

DISABILITIES ISSUES COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING

April 18, 2012

Morrill Hall Room 238A

[In these minutes: committee on committee's report; disability services update; disabled student cultural center update; assessment and disabilities education resolutions]

[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, Sherry Gray, Donna Johnson, Mary Kennedy, Amber Mayer, Brian McAdams, Victoria Nelson, Julia Robinson, Kimberly Simon, Frank Symons, Carla Tabourne

REGRETS: Chrispin Behnke, Susan Rose, Joanie Tool

ABSENT: Hayley Bemel, Joanna O'Connell, Clare McCormick, Peggy Mann Rinehart

GUESTS: Chad McGuire, Disabled Student Cultural Center; Justin Barlow, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Student Ambassadors

OTHERS: Tracy Kassel and Sarah Mansager, interpreters

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

Committee on Committee's Report

The Disabilities Issues Committee reviewed the Committee's (ConC) report on its review of the Disabilities Issues Committee. Professor Branton noted that the report captured issues he had raised about ensuring the need to have a committee member from the veteran's community in order to ensure veterans' issues are addressed and the committee's discomfort with the "legal aspects" of its charge. He also noted that the ConC seemed supportive of Disabilities Issues. The committee indicated it was satisfied with the report and there was no further discussion.

Disability Services Update

Donna Johnson, director, Disability Services (DS) provided the committee with an update on DS's work. Highlights included:

- DS, U Return, is coordinating the U employees threat assessment team with the Office of Human Resources.

- DS is hiring three new captioners in the Interpreting and Captioning Unit, and two new student services specialists.
- DS is reorganizing its service delivery. Two specialists are working solely with the AHC programs and two specialists are working with the Law School and will eventually be working with the Humphrey Center. This is an expansion of the college model in which more consultation is provided to faculty and staff in those colleges.
- On Wednesday, April 4th, Disability Services staff conducted three poster sessions at the UMN Academic Technology Showcase:
 - "Communicating Description of Visual Content to Blind Students using iDevices and Peripherals" Phil Kragnes and Tim Kamenar
 - "Improving Accessibility of University of Minnesota Websites" Tonu Mikk and Phil Kragnes
 - "E-Text: A Collaborative Approach to a Pilot Project" Sponsored by Bob McMaster, Vice Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Education and Billie Wahlstrom, Vice Provost for Distributed Education and Instructional Technology.
- DS was selected to do the accessibility evaluation for the course load e-text application for all of the CIC partners.
- Susan Aase gave a presentation on DS UReturn as part of the Keys to Supervision training for 35 managers and supervisors sponsored by Human Resources Organizational Effectiveness on March 6, 2012.
- Joanne Hubal gave a presentation entitled, "DS Collaboration with the Center for Writing," to Writing Center staff on March 6, 2012.
- Barb Blacklock gave a presentation entitled. "A Campus-wide Approach: Access for College Students with Mental Health Disabilities sponsored by North Carolina AHEAD on March 9, 2012 to DS providers.
- DS Access Assistants staffed the DS table at the CFANS CFANS Deans' Welcome Reception for admitted students and their families on March 30, 2012.
- Work is underway with OIT Video Production on the development of a short DS video about the role of DS on campus. The intended audience includes students, employees, and guests to the University. It will likely be rolled out in July.
- Working on the Adobe presenter presentations on specific aspects of Disability Services.

- DS is working on Deaf and Hard of Hearing Day in collaboration with the Disabled Student Cultural Center (DSCC), Office for Student Affairs (OSA) and Office of Equity and Diversity (OED).

Amber Mayer asked when and where the video would be released. Ms. Johnson responded that it would be on the DS website and possibly on the Academic Health Center (AHC) websites. DS is also considering rolling out the videos in conjunction with the Access Achievement Awards.

Professor Branton asked who the target audience is for the video. Ms. Johnson responded that the target audience for the video is anyone on campus who wants to learn more about DS, with particular focus on the partnership between the consumer, the faculty or supervisor, and DS.

Professor Mary Kennedy stated she recently met an individual from DS who has a dual role as a counselor and a disability specialist and she asked Ms. Johnson to discuss this new position. Ms. Johnson explained that 49 % of the students DS works with have a mental condition as an aspect to their disability, and, therefore, DS is trying a new approach to assist some of these students. DS has a joint hire with the Counseling Center, and she will function similarly to caseworker and assist students with connections to the campus community and local community services.

Sherry Gray noted the need for this type of assistance at the Humphrey Institute. Professor Kennedy noted that the case management system has been effective in the brain injury community.

Professor Branton asked if the video that DS is making would provide an opportunity to educate faculty on how to work with students with disabilities. Ms. Johnson responded that it is only three minutes long, but it would set a baseline of what can be expected. She noted that the adobe presentations on which DS is working would provide more information such as why DS asks for course information so far in advance when information needs to be converted to Braille.

Professor Branton noted that some faculty have difficulty understanding what the limits of accommodation are, and asked if DS would provide information to address this situation. Ms. Johnson responded that DS could provide an FAQ on what is reasonable accommodation, but she noted this is difficult because there are many grey areas. Professor Branton stated that it would be helpful to have some basic guidelines. Professor Kennedy suggested that the committee could explore this issue in the curriculum it is considering providing for faculty.

Professor Branton asked Ms. Johnson the primary problems she sees faculty encountering with regard to accommodating students. Ms. Johnson stated that faculty often over accommodate because they approach the situation from a perspective of pity rather than from a perspective of equal access. She stated it is important for faculty to follow the accommodation letter.

