

SOCIAL CONCERNS COMMITTEE

Thursday, December 3, 1998

626 Campus Club

1:30 PM

In these minutes:

Culture Fair, Alcohol Prevention, Student Housing

MINUTES

Present: Robin Brown (Chair), Lori Clark, Catherine Forseide-Hussain, Amelious Whyte, Margaret Kuchenreuther, Friedrich Srien, Joel Nelson, Jennifer Watts, Mike Davey, Wesley Matson, Clint Hewitt

Regrets: Jean Niemiec, George French, Doris Rubenstein, Sabeen Altaf, Thomas Haakenson, Theodore Lewis, Sheila Warness

Absent: Julie Sweitzer, Nicholas Dehnert, Stephanie Eckroth, Jenny Nate

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

The Social Concerns Committee met at 1:30 PM on Thursday, December 3, 1998 in 626 Campus Club on the East Bank of the University of Minnesota. The minutes from the November 12, 1998 meeting were approved as written.

CULTURE FAIR.

Amelious Whyte reported that he met recently with Tina Rovick, Special Events Coordinator from the Campus Involvement Center, to discuss the Social Concerns Committee's proposal for a culture fair. He stated that she had just met with various student culture centers across the University who are in the process of considering the organization of a cultural history day this

spring. Mr. Whyte added that he will try to get on the January meeting agenda with this group to see how the Social Concerns Committee, Campus Involvement Center, and student culture centers can work together in the planning of such an event. Discussion about the cultural history day to date has resulted in an interest in having an educational yet entertaining component, holding the culture day in the fall since more time will be available due to the new semester system, and sponsoring different events at different times and at different campuses.

ALCOHOL PREVENTION.

Amelious Whyte distributed two handouts to committee members for their review: 1) Regents Policy on Alcoholic Beverages on Campus; and 2) Potential Actions Re: Alcohol and Other Drug Problems on Campus. He identified three options available to the Social Concerns Committee in supporting alcohol prevention efforts across the University:

- Sending a resolution to the senate
- Promoting efforts through publicity at the University and beyond
- Organize and coordinate specific action

University policies, procedures, and actions might be able to address specific policies on sponsorship, alcohol use on campus, and campus sales of alcohol, as well as AOD prevention efforts. On the other hand, faculty policies, procedure, and actions might be in the form of a statement or policy regarding the use of alcohol at campus events where students are present or encouraging faculty involvement in AOD prevention efforts. Specifically, the latter might include the following:

- Including statement in syllabus about alcohol such as reading the statement to students
- Becoming familiar with indicators of a problem with alcohol or other drugs
- Infusing curriculum with AOD information where appropriate
- Displaying AOD posters and materials in and around offices and classrooms
- Scheduling exams for Mondays and Fridays
- Less flexibility regarding late assignments and make-ups
- Making attendance and on-time arrival count (especially on Fridays)

The committee held a lengthy discussion that resulted in the following comments:

- If students are not allowed to buy or drink alcohol on campus, why are faculty allowed to attend and organize meetings, conferences, and receptions on campus where alcohol is served?
- The University should encourage faculty to identify how relating education about alcohol to their coursework where appropriate may help prevent its abuse.
- Should the University require a statement about alcohol prevention on every syllabus as is the case with academic dishonesty?
- The University wants to change the current environment by getting faculty more involved in supporting alcohol prevention efforts.

