

Minutes*

**Senate Consultative Committee
Thursday, November 18, 2004
3:00 – 4:00
Room 238A Morrill Hall**

Present: Marvin Marshak (chair), Susan Brorson¹, Carol Chomsky, Tom Clayton, Mary Jo Kane, Taque Khaled, Scott Lanyon, Jamie Larson, Tom Pielow, Jeff Ratliff-Crain, Colin Schwensohn, John Sullivan, Nathan Wanderman

Absent: Jean Bauer, Charles Campbell, Dan Feeney, James Kanten, Seyon Nyanwleh, Stacey Vonderhaar, Teresa Wallace

Guests: Associate Vice President Laurie Scheich (Auxiliary Services), Laurie McLaughlin (Housing and Residential Life), Michael Berthelsen (University Services), Orlyn Miller (University Planning); Bob Baker (Parking and Transportation Services), Tom Zearley, Anthony Dew (MSA)

Others:

[In these minutes:

1. Senate Docket

Professor Marshak convened the meeting at 3:05 and asked for approval of the Senate docket. The motion was made and unanimously favored.

2. Housing Report

Professor Marshak welcomed Associate Vice President Scheich, Ms. McLaughlin, and Mr. Miller to the meeting to discuss housing issues. [Note: Many of the points touched on at this meeting were covered in greater detail at the meeting of the Senate Committee on Finance and Planning, which can be found at <http://www1.umn.edu/usenate/scfp/04-11-09.html> (item 2 in the minutes). Only the new points of discussion will be reported in these minutes.] Ms. McLaughlin distributed copies of a report on housing from a task force that Vice President O'Brien appointed earlier in the year.

-- One recommendation concerns the maximum number of students who should be in "expanded housing" (e.g., lounges, hotels, etc.); the University may be the only Big Ten school that guarantees housing (1) if an admitted student requests it by May 1 and (2) for any returning student who requests it.

-- They house about 77% of first-year students; they encountered problems when more students were admitted than expected.

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

¹ Professor Brorson tried to be present, but the technology failed, so she is not counted as absent.

-- They cannot serve graduate, professional, and transfer students very well because of the number of first-year and returning students. They have about 250 beds they can guarantee to graduate, professional, and transfer students, who are often international students linked to a particular academic program.

When they guarantee housing, do they indicate that it might be in a converted lounge, Professor Ratliff-Crain asked? The Admissions office does so, Ms. McLaughlin said, and it is also in the housing contract.

Professor Kane said that the different rates of retention and graduation between students in on- and off-campus housing could be a reflection of self-selection. Ms. McLaughlin agreed. It would help their case, Professor Kane said, if they looked at demographic data for the two groups of students and determined that the baseline data were the same for both groups.

Professor Marshak reviewed the recommendations from the task force. Number one, build an additional 200-300 spaces: the University can always use them, if it can afford to build them; one cannot rely on the same level of first-year enrollments but there will still be demand from other groups of students. Number two, the superblock residence halls should not be relocated: students are very positive about the superblock and he would be opposed to anything that eliminates it, with the possible exception of a slight shift to the east, contiguous with the existing superblock, and the alternative sites that been identified are not feasible. Number three, the University should explore housing options for under-served student populations: there clearly is a need. Number four, the University should continue to manage the cost of attendance, including on-campus housing, so it does not get priced above the market and force students to seek off-campus living; the Provost has said that if the Academic Health Center wants part of the superblock, it should pay for the relocation costs and that it was not appropriate to impose new construction costs on students.

Mr. Khaled asked about the meaning of one element of the third recommendation, that "the University should identify and provide a site that would enable the Greek community to revitalize/expand on-campus Greek student housing." Ms. McLaughlin said they are working with a group of students on this because the 35 Greek houses cannot sustain themselves financially. If the University provides the land, a coalition will provide housing on campus. It is a separate question whether the University should partner with the Greeks, Professor Marshak said, but it is a fact that 1000-1500 students are living in Greek houses, some of which may be substandard.

