chair, of the Disability Studies Major Subcommittee to provide members with an update on activities related to offering a Disability Studies major at the University. Professor Mathiowetz reported that Professor Brenda Jo Brueggemann of Ohio State University (OSU), a catalyst in establishing OSU's Disability Studies minor, visited the University of Minnesota on October 28th and 29th and shared her recommendations on how the University should proceed with its Disability Studies major. In Professor Mathiowetz's opinion, the information she shared was very informative and well received by the University community.

IV). Dr. Pickett called on Bobbi Cordano to share with the Committee information on the

University's 'Return to Work Initiative'. Ms. Cordano announced that Disability Services is partnering with the Office of the General Council (OGC) to develop a pilot Integrated Return to Work Program on the Twin Cities Campus. An Integrated Return to Work Committee is in the process of being formed. Over the course of a year the Committee will roll out the pilot study, and, in the end, provide recommendations to the administration based on their findings.

The philosophy behind an Integrated Return to Work Program is to get employees that are out of work, for either occupational or non-occupational reasons related to a medical condition or disability, back to work in order to increase productivity and retention and reduce benefit usage. To calculate the success of this program, reductions in lost time and benefit usage will be measured. Statistics indicate that the University could save as much as 35% in benefit usage by effectively implementing such a program. Eventually, assuming this program is successful on the Twin Cities campus, it will be made available systemwide.

To conclude, this program is an approach by the University to dealing with an aging employee population. For this program to be successful it will require a change in the way the administration and University community at large think about and manage these issues.

Ms. Cordano noted that she plans invite Susan Rafferty, chair, Integrated Return to Work Committee and David Fuecker from Disability Services to update the Committee on this initiative at a spring 2004 meeting.

V). Dr. Pickett introduced and welcomed Barbara Blacklock and Betty Benson from Disability Services. Ms. Blacklock and Ms. Benson presented members with information concerning the 'Needs Assessment Project: Exploring Barriers and Opportunities for College Students with Psychiatric Disabilities'. Highlights from their presentation included:

- In 2001, Disability Services was awarded a FIPSE (Fund for the Improvement for Secondary Education) Grant to look at the barriers and opportunities for college students with psychiatric disabilities. Disability Services sought this grant because students with psychiatric disabilities represented the largest group of students they were serving.
- The purpose of the project was to:
 - Gather comprehensive data on college students with psychiatric disabilities on a nationwide basis.
 - Identify the real and perceived barriers facing students with psychiatric disabilities.
 - Identify strategies that could reduce or remove barriers to full participation in higher education.
- Thirty-nine focus groups were conducted on 13 campuses across the country. A wide range of schools participated including regional schools, ivy-league schools, small schools, state schools, community colleges and large research institutions.
- Focus group participants included faculty and administrators that had experience

dealing with students with psychiatric disabilities, providers (on-campus and off-campus mental health providers and disability service employees on each campus) and students with a documented psychiatric disability.

- Following each focus group a qualitative analysis was conducted and focus group discussions were transcribed. Information collected from the focus groups uncovered emerging themes.
- Five barriers were identified for students with psychiatric disabilities:
 - There are stigmas and stereotypes associated with psychiatric disabilities, self-imposed stigmas and stigmas imposed from others.
 - Psychiatric disabilities are inherently complex in nature.
 - Organizational and institutional barriers are prevalent e.g. lack of service coordination and provider communication, limited resources and increased need, professor's teaching style/approach (students tended to benefit more from faculty that used a variety of teaching styles), faculty concerns about safety and classroom management and campus identity.
 - There are limited student resources and insurance.
 - Access to information and services are limited.
- Potential strategies for removing these barriers included:
 - Using the principles of universal instructional design to alter classroom and teaching practices to better fit the academic needs of all students. Principles for applying universal instructional design include:
 - Creating a welcoming classroom climate.
 - Determining essential course components.
 - Providing clear expectations and feedback.
 - Incorporating natural supports for learning.
 - Using multi-modal instructional methods.
 - Providing a variety of ways to demonstrate knowledge.
 - Using technology to enhance learning.
 - Encouraging faculty-student contact.
 - Improving clarity, coordination and communication among key stakeholders.
 - Ensuring access to resources, training and strategies for key stakeholders.
 - Reducing student isolation.
- National implications that were uncovered during the course of this project included:
 - Many of the barriers appeared to be universal.
 - Oftentimes barriers are addressed using "crisis management"; proactive systems are not in place for the most part.
 - Campus resources need to be better coordinated.
 - Students, faculty and providers face barriers in isolation.
 - There is a growing need for national leadership.
- Next steps at the University of Minnesota include:
 - Developing an integrated workgroup to prioritize and implement strategies on our campus.

- Exploring funding opportunities to support campus initiatives.

In closing, Ms. Benson asked members to take a few moments to jot down any ideas they have for removing barriers for students with psychiatric disabilities at the University and to turn these in to Ms. Blacklock or Ms. Benson before they leave.

VI). Hearing no further business, Dr. Pickett adjourned the meeting.

Renee Dempsey
University Senate