

SENATE COMMITTEE ON STUDENT AFFAIRS
MINUTES OF MEETING
APRIL 6, 2005

[In these minutes: Student Transportation Issues, Meeting Announcements, Strategic Positioning]

[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: Kristen Denzer, chair, Jennifer Wagner, Iraj Bashiri, Jean-Marie Del-Santo, Carolyn Nayematsu, Kim Roufs, Janet Schottel, Maria McRae, Matt Painschab, Michael Rhodes

REGRETS: Kendre Turonie, Amelious Whyte, Gabriele Schmiegel, Tina Falkner

ABSENT: Christina Trok, Yasemin Kaygisiz, Christine Ascheman, Shannon Carry, Divya Raman

OTHERS: Anthony Dew, Ryan Mann, Amy Jo Pierce, Nathan Wanderman, Lynn Holleran

GUEST: President Bruininks

I). Kristen Denzer called the meeting to order.

II). Kristen Denzer introduced Ryan Mann, a University of Minnesota student who is working on a class project to examine student transportation issues. Relative to this project, a proposal is being put forward to the administration to extend the hours of operation of the Washington Avenue Bridge Circulator (WABC) from 4:45 p.m. to midnight. According to Mr. Mann, the extended hours would better serve students taking evening classes on the West Bank and/or who are using University resources e.g. Wilson Library. He added that extending the WABC hours would provide students with a safe alternative to walking across the Tenth Avenue Bridge in the evening.

As part of this project, a meeting with the Director of Transit Services Bill Stahlmann has been scheduled for Tuesday, April 12th. The purpose of this meeting is to gain insight as to why this route ends at 4:45 and to also look at the cost of extending the WABC hours.

Mr. Mann solicited members' questions/comments regarding this issue from members:

- How frequently should the bus run if its hours are extended? Mr. Mann believes the WABC should continue to run every 15 minutes as it does during the day.
- The WABC should stop at Appleby Hall.

- There are financial issues that will likely factor into whether extending the WABC hours will be possible or not.
- Would students be willing to consider having the WABC run every hour in the evening rather than every 15 minutes? This is negotiable stated Mr. Mann.
- This is an important student safety issue. Mr. Mann agreed that besides being a safety issue, it is also a convenience issue. More students would likely be willing to take evening courses on the West Bank if adequate transportation were available.
- With gas prices increasing, it would seem logical that the University would be encouraging students to take the bus rather than drive. However, if no bus service is available, this leaves students with no alternative but to drive.
- Evening events on the West Bank can significantly increase the amount it costs students to park.

Moving on, Kristen Denzer introduced MSA representative Anthony Dew and asked that he provide the committee with information on MSA's Late Night Bus program. Mr. Dew distributed packets of materials containing statistics and cost estimates for a late night bus. Then, he provided members with background information and highlighted the following:

- During the 2003 – 2004 academic year, MSA conducted a pilot program to assess the need for a late night bus.
- A late night bus would address safety and convenience issues for many students.
- The 2003 – 2004 pilot program ran for two weeks. MSA believes that in order to accurately gauge whether this service is necessary, a longer (one-year) test period should be used to assess the demand for the service.
- MSA met with representatives from the Office of Parking and Transportation who agreed with the overall concept of the program, but who indicated that there is no money to fund such a service. Before applying for Student Services Fees, MSA is applying for grants and scholarships as a means to fund the program.
- The estimated one-year cost of operating a late night bus is \$200,000 per year (or \$2 per student per semester).

Mr. Dew solicited members' support for the Late Night Bus program and solicited questions/comments from members:

- How long would it take a bus to complete the route? It would take approximately 20 minutes. The program that is being proposed would have two buses on the route, which would mean that there would be roughly a 15-minute wait between buses at any given stop.
- Would the Late Night Bus program solve the WABC issue? Yes, because the Late Night Bus would go over the Tenth Avenue Bridge.
- Gophers After Dark offers free late night activities every Friday and Saturday night at Coffman Memorial Union during the academic school year. As part of this program, Gophers After Dark provides free bus service to students on Friday and Saturday nights to take them to and from these activities. MSA believes this service is too limited and that a more comprehensive service should be offered, especially if students are asked to pay for it.

- Would students who are proposing extending the WABC hours be satisfied with a late night bus program instead? According to Mr. Mann, he is confident students would be satisfied if a late night bus route were established in lieu of extending the WABC's hours.
- The Late Night Bus (during its pilot phase) had stops, which were convenient to Melrose and University Commons, where many students live.
- It was reported that President Bruininks has voiced his support of the concept of a late night bus.
- Will the St. Paul Campus be included in the Late Night Bus proposal? MSA President Tom Zearley is very passionate about including the St. Paul Campus in the proposal. Naturally, to do so would cost more money, but this is something that is being investigated.
- How late would the Late Night Bus run? Two o'clock a.m. is being proposed.
- Would students be willing to pay on a per ride basis? This is definitely a possibility worth considering. Once a cost per ride has been established, a survey could be conducted to determine students' willingness to pay on a per ride basis.

Collaboration between interested groups (e.g. MSA, SCSA, SSCC, etc.) that support the concept of a late night bus will be necessary to help secure funding for this proposal.

Mr. Mann volunteered to report back to members at the committee's May 4th meeting on a survey, which is being conducted to determine whether students would be more likely to take evening classes on the West Bank and/or use University resources if a safe and reliable means of transportation were available. He will also agreed to report back on the meeting with Transit Director Bill Stahlmann.

III). Other Business:

- Members were invited to the year-end celebration of Community-University partnerships, which will be held on April 14, 2005 from 4:00 – 6:00 in the Mississippi Room of Coffman Memorial Union.
- Ms. Denzer reminded members to complete and return the Stipend Review Evaluation on her performance, which they should have received via email. Members asked that the evaluation be resent.

IV). Kristen Denzer welcomed President Bruininks who asked to speak to the committee around the University's strategic positioning efforts. President Bruininks noted that decreased levels of State and Federal financial support in conjunction with demographic changes were, in large part, the impetus for the University's strategic positioning initiative. Next, he provided members with background information on the strategic positioning efforts to date and the timeline this initiative is expected to follow. The ultimate goal of this undertaking is for the University of Minnesota to become one of the top three public research universities in the world.

President Bruininks shared ideas that have been discussed to improve the University's strategic position. Examples of these ideas included, but were not limited to:

- Integrate colleges/units to create strength.

- Realign academic programs as needed.
- Build a stronger center of leadership.
- Continue to reform administrative practices to save money.
- Eliminate programs as needed.
- Strengthen the honors program for undergraduate students.

He added that whichever recommendations are adopted, input from the broad University community will be garnered with respect to implementation.

The most controversial of the recommendations that have been discussed is the closure of General College. President Bruininks stressed that closing General College is not intended to decrease access to the University nor is it intended to diminish the University's commitment to diversity. The goal is to admit students who will succeed in the University environment. Some students, in preparation for studying at the University, may need to start at community college rather than the University.

President Bruininks noted that a simpler administrative structure would likely have a positive impact on the University's economies of scale. He added that the strategic planning process is an opportunity for the University to rethink its current paradigm as it strives to be one of the top three public research institutions in the world.

In closing, President Bruininks thanked members for their time and thoughtful discussion.

IV). Hearing no further business, Kristen Denzer adjourned the meeting.

Renee Dempsey
University Senate