

EQUITY, ACCESS & DIVERSITY
MINUTES OF MEETING
SEPTEMBER 20, 2010

[In these minutes: Professor Dale Branton on collaboration with the Diversity Committee; MLK Day Report discussion; Resolution on Supporting the Efforts of Work Group Promoting Academic Civility; Resolution on Equity During Budget Cuts; Resolution on Health Care Savings Plans and Discrimination on the Basis of Sexual Orientation; political contributions by Securian Financial Group, Board of Regents policy on benefits for recipients of fellowships]

[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: Irene Duranczyk (Chair), Kimberly Boyd, Patrick Troup, Richard Graff, Gregory Sawyer, Lauren Beach, Michelle Page

REGRETS: MJ Gilbert, Michael Goh, Janet Thomas, Susan Cable-Morrison,

ABSENT: Aisha El-Huni, Peg Lonquist, Anne Phibbs

GUESTS: Professor Branton, Chair of the Disabilities Issues Committee

Professor Irene Duranczyk called the meeting to order and welcomed those present. She asked the committee members to introduce themselves and describe the issues they are interested in working on this year.

A quorum was not present. So, the committee was unable to approve the April minutes.

Professor Duranczyk handed out the document entitled “Options for Committee Action,” and provided the committee with an overview of the tools and process for bringing issues to the University Senate. She highlighted the difference between committee “statements” and “resolutions.”

Next, Professor Duranczyk introduced Professor Dale Branton, Chair of the Disabilities Issues Committees. Professor Branton discussed several areas for collaboration between the Equity Access & Diversity (EAD) and Disabilities Issues committees, and outlined the projects the Disabilities Committee is taking on this year. He stated there are many issues in disabilities that are diversity issues and many overlaps in the charges of the EAD and Disabilities’ committees. But, he is not suggesting collaboration on all issues. Rather, he believes the committees should act together where there is genuine overlap and in this way they can act more forcefully. Professor Branton explained both committees have duties to oversee compliance with the laws regarding disabilities and diversity. He, however, wants to see promotion of a welcoming atmosphere at the University not just legal compliance. He noted that there are many people

with hidden disabilities who experience discrimination, and those with more overt disabilities who do not want to display their weaknesses due to the fear of the discrimination they may experience.

Professor Branton identified two broad issues the Disabilities Committee is taking on this year. (1) A survey to identify the University's policies and training programs related to individuals with disabilities in order to identify what information is available, where the information is housed, and if it is being effectively communicated, and (2) Considering methods for educating the University administrators, staff, and students about the needs of diverse populations and the disabled.

Professor Branton explained further that the Disabilities Committee wants to create a universal education process for the University about the needs of diverse populations. He wants to communicate the real value of welcoming diversity not just tolerating it or meeting legal requirements. He believes this is an area where the EAD and Disabilities Committees can work together. Professor Richard Graff affirmed Professor Branton's sentiments stating that disabilities should not just be addressed as an issue of access but should be seen on a deeper level as diversity. Professor Duranczyk drew an analogy between Professor Branton's comments and a presentation on academic civility EAD heard last year. She stated the academic civility presentation emphasized the legal rights and protections of students, but failed to consider changing the attitudes of staff and employees. Professor Branton replied that while it is important to communicate the laws, you do not want them to end up as boilerplate information that is largely ignored.

It was mentioned that bathroom accessibility was a previous area of committee collaboration. The committee then discussed the current situation regarding gender-neutral bathroom facilities and accessibility for people with disabilities. Lauren Beach mentioned that the GLBT website has a map of gender neutral and handicapped accessible bathroom facilities throughout the University. She also indicated that Facilities Management has made the commitment that all new construction will have handicapped accessible bathroom facilities and, if possible, have unisex bathrooms. Professor Duranczyk asked if there was a need for continued oversight, but the committee consensus was that several other organizations have this on their agenda and it was not necessary for EAD to take this on at the present time. In particular Anne Phibbs of the GLBT office was aware of the issue.

Professor Branton then returned to his discussion of how the University is educating its employees and students about diversity and how this can be updated beyond letting people know about the laws and their responsibilities. He wants to create something gripping enough to generate understanding of diverse individuals. He suggested this could be done through videos. He wants to get the message out that welcoming diversity is rewarding. Professor Duranczyk mentioned she was involved in a project at the General College entitled "Pass-It Faculty and Students on Inclusion" <http://www.cehd.umn.edu/passit/>. This project included videos of graduates and undergraduates telling their stories about inclusion at the University of Minnesota. It also has information on universally designed classrooms and their impact on faculty and students. Professor Duranczyk indicated she would send a copy of both of the videos to Professor Branton.

