

Minutes*

Senate Consultative Committee
Thursday, March 22, 2012
3:00 – 4:00
Room 238A Morrill Hall

Present: Chris Cramer (chair), Avner Ben-Ner, Peter Bitterman, Don Cavalier, Carol Chomsky, Harrison Defries, Nancy Ehlke, Janet Ericksen, Walt Jacobs, Sally Gregory Kohlstedt, Russell Luepker, Elaine Tyler May, Jan McCulloch, Becky Mohn, Steven Pearthree, Joshua Preston

Absent: Angela Bartholomew, Thomas Brothen, Nicole Conti, Ann Hagen, Joe Inhofer, Amy Olson, James Pacala, Evan Vogel, Richard Ziegler

Guests: Vickie Courtney (University Senate)

Others: Becky Hippert (University Senate)

[In these minutes: (1) marriage amendment; (2) Senate Budget Subcommittee report; (3) docket approval]

1. Marriage Amendment

Professor Cramer convened the meeting at 3:00, noted the agenda items, and turned to Mr. Preston.

Mr. Preston reported that the Student Senate had adopted a resolution (on a 23-1 vote with 4 abstentions) to condemn the proposed Minnesota constitutional amendment defining marriage as between a man and a woman. They would like to move the resolution to the University Senate and recognize that the language the Student Senate adopted could be changed. Some favored the resolution because it was a feel-good document; that is not the reason the proponents advanced it, Mr. Preston said. They did so because they believe the Student Senate could stand up for a minority and try to look out for the welfare of the whole. They have not heard from the administration.

The Committee on Equity, Access, and Diversity has taken up the Student Senate resolution and will vote on endorsing it (or adopting new language).

They would prefer that the University Senate act this semester, rather than wait until next fall, in order to capitalize on actions already taken. The resolution can generate social media activities and can make a splash.

Professor Cramer said he believed the University Senate should take up the resolution because of its potential effect on University employees and because it is abhorrent social policy. He said he was concerned that if the statement were adopted at the May meeting of the Senate, it could drop without a

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ripple and potentially there could be a greater effect on the election if adopted in the fall. There will also be an opportunity for both the Social Concerns and Equity, Access, and Diversity Committees to bring statements forward if they wish.

Professor May said she was thrilled and proud of the Student Senate for bringing forward the resolution. She said she has been thinking about a way the University community could have a distinctive voice; this is not a partisan issue and it transcends party, but politicians will take it on. Is there a way the University can speak to the issue? It is fundamentally a human rights issue, which is why the University should address it.

On the question of timing, Professor Chomsky reported that her thought, after talking with a colleague deeply involved in the question, is that earlier is better. Not so much because of any media splash but because of organizing: In other states there has been a lack of organization to help defeat these proposals; this resolution helps set the platform for student, faculty, and staff involvement over the summer. In the fall, it would just be a statement that might or might not have any impact. She suggested it would be better for the University Senate to act this spring.

Professor Jacobs agreed and added that if the resolution is adopted in the fall, it could be that the University would be seen as deliberately inserting itself into the political process. The statement can be reiterated in the fall, Professor May suggested.

Professor Cramer said that he would work with other Senate committees on the timeline and would seek to have a statement prepared for the University Senate docket for the May meeting.

2. Senate Budget Subcommittee Report

Professor Chomsky reported for the Senate Budget Subcommittee, the group of Senate leaders that reviews the annual budget for the Senate office. The Budget Subcommittee met and approved steps to be taken to reduce expenses.

The Committee voted unanimously to endorse the recommendations.

3. University Senate Docket

The Committee voted unanimously to approve the April 5 University Senate docket.

Professor Cramer adjourned the meeting at 3:45.

-- Gary Engstrand