

**Social Concerns Committee
Minutes
Thursday, February 11, 1999
626 Campus Club
1:30 - 3:00 p.m.**

[**In these minutes:** Updates on the Culture Fair, Alcohol Prevention Letter, and Student Housing; Discussion on Lawsuit between University and TCF CEO; Action on proxy resolutions]

Present: Robin Brown (Chair), Mike Davey, Catherine Forseide, Thomas Haakenson, Wesley Matson, Amy Mertl, Doris Rubenstein, Amelious Whyte

Regrets: Sabeen Altaf, Lori Clark, George French, Margaret Kuchenreuther, Theodore Lewis, Joel Nelson, Jean Niemiec, Friedrich Srienc, Julie Sweitzer, Sheila Warness

Absent: Nicholas Dehnert, Jenny Nate, Jennifer Watts

(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 p.m. on Thursday, February 11, 1999 in 626 Campus Club on the East Bank of the University of Minnesota Twin Cities Campus.

Approval of January 14, 1999 Meeting Minutes

The minutes were approved as presented.

Culture Fair

- Amelious Whyte does not know when the culture centers are meeting. However, through the administrative group that approves grants given to student groups, he found out that there are sixteen student groups requesting grants for the development of programs. Therefore, a culture fair may be redundant.
- The committee agreed that instead of organizing a culture fair, more focus should be given to publicizing the fairs organized by the individual student groups.

Alcohol Prevention

- The letter to Deans, Directors, and Department heads is ready to be sent.
- Amelious Whyte has been lobbying the Minnesota Daily to change the way it advertises alcohol and the Board of Directors of the Daily will look into the matter.
- The committee agreed a letter (drafted by Professor Brown and Mr. Whyte) should be sent to the Daily outlining changes to their policy on advertising alcohol.

Student Housing

Update on Professor Brown's Contacts:

- There has been no response from MSA but he will try to contact them again.
- The Minnesota Daily said space could not be allocated for a fair housing column without a charge since it would show favoritism towards a group.
- The CMU Forum series is very interested in hosting a forum on student housing so developments should get underway.

The following comments were made by Committee members:

- The St. Paul Campus should be contacted to see if a similar forum is desired.
- Augsburg is building a new dorm that can't possibly be filled by Augsburg students so the University should look into gaining access to the extra rooms.
- The housing issue is not focused on undergraduates or graduates, but the overall experience of all students.

Groups/People that should be involved in the forum include:

- Two lawyers (contact through Mike Davey) who have developed a workshop on fair housing
- Department of Housing and Residential Life
- Off Campus Housing
- Department of Design, Housing and Apparel
- College of Architecture and Landscape Architecture
- Neighborhood Association Representatives

New Business

Student Fees Lawsuit

Professor Brown informed the committee that the CEO of TCF is actively involved in lobbying against the use of student service fees by student groups on campus. Currently, there is a lawsuit looking into whether or not this creates a conflict of interest because of the contract the University holds with TCF. The committee should decide if this is an issue worth looking into.

The following comments were made by committee members:

- The Student Affairs Committee has already met with the University's lawyers about this issue. The group was assured that there is no legal conflict of interest because the personal views of the CEO do not effect the contract between TCF and the University.
- The lawyer representing the CEO of TCF is either the head or associate lawyer for TCF, but that person is working pro bono so that does not create another conflict of interest.
- Although the lawsuit may not be a legal issue, the committee should consider the other social ramifications of it.
- The University lawyers should be invited to a meeting to clarify the situation, and the committee decide what to do, if anything, after that meeting.

Proxy Resolutions

Professor Brown provided the committee with background information and outlined the committee's responsibility on proxy resolutions with companies in which the University invests. The committee cannot possibly consider all of the resolutions before the University so stipulations should be set to determine which ones will be considered. Proxy resolutions are important for the committee to review because it may bring forth deeper issues the University may need to be aware of.

The following suggestions concerning proxy resolutions were made by committee members:

- One approach to determine which resolutions to consider would be to focus on companies that the University does most business with.
- The committee could look at resolutions where the issues are similar or relevant to what is happening at the University.
- The Committee should work with social concerns committees at other universities to develop a network that would provide assistance to each other and create a stronger voice with social issues affecting universities.
- It would be helpful to know when companies will consider the proxy resolutions.

Resolutions considered by the committee included:

Smoking Prevention (Loews)

The committee approved all four resolutions before Loews on the basis that it is in line with the tobacco settlement and it promotes awareness of the negative effects of smoking.

Precautions against forced labor in China (Lucent)

The committee did not act on the resolution to be brought to Lucent because a full copy of the resolution was not available and the meeting where it will be decided is too soon to offer input.

Equal Employment Diversity Report (Home Depot, American International Group, Rite Aid)

The committee approved the resolution that calls for a report on equal employment and diversity on the grounds that University graduates need a workplace that offers equality and diversity.

Board Inclusiveness Review (American International Group, Associates First Capital, MBNA)

The committee approved the resolution on the grounds that the guiding group of any company should be as diverse as possible to ensure fair employment for those working under them.

Test products on or use human fetuses (Bristol-Myers)

The committee did not approve the resolution because it would impose limits on rights and beliefs that are found throughout a research institution.

Sales of old growth wood (Home Depot)

The committee approved the resolution that calls for the phasing out of the sales of old growth wood based on the environmental good it would provide.

Sexual Orientation (General Electric and IBM)

The committee approved the adoption of a sexual orientation non-discrimination policy before General Electric because it would be consistent with University policy. However, it did not approve the recommendation to not extend benefits to domestic partners at IBM for the same reason.

What's Next?

- The University's attorneys working on the case with the CEO of TCF will be invited to a future meeting of the committee.
- Professor Brown and Amelious Whyte will draft a letter to the Daily outlining changes that should be made to their policy on the advertising of alcohol. The committee will be asked to provide revisions before it is distributed.
- Development of the housing forum will get underway.
- Sheila Warness will provide meeting dates that proxy resolutions will be considered.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 p.m.

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