The committee next discussed opportunities for incorporating information on diversity into faculty and staff orientations. Kimberly Boyd mentioned that currently there are only limited opportunities for the Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) to participate in the faculty orientation. She also mentioned that she is involved with a Marcus Foundation grant designed to enhance the quality of the learning/training environment for medical trainees with invisible disabilities, and that Donna Johnson would have more information on this. Professor Duranczyk suggested that the Disabilities and EAD committees should share their meeting minutes with one another. She then thanked Professor Branton for his presentation.

MLK Day Report - Lauren Beach

Professor Duranczyk asked Ms. Beach to update the committee on the Martin Luther King Day Report that the committee began work on last year. Ms. Beach indicated that it might be necessary to update the report with information on the MLK events that took place in 2010. She also emphasized that the level of commitment to MLK Day events and their promotion is an indicator of whether the campus is welcoming of diversity. She stated the scale, number and advertisement of MLK events at the University of Minnesota falls below those of other Big Ten Universities. She stated the University of Minnesota needs a more visible diversity outreach effort. She further stated the primary recommendations of the report are: (1) the creation of a centralized MLK website with an MLK Event Calendar where members of the University community could post their MLK related events, and (2) partnering with local and state governments, community nonprofits and organizations, and other Minnesota Colleges and Universities to hold MLK-day events that encourage engagement in service and outreach. She also indicated that the report does not cast the University of Minnesota in a very positive light, and that the committee should be sensitive about releasing the report. It was noted that the report recommendations could stand alone, without publication of the entire report. The committee then discussed options for moving forward with the report. It was decided that the committee would share the MLK report and recommendations with the OED, discuss it with an OED representative at the next EAD meeting, and then forward the report to the Senate with a resolution and recommendations. Professor Duranczyk asked Ms. Beach and Professor Graff to create a draft resolution for the committee. They agreed to do so. It was also agreed that a copy of the resolution would be given to Kris Lockhart, Associate Vice President of OED.

Resolution on Supporting the Efforts of Work Group Promoting Academic Civility

Next, Professor Duranczyk reminded the committee of the academic civility report they heard last year by Jan Morse, Director of the Student Conflict Resolution Center, and provided the committee with a draft resolution supporting the efforts of the work group promoting academic civility. Professor Duranczyk asked for committee discussion on whether or not to move forward with the resolution. Ms. Beach asked for clarification of the definition of academic incivility, and asked what results in the survey prompted the resolution. Professor Duranczyk indicated she would revise the resolution and send it to Jan Morse for her input.

Resolution on Equity During Budget Cuts

Professor Duranczyk introduced the resolution Equity During Budget Cuts. The members of the committee supported the resolution, however, the committee lacked a quorum and was unable to take further action. It was agreed that the resolution would be included with next month's agenda and be voted on at the October 18 meeting. Professor Duranczyk indicated the committee could also seek support for the resolution from the Disability Issues and Social Concerns committees.

Resolution on Health Care Savings Plans and Discrimination on the Basis of Sexual Orientation

Professor Duranczyk reviewed the history of the Senate Committee on Faculty Affairs Health Care Savings Plans resolution. She indicated that the resolution is not currently on the University Senate docket due to the passage of new federal health care legislation and consideration of the impact of that legislation on the University's health care plan. However, she stated she wanted the committee to be aware of the resolution and be prepared to move forward quickly when the resolution returns to the Senate Docket.

Securian Financial Group Political Contributions

Professor Duranczyk informed the committee that the Social Concerns Committee is discussing the Securian Financial Group's contributions to MN Forward. She stated MN Forward used the contributions to support gubernatorial candidate Tom Emmer, and Tom Emmer's positions on the rights of the GLBT community are contrary to those of the University of Minnesota. She asked the EAD Committee if they would like to take some action now or wait until after the election. The committee indicated they would like to review the Social Concerns Committee's action and then determine whether to support that. Professor Duranczyk stated she would contact the chair of the Social Concerns Committee.

Board of Regents Policy on Benefits for Recipients of Fellowships

Ms Beach brought forward a new agenda item. She indicated that under a Board of Regents policy, post doctorates and graduate student employees who receive federal fellowships lose their status as employees and become independent contractors. Consequently, they lose their health care benefits and maternity leave. She further indicated that the students were not informed that their acceptance of the fellowships would result in a loss of benefits. She would like the committee to consider a resolution supporting a change in the Board of Regents policy. Professor Duranczyk asked for more information to be gathered on this issue prior to the next meeting.

University of Minnesota Women's Faculty Cabinet's Study

Finally, Professor Duranczyk indicated she would like to invite a member of the University of Minnesota Women's Faculty Cabinet to speak on their salary equity study and the establishment of diversity and equity indicators for the University. She also wants to determine if there are ways that EAD can support the Women's Faculty Cabinet.

Hearing no further business, Professor Duranczyk adjourned the meeting.

Dawn Zugay
University Senate Office