

[In these minutes: Animal Research, Student Housing]

SOCIAL CONCERNS COMMITTEE

MINUTES

MONDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2000

3:00 - 4:30

300 MORRILL HALL

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

PRESENT: George French (Chair), Robert Brown, Patricia Cavanaugh, Mike Davey, Margaret Kuchenreuther, Judi Linder, Wesley Matson, Annette McNamee, Jean Niemiec, Greg Schooler, Karly Turner

REGRETS: Selma de Ridder, Anthony Eliseuson, Andrew Kuhlmann, Geri Malendra, Julie Sweitzer

ABSENT: Katherine Anderson, John Beatty, Catherine Forseide-Hussain, John Jensen, Luis Ramos-Garcia, Angelita Reyes, Mary Steinke

PRESENTERS: Director of Research Animal Resources Cynthia Gillett, Center for Bioethics Program Director Professor Jeffrey Kahn, Director of Research Subjects Protection Program and IACUC (Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee) Moira Keane, Animal Science Department Head Professor F. Abel Ponce de Leon

GUESTS: Vice President of Research and AHC Asst. Vice President Professor Richard Bianco, FCC Vice Chair and Wood and Paper Science Department Head Professor Joe Massey, student Kate Petersen, student Joseph Janzen, Matthew Bullard

Minutes of the November 6, 2000 meeting were approved with one change.

1. DISCUSSION OF ANIMAL RESEARCH.

Professor French informed the Committee that he had received a number of emails from interested individuals and had responded that the Committee is gathering information on the topic.

Cynthia Gillett gave an introduction to the activities of her department, which has responsibility for managing all of the animal care facilities at the University.

Moira Keane discussed the functions of IACUC and its administrative review process. Federal regulatory agencies charge the group with oversight responsibility for all federally funded research that involves animals at this institution. The University has voluntarily extended this oversight responsibility to all animals used in teaching, research, service or display. Every proposal to use animals in any way is reviewed by IACUC to make sure that the proposal meets or exceeds federal regulations and guidelines. There are both internal and external reviews and inspections of projects and facilities.

Jeffrey Kahn added that the regulatory processes for research on humans and animals are in many ways parallel: there is an Institutional Review Board (IRB) for human subjects research which is similar to the IACUC for animals. In addition, there is another layer of oversight and protection for animals through regulation by the USDA.

Professor Ponce de Leon commented that society uses animal products very heavily. The work of his profession is based on trying to provide care to those animals for production purposes and finding the best ways to have them be productive, but research is also conducted that benefits those animals directly.

Q: Historically, from where has the push for tightening of regulations come, and where does policy change initiate?

A: There is a great deal of pressure from the public, congress and other groups, including industries (pharmaceutical and so on) to initiate, change and direct various aspects of animal research. The federal rules and guidelines are established as a minimum. Institutions, like the University, are leaders in research fields and will actually add to the requirements for protection, both for humans and animals. Change is also initiated internally from the staff's own desire to do the best jobs they can.

Professor Ponce de Leon gave a summary of the progression of legislation over the last couple hundred years dealing with protections of animals, leading up to the IACUC system being implemented at research institutions.

Q: If your agencies or programs receive complaints from an outside or internal source, what is the response?

A: There is a process to deal with any serious concern brought to the University's attention. There may be experts called in; in some instances procedures may be halted temporarily or permanently if they do not meet the mark. It is a collaborative effort with checks and balances.

The Research Animal Resources staff has worked very diligently with researchers and others who handle animals, to encourage them to be forthcoming when they have concerns. That has created a very open dialogue inside about what is and is not acceptable, what is state of the art, where do we draw the line, and that is a very open and active discussion.

Q: What is the schedule for checking after a project is established?

A: There is a very rigorous, ongoing review of every activity. The Office of Regulatory Affairs, a separate entity from IACUC and Research Animal Resources, has veterinarians inspect lab areas. IACUC has its own inspection program and there is external oversight by the USDA with unannounced inspections. The University also undergoes certification and inspection by an independent international organization every three years.

Q: Do all lab cages meet the minimum regulations?

A: The University's regulations are the same as federal regulations, and all cages are in compliance.

Q: How does the protocol review committee decide what is undue suffering by an animal?

A: Ms. Gillett and Ms. Keane gave detailed explanations of the protocol review process, the ongoing daily care and monitoring of animals, and the process for deciding to euthanize research animals.

Q: Does the Oregon Regional Primate Research Center have policies and guidelines similar or the same as the University of Minnesota?

A: Most major institutions which receive NIH funding have these policies and procedures in place.

Q: Are there any states that have more comprehensive or restrictive policies than the federal regulations?

A: Minnesota does not; regulations in other states are unknown. As far as going above and beyond the minimum requirements, there are many ways in which the University of Minnesota does so voluntarily.

There was a discussion of issues of academic freedom and making judgments about the value of research. Ms. Keane added that the capacity to conduct research at this institution is a privilege that has many obligations, and part of the obligation is to obey the rules. The researcher must demonstrate the capacity to manage those requirements appropriately, and then all of the oversight is there to verify that in fact the capacity exists and can be sustained over the course of the project.

Ms. Gillett extended an invitation to the Committee to send one or two representatives to tour the research facilities. Mr. Janzen requested that the Committee schedule a speaker from SOAR or set up a debate. Professor French replied that he would contact them to discuss further.

Professor Massey asked the Committee to send a statement to the Senate regarding the Committee's findings on the issue of animal research.

2. STUDENT HOUSING.

Mike Davey reported on the subcommittee meeting about student housing. The issues being examined are quality, quantity and affordability, with an emphasis on the affordability question: is the University effectively pricing certain groups of students out of a college education? The group is researching whether a portion of the funds collected by student housing fees is shifted to the University's General Fund.

The housing group meets again on December 14 2000.

3. OTHER BUSINESS.

With no further business, Professor French thanked all members for attending and adjourned the meeting.

Mary Kosowski

University Senate