

SENATE COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL CONCERNS  
MINUTES OF MEETING  
MAY 7, 2007

[In these minutes: Military Commissions Act Update, Brainstorm Agenda Items for the 2007 – 2008 Academic Year, the University's Sustainability Efforts]

[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, Todd Tratz, Peter Hiniker, Richard Lidstad, Elizabeth Richardson, Carolyn Chalmers, Greg Schooler, Amelious Whyte, Katherine Fennelly, Catherine Jordan, Christine Dolph, Ann Linde, Kurtis McIntire, Mira Reinberg

REGRETS: Benton Schnabel, Kenneth Heller, Ajay Skaria, Justin Drees, Megan Swanson

ABSENT: David Fox, Craig Hassel

OTHER: Juan Rangel, Virajita Singh

GUESTS: Andy Phelan, assistant director, Environmental Health & Safety and Deb Swackhamer, interim director, Institute on the Environment

I). Professor Subramani called the meeting to order.

II). Professor Subramani reported that the committee's Military Commissions Act statement was approved by the Senate and is awaiting action by the President.

III). The committee brainstormed agenda items for the 2007 – 2008 academic year. The following ideas were generated:

- Follow-up on the Military Commissions Act statement passed by the Senate in May 2007. Did President Bruininks ask the University's legislative liaison in Washington, D.C. to campaign for revision of the Military Commissions Act?
- Receive an update from the Office of Asset Management regarding the resolution to divest from Sudan. What steps have been taken to date?
- Explore corporate sponsorships at the University, e.g. Coca Cola, TCF.
- Receive an update from Vice President Pfutzenreuter on the Vendor Code of Conduct, which was approved by the Senate in April 2006.
- Receive an update from Brent Benrud from the Office of the General Counsel regarding the Designated Suppliers Program. What was the ruling by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) regarding the legality of the program under U.S. anti-trust laws?

- Work on getting more press from the Minnesota Daily on the existence of the Social Concerns Committee and the issues it takes up.
- Follow-up on the Minnesota Dream Act. Was this bill removed from the Higher Education Conference Report?

A member noted that the committee takes up several topics throughout the course of an academic year, and while action is not taken on all of these topics, it is unclear what happens with many of these issues. Examples that were cited included cage-free eggs, the Solomon Amendment, and Total Oil. (Should the University continue to not invest in Total Oil?) Therefore, the suggestion was made to keep a spreadsheet to track the issues the committee has taken up as a way to follow the issues through from start to finish. Professor Subramani also suggested having volunteers from the committee track issues of interest to them and report back to the committee. He added that he would put together a flowchart for tracking topics the committee takes up and circulate it to members for their input. Tracking issues systematically, noted Professor Subramani, will not only give the committee a sense of accomplishment but will help the committee to track the issues it has taken up.

Other suggestions that were made to facilitate how the committee operates included attaching the flowchart to the agenda when it is sent out prior to each meeting, and to put the committee's charge at the top of each agenda. Additionally, send a letter to the President's Office a couple times a year outlining the issues the committee is waiting to hear back on. This would put the onus on the President's Office to contact administrators and let them know they have a responsibility to report back to the committee on a particular issue. It is too easy for administrators to say they are still working on an issue.

IV). Juan Rangel thanked the committee for its support concerning the Dream Act, which the University Senate approved earlier this month. The Dream Act would allow Minnesota high school students whose parents are undocumented immigrants to attend Minnesota universities at in-state tuition rate. Currently, there is discussion at the Capitol to remove this bill from the Higher Education Conference Report.

V). Professor Subramani welcomed Andy Phelan, the assistant director from the Department of Environmental Health and Safety. Mr. Phelan reported that the main part of his job is environmental protection and environmental compliance. It is his goal, however, to go beyond what is required and take on an environmental stewardship role.

A handout containing an amended version of the Pollution Prevention Report that the Department of Environmental Health and Safety provides to the Governor each year was distributed to members. Additionally, in the handout were a handful of slides from a presentation given to 5 University economists, which outline the University's utility and energy management program as well as pages from the University Dining Services (UDS) website reflecting its commitment to sustainability and the environment (<http://www1.umn.edu/dining/awareness.html>).

Mr. Phelan reported that the Sustainable Endowments Institute (<http://www.endowmentinstitute.org/index.html>) recently released its College Sustainability Report Card. This report card reviews campus and endowment policies at leading institutions concerning their sustainability efforts. The University of Minnesota received a B- on its report card. To come up with this grade the institute looked at campus administration, climate change and energy, food & recycling, green building, endowment transparency, investment priorities and shareholder engagement.

Mr. Phelan briefly highlighted aspects of the University's report card. He noted that the University is in the top 20% of rated schools. With respect to public institutions, only 3 schools are rated higher, University of Michigan B+, University of California B, University of Wisconsin B.

