

[In these minutes: Resolution on increased transparency in the collegiate fees charged to all students, Comments and concerns from the student population, Twin Cities smoking ban, Absence policy for senators]

STUDENT SENATE CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE (SSCC) MINUTES

OCTOBER 20, 2011

[These minutes reflect discussion and debate at 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.]

PRESENT: Adam Matula (chair), Angela Bartholomew, Harrison Defries, Kanza Khan, Sharin Park, Joshua Preston, Adair Rounthwaite.

ABSENT: Becky Mohn, Jaycob Robinson.

1. CHAIR'S REPORT

Adam Matula reported that open seats on the Student Senate, Senate committees, SSCC Vice Chair, and ex officio member to the MSLC have all been filled. He attended the recent meeting of the Student Affairs Committee and heard their discussion of a Twin Cities Campus smoking ban, which is later on today's agenda. There is a Student Advisory Council meeting of the Minnesota Higher Education Office scheduled for October 26. He serves as the representative from the University system.

2. STUDENT ASSOCIATION/ASSEMBLY UPDATES

Angela Bartholomew stated that CSA is working to implement a program to break the diversity barriers on campus through more club and community interactions.

Harrison Defries noted that UMDSA is participating in Homecoming events and is working on changing the campus climate to be more inclusive of diversity.

Joshua Preston reported that MCSA is working to educate campus about green programs such as the use of wind power, recycling, and turning off lights. He also serves as the grassroots manager for MSLC, which is working to have its charter approved by each campus.

Kanza Khan said that RSA is looking to increase its size and has been helping with furniture for the student commons in the new campus building.

Sharin Park stated that MSA approved the MSLC charter, participated in Homecoming, and is working on revisions to its constitution.

Adair Rounthwaite reported that GAPSA held its second assembly meeting of the year. The fees slate was approved and the budget was discussed in terms of GAPSA funds being used to pay for student services instead of services that should be covered by tuition.

3. ELECTION OF TWO SSCC MEMBERS TO THE STUDENT SENATE NOMINATING SUBCOMMITTEE

This election was postponed as not enough Twin Cities SSCC members were present.

4. DISCUSSION OF RESOLUTION ON INCREASED TRANSPARENCY IN THE COLLEGIATE FEES CHARGED TO ALL STUDENTS

Adam Matula said that he was forwarded this resolution by the Council of Graduate Students (COGS) for inclusion on the December Student Senate agenda. He asked if this resolution would pertain to the coordinate campuses. A few members stated that they would need to look at their tuition bill to see if they pay this type of fee, but most students are not well-informed about how fees are spent. Morris is the exception since MCSA allocates the technology fee paid by all students.

Members made the following comments:

- Is an audit already being done?
- GAPSA has not taken action on this resolution
- Resolution was prompted by a large increase this year
- Most students are under-informed about the fees that they pay
- Resolution would need to be modified to apply to all students

Adam Matula said that he would be in touch with COGS prior to the December 1 docket deadline to see if this resolution was ready.

5. DISCUSSION OF RECEIVING COMMENTS AND CONCERNS FROM THE STUDENT POPULATION

Adam Matula stated that he feels out of touch with the general student body and their concerns and issues. The only contact the Student Senate has is with the few students who already participate in governance. He believes that the credibility of the organization would increase with more contact.

Members made the following comments:

- This is a problem for most student organizations
- Most students are misinformed, do not know who their representatives are, or what can be done
- Student Senate should be defined in terms of its capability and what makes it distinct from the other student organizations
- Student Senate should come to MSA Forum and talk about ways to partner on issues
- Minnesota Daily article could be co-sponsored by MSA, GAPSA, and Student Senate
- Allowing anonymous concerns on a website is a way to solicit general feedback
- Facebook page could be developed
- Each president should have a blog
- Networking tools would be important
- The hardest issue is how to get students to the information
- Unity is needed among the senators first
- Student Senate should be aggressive and proactive
- There is lots of competition for student attendance
- Hosted events to bring general students into discussion
- What is the mission of the body?
- Student Senate retreat would be a great opportunity to get senators together, but even if planned, not everyone will participate
- Attendance is an issue and meeting in person might not be the answer
- Senators need a reason to attend meetings
- Senators need to learn what the Senate does to be effective leaders

6. DISCUSSION OF DECEMBER STUDENT SENATE AGENDA

Adam Matula said that he just had a few ideas for the December 1 agenda – Twin Cities Campus smoking ban and the senator absence policy. He would like to get more suggestions for discussions, speakers, or action items. He asked each member of SSCC to go back to their student groups and bring one or two items to the November SSCC meeting.

Members made the following suggestions for topics:

- Campus safety
- Senator attendance
- Chair's vision for the organization
- Resolution opposing Minnesota marriage amendment, if framed from a student perspective

7. DISCUSSION OF TWIN CITIES SMOKING BAN

Adam Matula stated that the Student Affairs Committee (SCSA) discussed this topic at their last meeting, which he attended. While President Bruininks did not support this idea when proposed two years ago, several committees are looking at the idea again. If approved by SCSA, it would be sent to the Student Senate for discussion and action. He asked members for their preliminary thoughts on the proposal and for feedback from the two campuses which already have a ban in place.

Harrison Defries said that the ban is called Breathe Free UMD. Enforcement was mostly done through people reminding other people of the policy. However there is now a \$25 fee and required attendance at a class. Students are mixed on their responses with some asking for designated smoking areas. The ban is hard to enforce.

Joshua Preston stated that Morris flirted with the idea but there were protests by the students. While the health benefits are recognized, there is already a problem enforcing smoking 20 feet from a door.

Kanza Khan said that Rochester is not a complete campus as there are two buildings, one of which is leased so a ban would not work. However it is currently not an issue.

Members then made the following comments:

- Smoking ban would be demoralizing
- Even if personally do not want behavior on campus, do not support a ban
- There is a large international student population and smoking can be a part of their culture
- Enforcement will be impossible
- In light of campus safety concerns, police should not be used to enforce smoking ban
- What happens to the students who live on campus

8. DISCUSSION OF ABSENCE POLICY AMENDMENT FOR STUDENT SENATORS

Adam Matula stated that the Student Senate approved a resolution to allow absences for student senators on May 6, 2010. It was sent to the administration and not approved by President Bruininks as he stated that he could not support students missing classes. As this appears to still be a legitimate issue for why students miss meetings, and there is a new administration, should this item be reintroduced? If so, his concern is that the original language was too broad. Might it be approved if it asked for excused absences only for Student Senate and University Senate meetings?

Members then made the following comments:

- Students need to be aware of when meetings are held

- Current meeting time is hard; could the time be moved?
- No meeting time will work for all students
- Teaching assistants and instructors might be frustrated that Senate is depicted as an excused absence
- Absence policy should be clear and restricted to two excuses per voting member
- Morris has a Chancellor's excuse to miss class
- Most students can only receive an excused absence if an instructor is lenient
- If the organization is legitimate, why are its absences not sanctioned?
- Standardization is necessary as relying on instructor leniency is not functional
- It is difficult to coordinate class schedules with the Senate meeting schedule
- Senators should not be forced to choose

Adam Matula proposed having an informal discussion with President Kaler when he meets with SSCC in January. If there is no support, then the Student Senate does not have to spend time on the issue.

9. OTHER BUSINESS

With no further business, Adam Matula thanked all members for attending and adjourned the meeting.

Becky Hippert
University Senate