Does the University make money on housing, Professor Kane asked? What is the philosophy—to break even? Ms. McLaughlin said they want to break even and they do not budget much of a margin; they fund their own depreciation and have reserves for emergencies. They are totally self-supporting so occupancy is important—if occupancy declines, fewer students must pay more in order to cover the fixed costs. About 17% of what students pay is attributable to debt service, Professor Marshak observed, so even students living in buildings that are 40 years old are paying for the new residence halls. Housing pays both its direct costs as well as an internal tax levied on all auxiliary units in order to cover its share of University costs such as accounting, human resources, purchasing, etc., Mr. Berthelsen reported.

Professor Ratliff-Crain said that recommendations to increase spaces and to retain the May 1 guarantee seem to contradict each other: if a similar number of students are admitted next year, the same

problem will arise. Students do not like temporary housing. What is the short-term plan, if students will end up living in lounges again? They are waiting to find out the numbers, Ms. McLaughlin said; Professor Marshak noted that the numbers have been set, according to the Provost, and the deans have been told the numbers are a ceiling and they may not go over the number.

Mr. Wanderman asked about the type of housing that would be added if there were expansion. Ms. McLaughlin said they would likely propose more apartment-style housing; such units give them greater flexibility because they can be used with populations other than first-year students. They do not, however, generally like to put first-year students in apartment-like settings. Mr. Wanderman said he very much supported the apartment-like housing; the rate of returning students to housing is low, which decentralizes student life.

"Expanded housing" is a bad deal, Mr. Larson said, students have to live in lounges and the other students in the facility lose their lounge. Ms. McLaughlin agreed.

Mr. Schwensohn asked about the number of upper-class students living in residence halls, which could affect the number of apartment-style accommodations that are built. Ms. McLaughlin said there about 1800-2000 upper-class students in residence halls and about 980 apartments, so about half of the upper-class students live in traditional residential halls.

If they keep the May 1 guarantee, perhaps they need to put returning students on the back burner until they have the numbers for the first-year students, Professor Lanyon suggested. They have had those discussions, Ms. McLaughlin said. If the first-year class is less than 5400, however, they will not have too much of a problem, and students will be in temporary housing only 2-3 weeks. The problem is that the reapplication process for returning students is usually completed by March. But they are keeping an eye on the numbers.

Mr. Khaled asked about demand for housing from graduate/professional students. They accommodate about 250-300, Ms. McLaughlin said, and they have a waiting list about the same length.

Mr. Khaled also inquired about "lifestyle compatibility options," such as for several hundred Muslims who would more likely live in residence halls if their dietary requirements could be met and there were gender segregation, both of which are an important part of their beliefs. A lot of universities have good kosher and halal options. They have developed a kosher meal plan option, Ms. McLaughlin said; they need also to meet the needs of Muslims, Mr. Khaled suggested. Professor Marshak noted that there are diverse student interests—he has been pushing Ms. McLaughlin on greater gender INTEGRATION, while some want more segregation. He said the Committee would return to this topic next semester because there are a number of issues to be addressed.

Professor Marshak thanked Mss. McLaughlin and Scheich and Messrs. Berthelsen and Miller for joining the meeting.

3. Late-Night Buses

Professor Marshak next welcomed Mr. Baker to join Ms. Scheich to discuss late-night bus service. He said that he had to leave the meeting, but commented that this issue had come up again and again and has been addressed variously by housing, MSA, and Parking and Transportation Services. His

opinion, he said, is the only long-term solution is that Parking and Transportation Services operates a late-night bus service; the other organizations cannot sustain it, so the question is convincing Parking and Transportation to take ownership. The problem is low ridership; Parking and Transportation argues that the money should be spent on more buses during the day, and there is a trade-off. But the University does not turn off the lights on the Mall just because no one is walking there. Professor Marshak turned over the gavel to Mr. Wanderman.

Mr. Baker said that he respectfully disagreed with Professor Marshak, and distributed materials which he discussed with the Committee. The topic has been around for 2-3 years, he said, and Parking and Transportation has been in discussions with MSA and with Coffman Union staff with respect to the "Gophers After Dark" program this fall. He recapped previous and current late-night bus service.

