

DISABILITIES ISSUES COMMITTEE  
MINUTES OF MEETING

October 19, 2011

Morrill Hall Room 238A

[In these minutes: disability services update; disabled student cultural center update; office of equity and diversity vision]

[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.]

PRESENT: Dale Branton, Donna Johnson, Brian McAdams, Julia Robinson, Kimberly Simon, Frank Symons, Sherry Gray, Michael Silverman, Victoria Nelson, Carla Tabourne, Joanna O'Connell, Amber Mayer

REGRETS: Susan Rose, Mary Kennedy

ABSENT: Becca Gercken, Peggy Mann Rinehart

GUESTS: Luka Krmpotich, Chad McGuire

Professor Dale Branton called the meeting to order and asked for introductions.

**Disability Services Update**

Donna Johnson, director, Disability Services (DS) updated the committee on DS's work with the University of Minnesota Medical School on the Marcus Foundation project. She explained it is a three-year project started in 2009 to examine how the University of Minnesota medical School, in partnership with DS can increase awareness and create a welcoming and inclusive learning environment for medical students and residents who have invisible disabilities such as psychiatric disabilities, attention deficit disorder, and learning disabilities.

Focus Groups were conducted from January through March 2010 with graduate medical education program directors, medical students, and medical residents and fellows. Eight focus groups were conducted, and the results were used to inform survey development. The topics identified by the focus group as "most important" were:

- Attitudinal: stigma around mental health issues, and the culture of perfectionism in the medical school
- Knowledge, Skills: providing information on disability conditions and resources. In particular, identifying resources for medical trainees with disabilities
- Process, Structural: boundaries for confidentiality.

Additionally, she stated the focus groups helped individuals understand DS's work and opened the door for dialogue about disabilities.

Ms. Johnson stated that after conducting the focus groups, three online surveys of faculty, staff, and administrators, residents and fellows, and medical students were conducted from May through July 2011. According to the survey, 40% of medical students suspect that they have an invisible disability, but only 2% of medical students have sought treatment. All the surveyed groups identified the following issues as perceived barriers for trainees with disabilities:

- Belief that medical trainees/physicians will think less of them
- Lack of awareness of resources
- Belief that future licensing will be jeopardized

The following were identified as the most severe barriers for trainees with invisible disabilities:

- Societal expectations of perfection in physicians
- Lack of awareness of resources for assistance
- Lack of training on reasonable accommodations

The next steps for the project include:

- January 2012 presentation from Dr. Suzanne Vogel-Scibilia
- A case study and panel discussion
- Hippocrates Café session on mental health
- Possible journal article regarding the quantitative and qualitative results from the study

Professor Joanna O'Connell asked whether the term invisible disabilities was defined in the survey and why it did not include physical disabilities. Ms. Johnson responded that the survey defined invisible disabilities, and physical disabilities were not included because the project's funder was most interested in invisible mental health disabilities. The committee briefly discussed how invisible disability is defined. Ms. Johnson stated the definition is generally quite broad and would include any condition that cannot be seen such as chronic health conditions.

Professor O'Connell asked how the committee could support the research on the issue of invisible disabilities. Ms. Johnson stated there is a strong advisory committee on the project, but she would inform them of the committee's interest.

Professor Branton inquired what percentage of the individual's surveyed publically share their disability. That question was not asked, Ms. Johnson responded. Professor Branton asked for the legal definition of disability. Ms. Johnson stated that it is any condition that substantially limits a life activity. The committee discussed different definitions of disability under Social Security requirements and the American's with Disabilities Act. Professor Branton remarked that as more mental health issues are recognized, there would eventually be a debate over what constitutes a hidden disability.

## **DSCC**

Luka Krmpotich, co-director of finance and programming, Disabled Student Cultural Center (DSCC) provided the committee with an update on DSCC's work.

- Monthly Lunch and Learn Event –

- October - Rachel Garaghty spoke about her experience in Tanzania meeting with disabled student's rights groups at the University of Dar-es- Salaam.
- November – DSCC is trying to schedule Gene Shelburg. Mr. Shelburg was originally scheduled to speak at the University last spring, but cancelled at the last minute due to health problems.
- DSCC is working on methods for recruiting new members including using Facebook
- Working on building a new website that is fully accessible

Professor O'Connell noted the existing DSCC website is out of date and asked about the obstacles for updating the site. Mr. Krmpotich stated there is a skills deficit. Committee members made several suggestions for assistance with the website including: the Office of Information Technology, assistance from Disability Services because an accessibility issue is involved, and assistance from graduate student, Rachel Garaghty.

