

SENATE COMMITTEE ON STUDENT AFFAIRS  
MINUTES OF MEETING  
NOVEMBER 5, 2003

[In these minutes: Call to Order, Introductions, Student Housing, Student Bill of Rights, Committee Charge]

[These minutes reflect discussion and debate at a meeting of a committee of the University Senate or Twin Cities Assembly; none of the comments, conclusions, or actions reported in these minutes represent the view of, nor are they binding on the Senate or Assembly, the Administration, or the Board of Regents.]

PRESENT: Adam VanWagner, chair, David Lenander, Gerald Rinehart, Iraj Bashiri, Jean-Marie Del-Santo, Kim Roufs, Erin Albrecht, Emily Brown, Nathan Hilfiker, Shawn Lavelle, Ryan Osero, Matt Painschab, Divya Raman

REGRETS: Yasemin Kaygisiz, Cheryl Meyers, Nathan Saete

ABSENT: Janet Schottel

OTHER: Tina Falkner

GUEST: Charles W. Stech, SSCC Vice Chair

I). Adam VanWagner called the meeting to order and welcomed all those present. In light of the fact that several new student members were appointed to the Committee, Adam VanWagner asked that introductions be made. Adam VanWagner thanked the new student members for applying to serve on the Committee, and, then congratulated them on their respective appointments.

II). Adam VanWagner noted that in discussions with the Student Senate Consultative Committee and with the Student Senate, it was recommended that SCSA take up the issue of student housing this year. He added that MSA (Minnesota Student Association) is also working on this issue. Jeff Nath has spearheaded this issue on behalf of MSA. He is particularly interested in the availability of affordable housing as well as safe housing.

Mr. Nath proposes that either the State of Minnesota or the University use eminent domain as a means of purchasing property near the University for student housing. In terms of safety, Mr. Nath would like to increase the lighting resources around campus, particularly in Dinkytown. This initiative has been named 'Project Lighthouse'.

Adam VanWagner asked for the Committee's input on what role they would like to see SCSA play in this issue. How can SCSA affect student housing?

Responses included:

- How can this Committee take up student housing as an issue and try to affect change when each campus' housing situations are so different? Adam VanWagner noted that there are probably some similar concerns shared by students on all the campuses such as affordability and safety. A member concurred that using safe and affordable housing as a framework is a good idea because this is something that all students can relate to.
- A member asked that the Committee ask the University to offer student housing for graduate students.
- Housing and Residential Life does not seem to be concerned with the issue of retention for the obvious reason that they are responsible for guaranteeing student housing for all incoming freshmen.
- Is there a demand for student housing on campus? The Committee should not be arguing for something that there is no demand for. Several members believe that there is a demand (at least on the Twin Cities campus) that the University is not fulfilling. In order to determine the demand, a suggestion was made to contact the Office of Residential Life on each campus.
- How is the Committee defining 'affordable' housing? Because this will be relative across campuses, it was suggested that a formula, which takes into account a percentage of tuition and costs, be used to define affordable.
- A member reported that Morris student housing is not filled to capacity. In the opinion of this member, the two major reasons for this are:
  - It is cheaper to live off-campus.
  - The desire to live in a house versus a residence hall.
- It will be important to look at the type/style of housing that is available on each campus in addition to other factors.

- The Committee should come up with reasons why it would be in the University's best interest to offer affordable housing.
- A member suggested that the University establish guidelines in order for landlords to list their properties with Housing and Residential Life (HRL). The guidelines should include such factors as safety, cleanliness, etc. Adam VanWagner added that the University should be obligated to take an active role in making sure students are not living in substandard housing. The University should not delegate this responsibility to the various municipalities. It was also noted that students need to accept a level of responsibility as well.
- MSA passed a resolution apprising The Minnesota Daily that they need to abide by the same guidelines that HRL will be using for their off-campus housing website. The Daily refused to comply with this resolution by taking a free press stance. Hopefully, The Daily will change their position on this matter. A member asked how this resolution was communicated to The Daily. Maybe The Daily would cooperate if the approach was different and they were asked versus told to abide by the HRL guidelines. Adam VanWagner noted that there has been a history of contention between MSA and The Daily. Therefore, maybe The Daily would be more receptive to a different approach. A suggestion was made that The Daily consider having 'Approved' and 'Unapproved' columns for listing properties for rent. This strategy would protect their interests as a newspaper as well as students' interests and the University's interests.

To conclude, Adam VanWagner stated the purpose of today's discussion was to verify the Committee's interest in pursuing this issue. A member requested a synopsis of the information being proposed by MSA. Adam VanWagner agreed to provide this information to members electronically. Another member stated that in order for SCSA to delve into this issue further, it needs an understanding of the housing situation on each campus. Information from the Office of Housing & Residential Life needs to be collected from each campus. Once this information is collected, the Committee can strategize on how to move forward. Adam VanWagner and Ryan Osero volunteered to draft a set of questions to be sent to each campus to collect this information. The draft will be sent out to Committee members for their input prior to being sent to each campus.

