

[In these minutes: Engaging the public on the state of health care in the state]

ACADEMIC HEALTH CENTER STUDENT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE (AHC SCC) MINUTES

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2005

5:00 - 6:00 p.m.

488 CHILD REHAB CENTER

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

PRESENT: Mark Wiisanen, Chair (Medical School – 4th Year), Anna Abt (Public Health), Paul Behrens (Pharmacy), Rebecca Floyd (Dental Hygiene), Beth Hagen (Duluth Pharmacy), Alisa Madson (Dentistry), Julie Nitz (Mortuary Science), Katherine Peterson (Veterinary Medicine), Wendy Ruffedt (Occupational Therapy), Kristen Thorstenson (Medical School – 2nd Year), Amy Walsh (Medical Technology).

REGRETS: Stephanie Hvinden (Nursing), Jennifer Marr (Nursing – Rochester), Jeremy Olsen (Medical School – 3rd Year), Jeff Pinnow (Duluth School of Medicine), Sarah Walker (Physical Therapy).

As Barbara Brandt could not be in attendance at the meeting, several updates were relayed to the committee through Becky Hippert.

1. PORTAL UPDATE

Progress is being made, with initial focus being placed on the Medical School.

2. MT/OT PROGRAMS UPDATE

Dr. Cerra is leading a task force that is examining health education systems across the state. These programs have support from the University and there is no intention of abandoning the programs or the students without alternative options for education elsewhere.

Several members noted that it appears that the intent from the University is to move these types of programs to another institution, such as Mankato, so the University can focus on graduate-level education in the Medical School. Information on the OT program was distributed and members asked others to pass petitions in their classes to keep these programs open.

Members asked that about the latest information on these closures and the long-term planning for the University.

3. ENGAGING THE PUBLIC ON THE STATE OF HEALTH CARE IN THE STATE

Members started by addressing programs that are currently in place here or at other institutions to engage the public and education health care students:

- In Tennessee, legislators are brought in and talk to students about health care bills that will affect them
- Lunchtime lectures should be expanded to reach more AHC students
- AHC students should know who their legislators are and talk with them
- Aging of baby boomers should be a topic for discussion
- Public is only concerned with the cost, not issues, surrounding health care
- Employee benefit costs continue to rise and will force some companies to offer less
- Literature needs to be available to the public when they wait at clinics

Matt Wiisanen said that AHC students need to promote health care from all aspects: access, who is covered, what is the coverage, who are the providers, what about rural coverage, what are the resources for the elderly. He would like to know that students can do to affect the public and policy decisions.

In the last presidential election, there was a stark difference between the health care options for each party. One party wanted

to spend more and cover more people while the other party wanted to spend less and cover fewer people. Because this difference was not discussed, the public was short-changed in making an informed decision. If candidates are not going to mention this information, then who will?

Members made the following comments:

- Students need to be health care advocates
- Basic health care and access need to be defined
- Current system is patched and will fail
- Most students do not know how programs, such as Medicare and Medicaid work, but they will be working with them every day
- Health care decisions should not rest with the legislature if they cannot understand the impact
- Best lobbyists are students
- Once a year a group of dental students lobby at the state and national level. They are trained in all the dental and access issue. This type of training is needed for all students.
- An inter-professional presence is needed
- Student education is needed first
- Message to legislature must be consistent

The committee then decided to focus student attention on one bill during the session. Education would be provided on the bill and the process for approval, as well as how students can be effective. This would also help to foster relationships with the legislature. To get inter-professional interest, a broad bill must be used, so the committee chose the Freedom to Breathe Bill.

A lunch session would be scheduled between April 4-6, after the AHC Legislative Briefing on March 28 and the Hennepin County Smoking Ban effective date of March 31, and before the AHC Lobby Day on April 7. Video conference would be provided to Duluth and Rochester, since both these cities already have bans in place. A panel would be assembled, with an AHC student serving as moderator. Panelists would be chosen who represent different aspects of the bill, such as a legislator, a faculty member, a lawyer, etc.

4. OTHER BUSINESS

Members noted the following other issues:

- It was recently released that the University's Medical School is the most expensive public medical school in the country. At the same time as tuition increases, the state is considering another campus in Rochester. This issue needs to be addressed by the AHC community.
- With several key faculty are leaving the University, tuition increasing, and ratings dropping, there is a question about the value of a University degree.
- Several programs start prior to Martin Luther King Day in January and therefore these students are not able to use their spring semester parking permit on campus until a week or two into their programs. Most St. Paul lots are also closed on weekends which force students to park in the community and walk distances in the dark to get home.
- With the early start date of spring semester is the awarding of student loans. These funds are needed earlier to be able to buy books.
- AHC Lost and Found is currently in the Mayo sub-basement, not CHIP, although an alternate location is being sought

With no other business, Matthew Wiisanen thanked the members for attending and adjourned the meeting.

Becky Hippert
University Senate