### **OED Vision**

Kris Lockhart, associate vice president, OED gave a presentation on OED's vision. She began by noting each of the offices within OED. She also stated that OED is trying to improve its partnerships with governance committees and other University task forces.

Associate Vice President Lockhart stated that OED began its present method of work about five years ago when the chief diversity officer was elevated to the level of Vice President and Vice Provost. When OED began its visioning and strategic planning process a determination was made not to do strategic planning with metrics. Groundwork was needed before metrics could be implemented. An equity and diversity framework was created. The first phase of the framework focused on broader communication and education system-wide. This included meetings with every administrative vice president, work sessions with the President's cabinet, and speaking with each dean and chancellor. OED then realigned its resources in response to what was learned in this process, performed an educational needs assessment, and also realigned its training programs. Phase one also included a review of each of its offices, development of a formal process for annual reallocation of its capacity, and a meeting with the Board of Regents regarding OED's implementation of the University's vision framework.

Phase two began with a meeting with President Bruininks and included a second set of meetings with the deans and chancellors. Strategic planning was done across all of the OED offices. Resources were realigned and some positions were reshaped.

OED is presently beginning phase three, working in a strategic way at a local level. It has dedicated deep resources to four strategic arenas within OED: communication, education, evaluation, and advocacy. Associate Vice President Lockhart stated that 15 months ago OED hired a new communications director and two months ago an evaluation director and an education director were hired. The education director will

look at the efforts across all of OED's offices to insure core messages are brought forward. This position will not replace subject matter expert training done by those in DS. OED is also beginning a pilot project for working with the colleges. The project is intended to develop strategic diversity goals linked to the mission and values of the colleges, and supported by metrics. Next spring, OED will develop resources to provide to the colleges. Amber Mayer asked which colleges are part of the pilot program. Associate Vice President Lockhart responded that OED is starting with the College of Education and Human Development and the School of Public Health will likely also be included. Ms. Mayer stated it would be important to include science and technology colleges because of disparities that exist in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics fields. Associate Vice President Lockhart stated OED has other partnerships with the STEM fields, but acknowledged that the STEM fields have greater challenges seeing how diversity issues relate to their fields.

Professor Julia Robinson stated it has been difficult to institute change within her college under OED's existing structure. Associate Vice President Lockhart asked what paths were previously available, but no longer exist in the new OED framework. Professor Robinson noted there is not an ombudsperson for faculty and Pat Mullen is no longer working at the University. Professor O'Connell agreed that the restructuring resulted in a lack of knowledge about where faculty can bring diversity issues.

Associate Vice President Lockhart listed several resources including herself, Kimberly Hewitt, director, Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, and Professor Louis Mendoza, associate vice provost, OED. She also indicated she is considering a campus wide e-mail providing information about resources for diversity issues, and asked the committee for feedback on this idea. The committee expressed support for this idea. Professor Robinson thought it would be a good to use a frequently asked questions format to re-inform people about available resources for diversity questions. Kimberly Simon suggested the e-mail should bridge the gap between former contacts and new contacts for diversity issues.

Associate Vice President Lockhart also informed the committee about challenges OED was facing in providing communication. It has a new website in place, tool kits, and Facebook pages, but has been unable to launch them because OED is committed to having an accessible content management system and the University's content management system is not accessible. Additionally, the Office of Information Technology would not support a different content management system in addition to its current system. OED is looking into using Drupal. Associate Vice President Lockhart suggested the committee consider the issue of website accessibility.

She also noted that the Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC) is forming a group to consider accessibility of university websites in light of a federal civil rights complaint filed against Pennsylvania State University because a variety of its computer-and technology-based services and web sites are inaccessible to blind students and faculty. Associate Vice President Lockhart is a member of the CIC group and will update the Disability Issues committee on the CIC group's work.

Associate Vice President Lockhart reported that the EAD Breakfast is full, and that corporate sponsors fund all of the scholarships that are given at this event. She stated this is an indication that corporations recognize the need for diversity.

Professor Branton indicated he would like Associate Vice President Lockhart's feedback on the committee's goals for training and needs and services assessment, and would e-mail her about this following the meeting.

Professor Branton called for new business. Professor O'Connell noted that representatives from the Committee on Committee's would be meeting with the Disabilities Issues Committee next month as part of a regular committee review process.

Hearing no further business, Professor Branton adjourned the meeting.

Dawn Zugay  
University Senate