Late night bus service was offered by MSA for 14 days in Oct. 03. It cost MSA over \$ 13,700.00 to provide this service. It was reported by MSA that the service carried over 5100 people, which equals approximately 9.5 passengers per trip at a cost of \$2.84 per passenger. By comparison the Washington Avenue Bridge Circulator cost per passenger in fiscal 04 was \$.54.

The Gophers After Dark Program (Fri. and Sat.) cost \$858.37 per evening, this service includes extending our Connector Route from 12 midnight to 3:30 a.m. and providing two mini-buses for a Minneapolis circulator route between 9:00 p.m. and 3:30 a.m. (Our Mpls. Circulator route operates Mon.-Fri. 7 a.m.- 4:45 p.m.) With a 3.5% rate increase for fiscal 05, the cost of an evening's service would be \$888.41. Monday thru Saturday late night bus service for Academic [Year 2004-] 2005 would cost over \$150,000.00, which does not include anticipated security expenses.(169 days of service during Academic 05, excluding all Sundays, holidays, and breaks).

We have had a number of problems with the shuttle bus for the Gophers After Dark Program; two reported incidents of indecent exposure, alcohol abuse on the bus as recently as last Saturday, November 13, (UMPD were called) and twice we needed to clean buses after students got "sick" from intoxication. Due to these problems we have requested that the Gophers After Dark Program hire security monitors for the evenings we run the late night bus service.

In the case of the Gophers After Dark program, there was an average of 3 people per trip, at a cost of \$4.45 per person, on Homecoming and Halloween weekends. They have spoken with the Coffman staff about the program because the bus company said they were worried about their liability and the risk to drivers. The result was that security monitors were hired.

Mr. Baker also reviewed the Metro Transit bus service options and the routes that cover the Minneapolis and St. Paul campuses.

They have a number of recommendations that MSA might consider, Mr. Baker said, and he outlined them. Parking and Transportation, he said, would be willing to discuss these option and help to facilitate them.

- Parking and Transportation Services do not have budgeted resources for an after hours bus service. In fact we are raising parking and transportation fees to cover existing service levels.
- MSA may wish to partner with downtown business to provide this service.

- MSA may wish to partner with Gophers After Dark Program.
- Parking and Transportation has offered to facilitate a meeting between MSA and Metro Transit to expand service and routes.
- MSA may find it more economical (~ 50% less) to lease 15 passenger vans to provide curb to curb service. Parking and Transportation would assist with helping set up a program.
- Partnership with local taxi companies.

Professor Ratliff-Crain said a couple of the options seemed reasonable to him. How does MSA view them, he asked? Mr. Zearly of MSA reported that MSA did contact the Metropolitan Council about bus service but never heard anything after last March. They have considered the other options; all are possible and they are looking at them. Mr. Pielow reported that they have made similar efforts at the Duluth campus and learned that taxis are the cheapest option.

Professor Lanyon said that the key is for MSA to work with Parking and Transportation, because they can get the Metro Transit people to the table. Mr. Baker agreed.

Mr. Wanderman asked if the low ridership on the MSA experiment in 2003 was because the service only operated for two weeks and did not get established. What would the cost be if there were more riders? Mr. Baker said that the Gophers After Dark program has been very costly and been in place since earlier in the fall. He said he did not believe there would be a significant increase in ridership, and the MSA program did a good job of public relations in promoting its service.

Mr. Wanderman said he had heard the Gophers After Dark program was limiting ridership by refusing to allow people on unless they were going to Coffman. Mr. Baker said he did not believe that was true because many people rode from the student center to Commonwealth Terrace. Mr. Zearly said the Gophers After Dark program declined because of a conflict of interest—the students saw it as a safety issue, the Gophers After Dark program saw it as transport to and from its events. Mr. Baker said he did not know how that could be because drivers are instructed to pick up people if they are at a bus stop.

Mr. Wanderman thanked Mr. Baker and adjourned the meeting at 4:05.

-- Gary Engstrand