

DISABILITIES ISSUES COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING

November 16, 2011

Morrill Hall Room 238A

[In these minutes: committee review; disability services update; disabled student cultural center update; equity and diversity training]

[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, Kimberly Simon, Sherry Gray, Susan Rose, Joanna O'Connell, Carla Tabourne, Julia Robinson, Michael Silverman,

REGRETS: Mary Kennedy, Brian McAdams, Clare McCormick, Amber Mayer, Frank Symons

ABSENT: Becca Gercken, Peggy Mann Rinehart

GUESTS: Luka Krmpotich and Chad McGuire, Disabled Student Cultural Center (DSCC); Anne Phibbs, director of education, Office for Equity and Diversity

OTHERS: Victoria Nelson

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

Committee Review

Elaine Challacombe a member of the Senate Committee on Committees (ConC) explained that part of the ConC's charge is to conduct a review of Senate committees to ensure that their charges are current and of the right scope to reflect committee concerns, that the committees are functioning effectively, and that the committee membership and composition allows the committee to carry out its charge. She stated the review is an opportunity for the Senate Disabilities Issues Committee to communicate with the ConC, and provide feedback for how to improve the effectiveness of the Committee. She indicated those committee members who wanted to share information privately could e-mail her or the ConC chair, Professor Joanna O'Connell. She further explained that the ConC members would draft a report, and share it with the Disabilities Issues Committee. If the report recommends any changes in committee structure, charge, or membership, the recommendation would be sent to the Senate Consultative Committee and then to the University Senate.

Ms. Challacombe asked the Committee if its charge reflects the work it is doing. Professor Branton responded that the Committee has previously discussed the charge and been concerned about whether it has the person-power, means, and expertise to carry out

those aspects of its duties and responsibilities that relate to legal compliance. Section “b” reads: “To promote compliance with laws relating to students, staff, and guests of the University with disabilities.” Section “c” reads: “To review policies and practices in light of legal compliance aspects, deployment of resources, and effectiveness in meeting the needs of the University community, and to recommend changes.”

Ms. Challacombe asked if in the last five years, the Committee had taken any particular action with regard to section “b” of the charge: Professor Branton responded that he was not aware of any actions taken by the Committee in past years. He further indicated this aspect of the charge raises concerns about how Senate committees are able to communicate with the broader University and he asked Dawn Zugay, Senate staff, what methods committees use to disseminate information. Ms. Zugay responded committees could communicate with their colleagues and ex officio members of the committee, draft statements or resolutions expressing the sentiment of the committee, draft letters to administrators, sponsor forums, and conduct surveys. In response to a further question by Professor Branton, she indicated there is no newsletter or advertisement format to which committees routinely have access.

Ms. Challacombe next asked whether the composition of the Committee was adequate. Most Committee members indicated they were satisfied with the representation on the Committee. Professor Branton suggested it might be helpful to have a member of the military veterans community on the Committee.

Sherry Gray stated she felt the length and number of the meetings was not adequate to carry out the requirements of the Committee’s broad charge. She also noted the difficulty of having all Committee members present at all of the meetings. Professor Branton agreed that it was difficult to carry out the charge in the time provided, but noted that this year a meeting had been added to the Committee’s schedule. He also reiterated his concern about the Committee’s ability to review policies and practices in light of legal compliance.

Professor O’Connell stated there must be a balance between what committee members can do and relying on the advice and expertise of ex officios and other members of the University community. Ms. Challacombe asked if this meant section “c” of the charge should be rewritten. Professor O’Connell stated she did not believe so, and explained that there is a difference between governance and administration. For instance, it is not the Committee’s responsibility to administer the law, but it might be the Committee’s job to point out areas where the law is not being properly administered and to craft a resolution about this. She stated she believes the issue being expressed by Committee members cannot be resolved by changing the charge, but is the tension created by the fact that the Committee can recommend but cannot enforce. She illustrated her point with the example of faculty members sending closed pdf documents that are not accessible, and how the Committee could respond to this.

