

STUDENT SENATE MINUTES

April 20, 1995

The third meeting of the Student Senate for 1994-95 was convened in 25 Law Building, Minneapolis campus, on Thursday, April 20, 1995, at 11:30 a.m. Coordinate campuses were linked by telephone. Checking or signing the roll as present were 28 voting student members. Mr. Joel Bergstrom, Student Senate Chair, presided.

I. MINUTES FOR FEBRUARY 16, 1995
Action

APPROVED

II. REPORT ON STUDENT SENATE PARTICIPATION

Ms. Barbara Thompson reported on the open forums for perspective Senate candidates. The forums were conducted, she said, to inform students of the responsibilities associated with being a senator and of the Senate's role within the University. She also mentioned that the Student Senate Handbook is in the process of being revised to include a section on how to be an effective senator.

III. LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Mr. Rabun Taylor provided the legislative update. He reported that the Governor has recommended an increase for the University in the amount of approximately \$61 million, the House voted to increase that to \$62 million, and a Senate bill, which is still in committee, includes a recommendation of \$58 million. Students should be aware, he said, that given these figures, students could see an increase in tuition of 7.5% in each year of the biennium. The Legislature is also considering changing the funding formula for the University, he said, perhaps basing it on graduation rates instead of instructional costs.

IV. REPORT ON GAPSA STUDENT GOVERNANCE DOCUMENT

Mr. Rabun Taylor introduced Mr. Steve Prince, Executive Administrator of the Graduate and Professional Student Association (GAPSA), to comment on the GAPSA document. Mr. Prince explained that while some have had an opportunity to review the entire document, only the recommendations were being distributed at this time in order to focus the discussion on the ideas and issues in the report. The report, he said, was developed as a result of concerns expressed by past and present student government members in the TwinCities relating to staffing, continuity, and the organization and effectiveness of student government offices. The purpose of the document is

to initiate a dialogue between the administration and student leaders to determine what the structure of student government should look like in the future and what level of support is necessary to accompany it.

V. DISCUSSION OF UNIVERSITY GOVERNANCE AND SENATE RESTRUCTURING

Ms. Barbara Thompson encouraged senators to carefully review the GAPSA document when it becomes available in its entirety, especially the recommendations. She also asked senators to think about how students can best communicate with the broader University community and to consider where the focus of student government should be.

One senator who had reviewed the document said he concurred with most of the recommendations and supported developing mechanisms for strengthening the student voice with the administration.

Mr. Rabun Taylor raised the idea of having permanent University employees staff student governance organizations, instead of the current practice which is for the organizations to hire their own employees. This has proven to be ineffective, he said. Another issue discussed at length in the document is the relationship between student development and student governance.

Ms. Rebecca Mathern, Speaker of the MSA Forum, commented that MSA has been without an administrative officer for over a month and as a result the office isn't functioning properly. She believes a primary reason for the difficulty in both hiring and retaining someone in this position is the fact that they are not a University employee and do not receive benefits.

Another senator remarked that while she understands the rationale for hiring a University employee, she is concerned about maintaining student autonomy.

Mr. Taylor added that now may be the best chance students have to make a difference in governance, mainly because central administration is undergoing a great deal of change and has asked students to participate in those changes. A governance task force is scheduled to be appointed soon, he said, and that will be an excellent avenue for students to use to provide input and to suggest ways in which governance can be improved at the University. Of primary concern to students is appropriate representation on all University committees. Students must take some responsibility for the problems that exist in student government, said Senator Taylor, however, he believes part of the problem is that student opinion is not taken seriously enough. There is also concern about faculty dominance of issues at the University, he said. While it is true faculty have longevity at the University and tend to take the initiative on issues, students must become more actively involved in the consultative process.

If and when the governance task force is established, said another, it will be looking primarily at the Senate structure and not MSA and GAPSA. Changes within those organizations will have to come from the student associations themselves. It was suggested that mechanisms for improving communication are necessary--to make students more aware of University issues

and to encourage their involvement at the appropriate level.

On a final note, a former Student Senate Consultative Committee (SSCC) chair recommended that when filling important positions, such as task forces and search committees, the incoming SSCC chair and the Student Senate chair, be the individuals to serve. This will help provide continuity in the Student Senate. Based on her experience, she also suggested that students take a more aggressive role in the Senate and its committees.

VI. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE STUDENT COMMITTEE ON COMMITTEES
Action

MOTION:

To approve the following resolution:

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, a task force to reassess governance at the University will soon be constituted;

WHEREAS, this committee will examine the mission, structure, and function of Senate committees;

WHEREAS, the Student Committee on Committees has been developing capabilities to manage student databases and to recruit students on a larger scale than before;

WHEREAS, the University needs a single body to which it can take its requests for student participation in a variety of contexts;

WHEREAS, the Student Committee on Committees is the most appropriate body to receive requests from all sources seeking student participation at the systemwide level and often at the campus and college level;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Student Senate recommends to the governance task force that it consider broadening the mission of the Student Committee on Committees to include appointments outside of the University Senate.

Chair
Committee

RABUN TAYLOR,
Student Consultative

DISCUSSION:

Mr. Joel Bergstrom presented the Resolution. The intent of the Resolution, he said, is to make student government more responsive and more user-friendly for faculty, students, and administrators. If approved, it will broaden the duties and responsibilities of the Student Committee on Committees by making it the contact group for the appointment of students to all University committees.

Mr. Rabun Taylor added that the Resolution does not empower the Student Committee on Committees as the final arbiter of these appointments. Organizations, such as MSA and GAPSA, will retain control over final selections.

With no further discussion, the motion was approved by a majority of members present and voting.

APPROVED

VII. OLD BUSINESS

Mr. Bergstrom reported on the status of items approved by the Student Senate at its last meeting and reviewed items scheduled for University Senate consideration later in the day.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Barbara Thompson announced that information concerning the Women's Student Leadership Conference scheduled for the end of May is available. Interested students should contact her.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 12:40 P.M.

Martha Kvanbeck
ABTRACTOR