

SENATE COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL CONCERNS
MINUTES OF MEETING
NOVEMBER 13, 2006

[In these minutes: Divestiture from Sudan Discussion Continued, Future Agenda Items]

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

PRESENT: Mani Subramani, chair, Joseph Marchesani, Jennifer Oliphant, Peter Hiniker, Brandi Hoffman, Richard Lidstad, Elizabeth Richardson, Benton Schnabel, Carolyn Chalmers, Greg Schooler, Katherine Fennelly, David Fox, Ajay Skaria

REGRETS: Todd Tratz, Julia Washenberger, Amelious Whyte, Craig Hassel, Kenneth Heller, Catherine Jordan, Mira Reinberg

ABSENT: David Gysbers

I). Professor Subramani called the meeting to order.

II). Professor Subramani asked members for their comments/input concerning the Sudan divestiture presentation the committee heard on October 9th. After much discussion the committee agreed that it should:

- Draft a position statement as it relates to the University's investments and the situation in Sudan.
- Craft a broader, forward-thinking policy, with the assistance of the Office of Asset Management, which would guide the University and its fund managers when making investment decisions. The goal would be not to tie their hands, but to have the University's investments reflect its values and ethical standards.

In terms of whether the University should divest from the account manager with Sudanese exposure (see October 9, 2006 minutes - <http://www1.umn.edu/usenate/soccon/06-10-09.html>), the committee came to the conclusion that it would not ask the University to divest. Because this Sudanese exposure is in a pooled account, the University could not simply divest its Sudanese holdings, but would be forced to stop investing with this manager completely. Aside from this, a critical factor in the committee's decision had to do with the fact that this exposure was put on the books 6 – 8 years ago, and the U.S. government has since frozen these assets. Therefore, this manager would still own this position, and the University would be terminating its relationship with a top-performing manager for a situation that is out of the manager's control. The University has had several conversations with this manager who is looking for opportunities to sell this position whenever it is able to do so.

With respect to crafting a broader policy, members agreed it would be helpful to:

- Learn about what, if any, investment screens other institutions have in place.
- Invite the Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights (<http://www.mnadvocates.org/>) to act as a resource.
- Hear from a socially responsible fund manager.
- Listen to the opinions of Fulbright Scholars at the Hubert H. Humphrey Institute for Public Affairs on this topic.

Before concluding its discussion on this topic, the committee recommended that the University join the Sudan Divestment Task Force (<http://www.sudandivestment.org/home.asp>) as a show of support against the atrocities that are occurring in Sudan.

III). Professor Subramani asked members what additional topics the committee would be interested in taking on this year. The following ideas were generated:

- Receive an update on the caged versus cage-free egg issue, which was brought to the committee last year by Compassionate Action for Animals.
- Provide input to Vice President Pfitzenreuter concerning the Vendor Code of Conduct resolution that the Senate passed last year.
- Explore human rights concerns as they relate to the business practices of Coca-Cola, a vendor at the University of Minnesota.
- Learn about the changes to the Student Code of Conduct, which will apply to off-campus as well as on-campus behavior.
- Explore environmental issues such as:
 - Health of the Mississippi River.
 - Seasonal replanting of annuals versus use of native perennials. The University should be using more sustainable practices.
 - Renewable/clean energy.

The suggestion was made to invite Les Potts, grounds superintendent.

- Learn about what discussions are taking place around standardizing the background checking process for new hires at the University.
- Receive information on the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act, which seeks to amend the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 (IIRIRA). As currently written, the IIRIRA discourages states from providing in-state tuition to undocumented students. The DREAM Act would create an opportunity for these undocumented students to achieve permanent resident status. What is the University's policy on providing or not providing in-state tuition to undocumented students? Professor Katherine Fennelly agreed to spearhead this topic, which will be on the committee's December agenda.

IV). Hearing no further business, Professor Subramani adjourned the meeting.

Renee Dempsey
University Senate

