

Student Affairs Committee Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, April 7, 2010

2:30 ~ 4:00 p.m.

Morrill Hall, 510

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

[In these minutes ~ Student Services Fees]

Present: Thomas Reynolds (co-chair), Kendre Turonie, Anthony Albecker, Joyce Holl, Carlos Torelli, Silvia Canelon, Thomas Rozeske, Thomas Bilder, Amelious Whyte, Adam Arling, Gabriele Schmiegel, Philip Mlaker

Regrets: Olga Zakharenko (co-chair), Megan Hines, Elizabeth Vose

Absent: Nathan Pelzer, Miranda Kacer, Christiane Bartels, Andy Howe

Guest: Erich Martin, chair, Student Services Fees Subcommittee

Chair Reynolds welcomed the committee and introductions were made. A motion was made to approve the March meeting minutes; the motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

Chair Reynolds said he would like to set straight the relationship between the Student Affairs Committee and the Student Service Fees Subcommittee (SSFS). He reviewed the by-laws of the Social Concerns Committee and said that they should be getting regular updates from the SSFS but he has not heard of this committee up until the last committee meeting. Members briefly discussed what they should expect from SSFS as far as interaction with Social Concerns.

Student Service Fees Subcommittee ~ Erich Martin

Chair Reynolds asked Mr. Martin to explain the charge of SSFS and how it would interrelate with Social Concerns. Martin first explained that the student service fee is a process instituted by the Board of Regents to cover the costs of non-instructional programs and activities as well as student groups and organizations. He continued, saying that fellow University students that make up the Student Services Fees Committee (SSFC) decide upon the monetary amount. Each year, student groups and administrative units make a formal request for funds to the SSFC. The Committee then determines the amount that will be awarded collectively, which determines the fee that students will pay for the following year. Martin said that there is a budget-training program every October for student group members to learn the funding process. He said he is unaware of the connection between the SSFC/SSFS and the Social Concerns Committee. He does not know the historical context of the committee connections.

Martin said that the current rate of student services fees are \$375 per semester, per student as well as other fees that are not under the domain of student services fees. Mr. Arling asked if

there was a set limit to the amount of fees that can be charged to students. Martin replied that there is not and they can change year to year. He said that student groups and organizations calculate what they think they will need for the academic year and that is the amount they request. Ms. Turonie asked how the committee decides which applications to review first. Martin responded that there is no particular order. Professor Torelli asked how many organizations currently exist. Martin said there are approximately 500 student organizations and administrative units that are candidates for student services fees and they average about 38 to 42 applications per year. Student fees are determined by the collective amount that is distributed to the groups whose applications are approved each year. Next year's fees will be \$360 per student per semester. Martin explained that each group that receives funds is responsible for the management of those funds and they do get audited. He said that some groups carry their budgets over from year to year and though they are supposed to retain 10% of their operational fees from year to year, organizations award amounts can be reduced if there is too much carry over from not spending. Ms. Holl asked what is the process if the Board of Regents rejects the SSFC's recommendations. Whyte responded that the Regents do not vote on services fees; the recommendations are presented to the Provost but he has not heard of recommendations being rejected in the past. Whyte added that if a group does not like the committee's recommendations, they could appeal the decision to the Provost.

Mr. Bilder stated that the Student Affairs Committee should be receiving annual reports from the SSFC as well as regular updates of any changes and asked about what happened to that procedure. He added that the SC committee members do not know when the last report was submitted, so it had to be two years ago or more. Mr. Whyte responded that the reporting process probably was lost through extensive subcommittee coordinator turnover in the past five years. He added that the lack of communication was not on purpose and that at this time the committees should connect to review what is necessary. Whyte said there is no formal process for an individual to have their fees waved, which rarely happens. Mr. Arling asked if fees are waved when a student is abroad and Mr. Whyte said he was unsure about that. Arling questioned further about why administrative units are being funded by the SSFC and Whyte stated that it was difficult to decide where the funding would come from for those units; SSFC or tuition funds. He said these particular units support student organizations, so that seemed like the right choice. Mr. Albecker asked how the University compares in fees with other universities. Whyte stated that the University ranks in the middle.

Chair Reynolds asked when would be a good time to schedule committee visits and request committee reports. Mr. Whyte said the best time would be before or after the application process, as that time is very busy. He added that each campus has their own process to assign student fees.

Ms. Canelon asked about the seats on the committee in regard to the area the students come from to make up the committee. Mr. Martin said there are six graduate students and sixteen undergraduate students from various backgrounds that make up the committee. He added that the committee is very diverse. Whyte said that throughout the committee's history, various groups of students have applied to be on the SSFC, thinking they would have more weight in the Committee's decision making but that is not the case.

After Presentation Discussion

Ms. Canelon asked what the next step would be for the Student Affairs Committee in regard to connecting with the SSFC and SSFS. Reynolds stated that they are supposed to have a representative on the SSFC. Professor Torelli expressed concern about the lack of process and set limitations that go into determining student fees. Ms. Holl agreed, stating that the process seemed very loose. He thinks Student Affairs should oversee that committee and their processes. Arling thinks those appointing committee members should be from an outside source. Members discussed the difficulty groups may have of meeting the funds application deadline and the lack of leniency. Reynolds asked student members if they perceived suspicion among student that the SSFC members are not acting in the best interest of their constituents. Both Canelon and Schmiegel said yes. Mr. Arling said that many students think the University controls the fees. Reynolds asked their suggestions as to what should be addressed. Canelon said they should invite the SSFC to a committee meeting to explain the application process. She said they (Student Affairs) should get more involved and should review what things are not going well within the SSFC. Members agreed and Canelon added that they should consult the student services handbook to become more familiar with the SSFC and the processes prior to meeting with them. Members are concerned about the fact that there are only approximately 42 out of 500 plus groups that are receiving fees and what might happen if and when that number increases.

Ms. Schmiegel asked how organizations justify their fees or what it takes to be eligible to receive fees. Mr. Arling said some of that information is available online. Schmiegel said she noticed a vast difference between organizations and their fees. Chair Reynolds is concerned that there may be a fairness issue and thinks the committee should look into that. Schmiegel stated that students do not realize they have a say in student services fees and that the SSFC should be educating the student body and letting them know that they do have a say in fees. Mr. Albecker added that the application process needed to be reviewed, saying the application responsibility should not be placed solely on one student but that the responsibility should be shared with the members of the organization, which would help groups to meet the application deadline. Albecker agreed that it sounded as though policies needed to be firmed up but does not think it their committee prevue to bring that issue to light. Chair Reynolds would like to pursue this topic in the fall.

Old Business/new business

Ms. Canelon & Ms. Holl will be joint chairing for the 2010-2011 academic year.

Hearing no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

Lisa Towry
University Senate Office