

DISABILITIES ISSUES COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING
SEPTEMBER 15, 2010

In these minutes: [Creation of a process to assess whether the University is meeting the needs of the students, staff, and guests with disabilities; Services report; Disabled Student Cultural Center report]

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

PRESENT: Dale Branton (Chair), Carla Tabourne, Donna Johnson, Miriam Krause, Mary Kennedy, Amber Mayer, Sherry Gray, Kimberly Simon, Susan Rose, Mike Silverman, Julia Robinson, Joanna O'Connell,

REGRETS: Mary Muwahid, Joanie Tool

ABSENT: Frank Symons, Becca Gerken, Peggy Mann Rinehart

OTHERS ATTENDING: Victoria Nelson, Kristin Langer,

Professor Branton called the meeting to order, welcomed those present, and asked them to introduce themselves. He also indicated he had created a secret Facebook group for the committee. He stated it is an unofficial place to have increased communication between the committee meetings. He indicated he would invite the committee members to join.

The committee approved the April 2010 meeting minutes. Professor Branton next explained the process for approving minutes via e-mail and called for a motion to approve future minutes via e-mail. The motion passed.

Professor Branton discussed his goals as chair of the committee. He stated he wants to be a positive force towards changing how disabilities are viewed. He wants to bring the University around to a better understanding of what is really happening for students with disabilities. He indicated he wants to change the culture to an atmosphere of acceptance and accommodation. He also stated he would like the committee to be more active than it has been in the past, and he hopes that some of the committee's work results in resolutions for consideration by the University Senate.

He then reviewed the committee's charge. He welcomed discussion as to whether the committee should be working "to review [University] policies and practices in light of legal compliance aspects," as indicated in the charge; and he asked the committee to consider how to carry out this aspect of the charge.

An active committee discussion followed about ways to fulfill the compliance element of the charge. The following comments and suggestions were made.

- It was suggested that the committee must have a means of getting reports on compliance from the University.
- Guests could be invited to speak to the committee about compliance and the Americans with Disabilities Act, so that the committee knows what to evaluate.
- Kimberly Simon from Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action Office indicated she could provide the committee with the number of open ADA cases.
- The Pulse survey was another source suggested for data.
- Inviting those with disabilities to speak to the committee about their experiences was also suggested.
- Donna Johnson, director of Disability Services, informed the committee about the Identity Campaign in which students and employees are sharing stories of how they access the University. She also mentioned that the majority of the population served by Disability Services have hidden disabilities.
- Mary Kennedy discussed the problems with providing faculty and staff with training about disabilities. She indicated some training is available in new employee orientation and new managers and supervisors receive training. But, the problem is that the older employees who began working prior to the implementation of training are not receiving it.
- It was suggested that the committee review all of the new orientations provided to university staff to evaluate if they have meaningful information on disabilities.
- It was also mentioned that the committee should identify ways to fill the gaps for Teaching Assistants and managers who do not have training, and consider how this will map onto current policy.
- Hiring adjunct professors was mentioned as an additional challenge for providing information about disabilities during orientation.

Joanna O'Connel suggested inventorying where policy and communication about disabilities is housed, so that committee members know where there is support and where it is lacking. The committee listed some resources for policy information:

- The EAD committee in dialogue with Disabilities Services
- The Office of Equity and Diversity
- The Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, and Education Programming.

Professor Branton summarized the committee's discussion into two main action items.

1. First, the committee should report on what information is being offered about disabilities, and
2. Second, the committee should learn how that information is being disseminated.

Professor Branton stated, while he believes it is important to be knowledgeable about legal responsibilities relating to those with disabilities, he does not want “to just put more information on a syllabus.” He is more concerned with creating a welcoming accommodating environment at the University. He wants to communicate that this is in everyone’s interest. It is not an oppressive list of responsibilities. He further stated that he wants to create a positive atmosphere and educate people to be attuned to the possibility of disability as a reason for unexplained behavior.

Amber Mayer commented that the classroom is a relationship between the student and the teacher. It is important for students to know what they can expect in the classroom and what resources are available. She suggested students should be given information on disabilities during welcome week, but mentioned transfer students would be left out of this method of communication. Sherry Gray indicated the University of Minnesota wiki could be used as a central location for committee documents. She mentioned she would look into the possibility of this. It was suggested that the committee break into subcommittees in order to focus on different aspects of the committee’s review of the University’s policies on disabilities, and assessment of their effectiveness. Professor Branton indicated he would create an outline for this.