The report card references that the University has a Sustainable Campus Initiative Coordinator, who is this person, asked a member? Mr. Phelan noted that at one point there was a graduate student in this role. Also, the Morris campus has an assigned sustainability coordinator. Mr. Phelan noted that the Twin Cities campus, starting next fiscal year, plans to evaluate where the University is in terms of sustainability, what standards the University want to aspire to, and what mechanisms need to be put in place to accomplish its goals. Deb Swackhamer, interim director, Institute on the Environment, added that it is very likely the University will have a sustainability coordinator for the Twin Cities campus next year. The University is committed to having a coherent sustainability implementation policy, which will require coordination between the operations side of the University as well as the education and research enterprises of the University.

Professor Subramani asked Dr. Swackhamer what role the Social Concerns Committee could play with regard to the University's sustainability efforts. Dr. Swackhamer noted that there are numerous activities going on around sustainability. For example, on the research side, ISEES (Institute for Social, Economic and Ecological Sustainability) is currently hosting the University of Minnesota Ecosystem Science and Sustainability Initiative with a generous grant from the Bush Foundation. This is a five-year effort to look at developing sustainable practices and policies for the State of Minnesota. Also, as a result of this initiative, CFANS created a graduate minor in Sustainability Studies. Additionally, she noted that there is talk of creating a graduate minor and/or major in Climate Change Studies. There are also a number of faculty that use sustainability as a keystone project in the undergraduate teaching arena on campus.

Dr. Swackhamer reported that she and Dean Fisher from the College of Design were asked by Vice President Kathy O'Brien to work on implementing the Board of Regents sustainability policy, which is quite broad. The University is actually doing a lot to move the campus forward in terms of sustainability, but, as typical of a large enterprise, not everyone knows what each other is doing. Vice President O'Brien wants the University's sustainability policy to be implemented in a systematic and thoughtful fashion. As a result, a joint compact request between the College of Design, Institute on the Environment and Facilities Management has been submitted to develop a plan for

implementing the Board of Regents Sustainability and Energy Efficiency Policy. There has been no word as to whether this request has been funded as of yet. With this said, it would be an appropriate role for the Social Concerns Committee to make sure the University's sustainability efforts are moving forward and commenting accordingly noted Dr. Swackhamer.

Mr. Phelan shared information from the Pollution Prevention Summary Report 2006, and highlighted the following:

- The University of Minnesota is the largest user of E85 fuel in the State and across the nation.
- The number of hybrid vehicles owned by the University is on the increase.
- The total amount of copy paper used over the years has declined, assuming departments are purchasing their paper from the UStores, which is likely. The usage has gone down from 408,000 reams in 2002 to 329,000 reams in 2005. (Interestingly enough, the amount of 30% post consumer paper used at the University has also declined.)
- With the advent of the UPass, 60% more people are commuting to the University using public transportation.
- The University is having greater success in finding markets where it can purchase oat hulls.
- The Twin Cities campus has realized a significant decrease in BTUs per gross square feet (GSF).
- By centralizing the St. Paul Chiller Plant, the University reduced its overall energy usage by 10%.

On the University's College Sustainability Report Card a member questioned how an institution would ever receive a D or F grade in the "investment priorities" category. Mr. Phelan assumes that the Sustainable Endowments Institute must give all institutions a passing grade because no one scores points in that category. On a related note, a member stated that the University should challenge the F it received in the "endowment transparency" category on its report card. The University's investments in its endowment fund are not private. To illustrate, each quarter Accounting Services prepares a PUF Status Report that combines the endowment information from the Foundations and the University. This report contains market value and income distribution information for the entire endowment. Information in the PUF is publicly available information.

A member asked if any decision had been made as to whether the University will sign on to the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment. Dr. Swackhamer reported that no decision has been made as of this time, but it is still very much under discussion and on President Bruininks radar. She added that if one closely reads the commitment it is very unclear as to what the University would be committing itself to do. The University is currently in the process of working with the organization that developed the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment to understand what the commitment actually entails and what the University is obligating itself to do if it signs the agreement. The University wants to do the right thing by spending its energy, resources and capital on doing what is best for the University, and, if

this coincides with the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment, undoubtedly the University would sign this agreement. Still to be determined is whether this is the right thing for the University to do. The two pages of overview text that accompanied the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment are not very detailed. Dr. Swackhamer noted that President Bruininks has polled other Big 10 institutions to find out why they have not signed the agreement. The University may very well sign this agreement, but President Bruininks is being appropriately cautious, as he does not want to commit the University to a poor use of its resources.

Professor Subramani thanked Dr. Swackhamer and Andy Phelan for attending today's meeting and providing the committee with information on the University's sustainability efforts.

While time does not permit today, the committee mentioned wanting to learn what the top scoring institutions are doing to receive a better grade than the University on their report cards, and to think about the committee's role in the larger University efforts to "green" the campus.

VI). Professor Subramani thanked members for their service on the committee this academic year. In turn, the committee gave Professor Subramani a round of applause and thanked him for his leadership this past year. Hearing no further business, Professor Subramani adjourned the meeting.

Renee Dempsey  
University Senate