Lukas Krmpotich stated he believe the most effective method of bringing issues to the attention of the appropriate bodies, communicating changes, and educating others on campus is one-on-one communication.

Donna Johnson stated from the perspective of her office the issues is how best to communicate policies with the University community. Do you use a “good will” type campaign like “Stamp Out Stigma” or do you use the mandatory training route. She further noted that she had participated in an external review committee for Ohio State University. The review was done for many administrative offices, and was very effective. She stated she had the materials from this process and offered to speak with Committee members about it if they are interested in exploring this type of review.

Ms. Challacombe asked committee members to e-mail her any additional comments they might have, and Professor Branton thanked her.

Disability Services Update

Ms. Johnson, director, Disability Services, gave a brief update.

- Dr. Suzanne Vogel-Scibilia will be speaking on January 24, 2012 about her disability and the methods of accommodation she utilizes
- The Advancing Access Awards Ceremony was very successful.
 - Victoria Nelson noted the importance to her of receiving an Advancing Access Award
- The Provost’s Committee on Mental Health is considering hosting an awards ceremony of its own

DSCC

Luka Krmpotich, co-director of finance and programming, DSCC provided the committee with an update on DSCC’s work. He stated Gene Shelburg, founder of the DSCC, spoke at the November 4 Lunch and Learn event. This was well attended, and included a workshop to which representatives from all of the Cultural Centers were invited.

Professor Branton asked Mr. Krmpotich to assess DSCC’s organizational health. Mr. Krmpotich stated it has six active board members who attend meetings and worked hard to plan the Gene Shelburg event. The DSCC is still working on recruitment methods. Mr. Krmpotich and Chad McGuire are the only board members with disabilities. The DSCC is using a Face Book page for networking and Mr. Krmpotich has posted information about University construction projects and route changes on this site.

Mr. McGuire stated the DSCC is healthy but very small. Only about ten percent of the University population has a disability, and only a tiny fraction of that group participates with the DSCC. The group’s primary problem is communicating its existence to the broader University community. Ms. Gray asked why students are not participating. Mr. McGuire stated it might be due to size of the disabled community. Professor Branton asked what services the DSCC provides for individuals on a daily basis. Mr. Krmpotich responded that it provides some assistive technology such as a document reader and

video relay at its Coffman Student Union location. Professor Branton asked if there is any reason for those with hidden disabilities to identify with the DSCC. Mr. McGuire responded that there was not a lot of technology at the DSCC that would be of assistance to those with hidden disabilities.

Professor O'Connell noted that the DSCC website is out of date and asked how the Committee could assist the DSCC in developing its site. Mr. Krmpotich responded that the DSCC has received offers to build the site, but the problem is maintaining it. Additionally, he stated the DSCC's is being audited and has its fees presentation in January, so these issues are its current focus. He stated the DSCC would hold off on its website development until next semester. Professor O'Connell stated she hopes the Committee can connect the DSCC with the necessary resources for developing its website. Mr. McGuire noted the difficulties in navigating the Office of Information Technology structure and requirements for assistance. Ms. Gray noted Rachel Garaghty might be able to assist the DSCC with web development, and Professor O'Connell offered to further discuss the issue with the DSCC following the Committee meeting. She also suggested that the Committee discuss the issue of website accessibility and the policy decisions around this with the Senate Committee on Information Technology (SCIT). Professor Branton agreed that the policy and structural issues related to making websites accessible should be discussed with SCIT.

Mr. Krmpotich noted other future DSCC events:

- December 2, 2011 Lunch and Learn about autism with Mike Pedan
- Collaborating on a suicide prevention event
- Collaborating with Mixed Blood Theater
- Considering a disabilities awareness event in February where disabilities are simulated.

Professor Julia Robinson suggested the awareness event could be conducted in the Architecture courtyard. Ms. Gray stated Humphrey students might be interested in partnering on this event.