Disability Services – Donna Johnson

Next Professor Branton asked Ms. Johnson, Director of Disability Services, to provide the committee with a Disability Services (DS) update. Ms. Johnson first reported that the Board of Regents approved the revised policy on disability services. Next, she stated that the Disabilities Awareness Month Planning Committee is working the following events to promote disability as part of diversity.

- The Disability Awareness Month Planning Committee is working on the following events that promote disability as part of diversity.
- The Faces of Disability Kickoff and Award Ceremony will be held from 2-5 p.m. on Monday, October 11 in the Mississippi Room of Coffman Memorial Union from 2-5 p.m.
- The Access Achievement Award 2010 will be announced at the October 11 event and is designed to award those individuals and departments on campus that have taken extra steps to ensure accessibility for students/staff and have actively promoted awareness of access-related issues. Nomination forms are available on the DS Web site.
- Artist, Leslye Orr, and pianist, Rebecca Kragnes, will also perform at the event.
- The Disability Awareness Month Art Show (also coordinated by the planning committee) will be held on October 21 from 10 a.m. - 10 p.m. in the Larson Gallery on the St. Paul Campus. The theme of the Art Show is "Advancing Access for Everyone". Artists are being asked to capture how you view advancing access for everyone in a painting, drawing, photograph or sculpture. Participants must be a University of Minnesota student, staff or faculty. Prizes will be awarded.

She then reported that the following student scholarships were awarded: 12 Buuck, 3 Warner, 2 United Health Group, and 2 Marshall Access Education Fund. The winners were honored at the annual scholarship luncheon on September 16. She reported further that DS has awarded \$165,000 in student scholarships since 2004. This year, there was a record number of applicants - 30.

Ms. Johnson next reported that the new computer accommodations web site ACCESSIBILITY.UMN.EDU was launched. The content includes:

- Documents –information on accessibility barriers, best practices, and how to create accessible Microsoft Word, PDF, and Microsoft Excel documents.
- Presentation –information on accessibility barriers, best practices, and how to create accessible PowerPoint, Adobe Presenter, and Apple Keynote presentations.
- Web content –information on making Web pages and applications accessible. Includes a self-assessment tool.

Ms. Johnson went on to state that a professor in the College of Science and Engineering (CSE) was awarded a National Science Foundation grant to develop online modules for three courses, and he contacted Disability Services to ensure the modules were captioned. The Interpreting/ Captioning Unit (ICU) is partnering with CSE to caption learning modules for these courses, one in each of the next three semesters. Ms. Johnson reported further that six new deaf students have enrolled in the U of M, and ICU hired two new interpreters.

Ms. Johnson next reported that DS served a record 2000 students with disabilities last year. Student Services hired a manager, and three new Disability Specialists to cover the increasing number of students. DS also welcomed back returning veteran, Tim Kamenar, who was on military leave.

Finally, Ms. Johnson stated that U Return served more than 900 employees last year, and recently hired a 50% FTE contract employee and will be hiring a 50% FTE P/A employee to cover increasing numbers of faculty and staff with disabilities and medical conditions.

Professor Branton thanked Ms. Johnson for her report. He then asked her to consider how Disability Services evaluates its own success, and report that to the committee at the next meeting.

Disabled Student Cultural Center (DSCC) Update - Kristin Langer

Kristin Langer provided the committee with a DSCC update. She indicated the DSCC is having a difficult time due to personnel changes. She believes the turnover in staff is caused in part by an insufficient number of students with disabilities in leadership roles. She asked the committee to refer students with disabilities who display leadership qualities to the DSCC. She also indicated DSCC is exploring merging with the Active Minds organization. Julia Robinson suggested talking with individuals in student services for possible DSCC members. Other suggestions for reinvigorating the DSCC

included making the obligation to the organization manageable, not a 40-hour per week commitment. Ms. Johnson informed the committee that the University of Minnesota was the first DSCC in the nation. Committee members expressed concern that the DSCC remain viable.

Professor Branton thanked Ms. Langer for her presentation.

Hearing no further business, Professor Branton adjourned the meeting.

Dawn Zugay
University Senate Office