- There is a contradiction between policies that say drinking alcohol is uncool and friends saying that drinking alcohol is cool.
- Boynton Health Services sent a letter to the faculty of 40 of the largest classes (comprised primarily of freshmen) talking about the effects of alcohol; they are also providing faculty with a list of written resources on the subject for referral.
- Boynton is also backing a campaign that gets information out to students about how many University students are actually drinking.
- Last year, a letter was sent to all faculty and staff from EVPP Bruininks and VP McKinley Boston about alcohol use and prevention. Although this is an issue and that faculty and staff both play a role to get involved, the University also needs to bridge the gap between those who want to get involved, but don't know how.
- A task force recognized that the University has been doing what it should be last year, but was concerned that approximately 30 resident hall students were hospitalized from drinking too much alcohol (up from 17 the previous year). The University is not at a crisis level, but needs to continue to prevent itself from getting to a crisis point.
- Faculty could be major players in educating students about alcohol use and abuse since they have a lot of influence and contact with the students.
- If students drink too much, their school performance suffers and they graduate late.
- Students are coming out of high schools drinking more than they used to.
- Northern Illinois and the University of Arizona have both noticed significant decreases in their binge drinking numbers. These institutions have promoted the fact that not everyone is drinking; in essence, they are pushing the idea that the norm is not to drink alcohol rather than drinking alcohol. Social norms and changing perceptions is a good angle since it accentuates the positive.
- There seems to be three aspects to addressing alcohol prevention: 1) intervention, or how to identify alcohol abuse and help; 2) pedagogy, or providing support in a classroom context; or 3) normalization, or accentuating the positive.
- Faculty might be able to use some consciousness raising with this issue since some may not feel responsible or that it's a student development issue.
- The more students hear a message, the more it will click. The committee wants to discourage the misuse of alcohol and to relate the impact of alcohol use and abuse on the classroom, grades, attendance, and graduate.
- The committee recognizes that their actions could be limited by policies and procedures, but would like to emphasize encouragement and support from as many different individuals at this point.
- Some actions that the Social Concerns Committee could take are to: 1) send something brief and precise to department heads and deans to discuss at faculty meetings on how to incorporate alcohol prevention efforts into the classroom; 2) recommend that a statement from the Social Concerns Committee be added to the Gopher Guide, course guides, class schedules, student/staff directory, grading and classroom policy and procedures manual; 3) create a website for students, staff, and faculty for reference; 4) ask staff, students, and faculty to call Amelious Whyte for posters and materials that address alcohol abuse to get an indication of who and how many are taking action as a result of the outreach efforts.

STUDENT HOUSING.

Mike Davey distributed two handouts to committee members at the meeting: 1) Rent Limits by County; and 2) Rent and Vacancy Rates. He reported that since there are so many facets to this discussion, it might be helpful to make it a public discussion to determine the more prevalent concerns about this issue. As a point of reference, the Department of Housing and Development establishes the fair market rent; for example, a 2-bedroom in University Village is approximately \$1,500 at present. Mr. Davey added that when the University produces housing developments, however, it doesn't have to turn a profit, which decreases the housing costs, and the property taxes are lower as well. It was suggested that a small group brainstorm how the Social Concerns Committee could stimulate discussion at the University and determine how it could take a more proactive role in addressing housing issues. Mr. Davey's primary concern is to build affordable housing for the students. He added that there is not only insufficient housing available to students around campus, but students with fewer resources end up paying high prices for unsafe housing. In this case, how can the University ensure that building codes are enforced and that students are educated of their rights to quality housing?

It was noted that the University is in fact taking an active role in this issue, but perhaps not to the degree or speed at which students would like. One committee member stated that students need to remember to consider the quality versus cost of housing developments. For example, it's not only important that these developments are built to sustain more than 15 years, but it's equally important to balance quality with cost.

It was agreed that Mary Ann Ryan from the Office of Housing and Residential Life be asked to attend the January meeting to further discuss the issue, assist the committee in identifying the problem, and explore options about how the University can address it.

WHAT'S NEXT?

- Professor Robin Brown, Chair, will find out what statements are required on course syllabi
- Professor Brown and Amelious Whyte will draft some text about alcohol prevention to be placed on a website
- Kate Stuckert will invite Mary Ann Ryan to the January meeting
- Amelious Whyte will update the committee on his meeting with the culture centers regarding a culture history day or culture fair

The meeting adjourned at 3:00PM.