III). Next, Adam VanWagner introduced Charles Stech, SSCC Vice Chair. In Mr. Stech's opinion, students' rights have been taken advantage of over the past few years, and, as a result, he proposes a Student Bill of Rights be adopted. A draft copy of a Student Bill of Rights was distributed for members to review and comment on. Mr. Stech brought this draft to the SSCC and they suggested he bring it to SCSA. The SSCC has not taken any action on this item. In addition, Shawn Lavelle distributed a document, *Standards of Conduct - Joint Statement on the Rights and Freedoms of Students* adopted by Wesleyan University. He believes this could be used as a template for developing a similar document for students at the University. Comments and questions on this item included:

- A member recollected that back in the 1960s or 1970s either student government or the Student Senate adopted a Bill of Rights. It was suggested that someone check with University Archives or the Senate Office to see if such a document exists.
- Adam VanWagner asked Mr. Stech whether the draft Bill of Rights is a listing of rights that students already have or is it creating new rights? Mr. Stech said it is both. Some of the statements are rights that are lacking and some of the statements are affirmation of existing rights.
- What does Article VII mean, "Whereas students shall receive equal value for their dollar"? Adam VanWagner admitted having concerns regarding the practicality of some of the statements. For example, how can Article VII be quantified? Charles Stech reminded members this is a very rough draft but the thought process behind this statement had to do with tuition increases and whether or not students are getting more or less for their dollar.
- What does Article XIV mean, "Whereas students being the largest body in the university shall have the largest say in their education"?
- On behalf of the Committee, Adam VanWagner noted that members have specific concerns with some of the statements, as well as wanting to know what the motivation is in drafting such a document. Is this an attempt to correct past ills? Adam VanWagner asked Charles Stech what his expectations are for this document. In addition, Mr. Stech was asked what framework the Committee should use to construct such a document and what is this Bill of Rights

- intended to accomplish. Charles Stech would like this document to correct past ills and possibly future ills.
- Vice Provost Rinehart asked Mr. Stech what were the prompts that spurred these statements. These statements are not written clearly enough to be comprehensible. Vice Provost Rinehart suggested Mr. Stech bring forward examples of things that are wrong in the system. By doing so, it would help members better understand the motivation behind each of the articles.
  - A member recommended that there needs to be more of a comprehensive introduction than the two short sentences that introduce the Bill of Rights. The current introduction is quite vague and broad.
  - Charles Stech stated that this document evolved as a result of the University's *Inciting or Participating in a Riot Policy*. While attending the Board of Regents' meeting discussing this Policy, Mr. Stech heard at least one Regent say that going to the University is a privilege, not a right; therefore, students have none. Mr. Stech was offended by this comment. He believes that students should have rights.
  - Adam VanWagner would prefer not to have a document like this being generated out of anger.
  - A member recommended modernizing existing rights and policies so they apply to today's situation. This undertaking would be a more achievable goal.
  - Start by examining the University's *Inciting or Participating in a Riot Policy*. Concern was expressed over the fact that the administration put this policy in place without bringing it to the Senate. Then, after reviewing the *Inciting or Participating in a Riot Policy*, if the Committee wants to examine other policies and uncovers that students' rights have been taken advantage of, this would be the time to draft a Student Bill of Rights.
  - Members agreed, as a starting point, the University's current policies need to be examined before taking any action on the Bill of Rights before them today. A comprehensive collection of University policies that impact students' rights needs to be reviewed, this includes policies on all campuses. Adam VanWagner asked coordinate campus members, Nathan Hilfiker from Morris and Erin Albrecht from Duluth, to gather information from each of their campuses on the

various policies that impact students' rights. Charles Stech agreed to look up policies on the Duluth campus.

IV). Adam VanWagner noted that in conjunction with the reorganization of the Senate structure, Professor Judith Martin, chair of the SCC, requested that all Senate committees review their charge and make suggestions for changes. Copies of the charge were distributed to the members for their review. Committee discussion led to the following changes to the charge:

- Change the first paragraph as follows - "The Student Affairs Committee is concerned with all issues dealing with the ~~social~~ welfare of students at the University of Minnesota, ~~including serves such as the operation of student/staff health service facilities, and special needs pertaining to international students.~~"
- Expand the SCSA membership to include the Student Community Relations Coordinator position as an ex-officio member of SCSA.
- Under 'Duties and Responsibilities' change item 'b' as follows - "To provide a comprehensive link between the University and all University student organizations in accordance with the defined relationship between the student organization and the University as described in ~~the Policy on Registration and Classification of Student Groups for the Twin Cities campus and as defined by coordinate campuses~~ relevant policies on each campus."
- Under 'Duties and Responsibilities' change item 'c' as follows - "To be concerned with the ~~general~~ welfare of international students ~~and the services and affairs that pertain to them.~~"
- Under 'Duties and Responsibilities' change item 'e - 1' as follows - "To ~~receive request~~ and review an annual report from the Chair of the Student Services Fee Committee operating on each campus, as well as any other reports pertaining to fees such as an annual summary of waivers granted in the Regents Policy."
- Under 'Duties and Responsibilities' change item 'e - 2' as follows - "To recommend to the ~~appropriate student affairs officer Vice-Chancellor or the Office of Student Development (as appropriate)~~, in consultation with the senior administrator of the Student Services Fee process on each campus, any changes in the individual campus policies and/or procedures for the allocation of the Student Services

Fee on that campus, as well as to address issues noted in resolutions submitted annually by fees committee on that campus.”  
In closing, the Committee unanimously endorsed its revised charge.

V). Other Business - Ryan Osero reminded members that a series of questions directed at the Housing and Residential Life offices on each campus will be drafted and circulated to the Committee for their input prior to being sent out.

Lastly, Vice Provost Rinehart asked for guidance from the Committee related to riot issues. He asked for members to think about what measures the administration can take to make the campus a safe and protected environment without violating students' rights. If members have ideas, they were asked to share them with Vice Provost Rinehart.

VI). Hearing no further, business Adam VanWagner adjourned the meeting.

Renee Dempsey  
University Senate