Equity and Diversity Training Discussion

Anne Phibbs, director of education, Office for Equity and Diversity (OED), stated she is the former Gay, Lesbian, Bi-sexual, and Transgender Ally (GLBTA) programs director, and has been in her new position as Director of Education for about three months. She noted the education director position was recently created by OED to oversee all training. She is currently identifying the equity and diversity training that is occurring, and working to develop training across all units. She stated, in this work, it is important to consider all constituencies and understand how multiple identities effect people. She also noted the importance of building allies by educating all members of the University community.

Currently, she is beginning a new initiative to create an equity and diversity certification. This will have two aspects 1) a series of training sessions and 2) dialogue circles. The certificate will be awarded after completion of a set of six two-hour trainings, a second

set of four two-hour training sessions, and participation in the dialogue circles. The topics for the set of six training sessions will be: being an ally, leadership in the context of equity and diversity, working effectively in groups and diversity committees, communicating support of diversity, an evaluation workshop, and having difficult conversations. The trainings are beginning this fall, and are intended to be taken consecutively, but this is not required. The four two-hour trainings will cover disabilities, women, race, and GLBT issues. These trainings will begin fall 2012.

The dialogue circles will consist of twelve people who commit to meeting once a month for 90 minutes throughout the year. These circles will allow participants to engage in deeper exploration of equity and diversity work.

Ms. Phibbs also indicated that she has a strong relationship with disabilities issues trainer Susan Aase, and to increase her knowledge of disabilities issues, Ms. Phibbs is meeting with Ms. Aase. Additionally, Ms. Phibbs is working with Ms. Aase on the disabilities workshop that will be part of the certificate.

In discussing her philosophy toward training, Ms. Phibbs stated she wants the training to include discussions about challenging attitudinal barriers, to create opportunities for discussions that allow for change and growth, and to allow people to be heard in a safe environment.

She then asked committee members what they see as the needs and challenges in educational training. Professor Branton responded he would like to see movement toward some form of universal training on disabilities issues. A basic level of training that is required of all faculty that promotes a welcoming atmosphere for those with disabilities, and is compact and helpful to faculty.

Professor Robinson noted that Ms. Johnson is considering posting information for faculty about handling situations involving disabilities on the Disability Services website, and has requested the Committee's help with this. Kimberly Simon agreed that this project would be a good focus for the Committee's Subcommittee for Faculty Training. She thought the website might help address some faculty's reluctance to spend two hours in training and would assist them in their work.

Ms. Phibbs asked Professor Branton if his reference to universal training meant mandatory training. She also asked faculty members how possible this might be. Professor Branton confirmed that he believes mandatory training is necessary to promote a culture change across the University. Professor O'Connell opined that if faculty leaders support mandatory training it could happen. But the training must be presented as a requirement, be easily complied with and well explained. It must also benefit faculty and students.

Ms. Phibbs suggested that a website could be a first stop for information and have links to training. Professor O'Connell commented that there is already an accessibility website, but it is not well laid out.

Professor Branton stated that faculty need information to help them know the limits of accommodation. The HIPPA and research safety training could serve as models for mandatory disabilities training.

Ms. Phibbs recommended involving faculty in designing the website and indicated that she and Ms. Aase and could be resources for creating the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) section of the website if the Committee takes this on.

Professor Robinson indicated she would meet with Ms. Johnson to begin working on five FAQs about disabilities for the website.

Professor O'Connell expressed her concern that DSCC needs some administrative assistance, and asked Ms. Phibbs where student groups could receive this. Ms. Phibbs responded that student groups fall under the Office for Student Affairs. But she could discuss educational programming with the DSCC, and Alicia Cordes could help the DSCC to place an article in the Minnesota Daily.

Professor O'Connell stated she would e-mail Mr. McCormick and Mr. Krmpotich to obtain a "wish list" of the DSCC's technology needs.

Professor Branton stated he would outline the Committee's key agenda items and issues in light of the meeting.

Hearing no further business, Professor Branton adjourned the meeting.

Dawn Zugay
University Senate