Ms. Gray asked why it is a problem to over accommodate, and Ms. Johnson responded that this impacts academic integrity.

Ms. Simon commented that her office works with compliance issues and a problem she frequently sees is faculty trying to implement the same accommodations for different individuals. She stated that most accommodation situations must be approached on a case-by-case basis.

Ms. Johnson noted the problems that occur when one professor accommodates beyond the requirements of the accommodation letter and another does not.

The committee then discussed how to handle issues of disability and class attendance requirements. Professor Carla Tabourne stated one guideline she uses is “what are the guidelines of the profession and what is required in the work place.” Ms. Johnson noted that the AHC has technical standards that provided clarity on this issue.

Justin Barlow commented that in the past he has received good accommodation from faculty, but recently he has experienced many faculty using uncaptioned videos.

Disabled Student Cultural Center Update

Mr. McGuire provided the committee with an update on DSCC’s work. Highlights included the April lunch and learn with an engineer who developed an app that calls the walk signal at intersections.

Mr. McGuire then introduced Justin Barlow, a member of the DSCC and the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Student Ambassadors,. Mr. Barlow updated the committee on several events in which the Deaf Ambassadors and DSCC are involved.

- A May3 performance by Signmark, an international deaf hip-hop artist, who uses sign language.
- Silent Shout on Northrop Mall at 12:00 on May 2 followed by a flash mob event
- Deaf and Hard of Hearing Day May 3. The theme of the day is passion. It is for students in grades 9 - 12 and their teachers. They will spend the day in Coffman Union exploring ways to find--and live--their passions. Presenters will include U of M Deaf and Hard of Hearing Student Ambassadors, faculty members from the U of M ASL Department, and Signmark.
- The Deaf Ambassadors are attending the National Association of the Deaf’s College Bowl in Kentucky. They are working to be included in the Big 10 Quiz Bowl.

Amber Mayer asked if the high school students attending the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Day were deaf. Mr. Barlow replied that some are deaf, some hard of hearing, and some are children of deaf adults.

Ms. Gray remarked that a group of students from the Humphrey Center is working in Jamaica with the global deaf connection and she suggested an information session on

international and national careers for those who are deaf and hard of hearing could be part of a future Deaf and Hard of Hearing Day.

Discussion of Resolutions

Professor Branton provided committee members with two proposed resolutions, *Faculty Training in Disabilities Issues* and *Resolution on Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Disability Services*, and asked for committee discussion and feedback. The committee first discussed the faculty training resolution.

Proposed Resolution on Faculty Training in Disabilities Issues

The University of Minnesota is committed to a classroom atmosphere that encourages all members of a diverse student body to participate and learn;

The University is required by law to provide reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities;

In the absence of specific training, faculty members may be uncertain about the scope and limits of their responsibilities to students with disabilities;

Appropriate training would unburden faculty members and make them more comfortable and efficient in dealing with disabilities in the classroom;

Therefore, uniform training in fundamental aspects of disabilities issues and in the nature of reasonable accommodation should be provided to all faculty members at the University of Minnesota.

Ms. Gray recounted a situation in which faculty from the Learning Abroad Center expressed reluctance to provide accommodations for those with disabilities, and stated that the language of the resolution should be broadened to include all learning environments not just the classroom.

Chad McGuire agreed that reasonable accommodations should be made anywhere teaching is taking place. Several committee members commented on the legal requirements for accommodation. The committee briefly discussed the best methods for handling unwillingness to make reasonable accommodation for students with disabilities who wish to travel overseas. Several committee members commented on the effectiveness of demonstrating positive examples of faculty accommodating students with disabilities and incorporating a disability perspective into courses.

The committee agreed that the first paragraph of the resolution should be changed to read: “The University of Minnesota is committed to a positive classroom atmosphere in all learning environments that encourages all members of a diverse student body to participate and learn;”

Professor Kennedy suggested the following change to the resolution: “The University is committed as required by law to provide reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities;”

An additional change was suggested by Professor Tabourne and slightly modified by Professor Branton: “Appropriate training would increase the confidence of unburden faculty members ~~and make them more comfortable and efficient in dealing with disabilities in the classroom in making appropriate accommodations;~~”

The committee voted in favor of the motion to pass the resolution with the suggested changes.

Next, the committee discussed the *Resolution on Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Disability Service*.

Proposed Resolution on Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Disability Services

The Senate Committee for Disabilities Issues has a duty to review the effectiveness of policies and practices involving the Office of Disability Services;

The Senate Committee for Disabilities Issues must have access to indicators of the effectiveness of policies and practices involving the Office of Disability Services in order to make a meaningful review;

Therefore, the Office of Equity and Diversity, in consultation with the Senate Committee for Disabilities Issues, should develop a recurring, formal evaluation of the effectiveness of the programs and assistance offered by the Office of Disability Services;

This evaluation should include formal feedback from individuals who have been served by the Office of Disability Services and from individuals who contact Disability Services and then decide not to participate in available programs.

Professor Branton stated that the committee has a responsibility to advise DS about the effectiveness of its practices and policies and in order to do that the committee needs information about how well the University is doing in these areas. He stated that the committee also believes it needs feedback from those being served by DS or choosing not to be served. He noted that the OED and DS are already on a track to develop a means of evaluation, but there has been some controversy about the committee’s suggestion to gather feedback from individuals who are served by DS. Professor Branton asked Ms. Johnson if she would like to address this issue.

Ms. Johnson stated that her main concern is staying on track with logic model that she is working on with OED Director of Evaluation, Rosemary Whiteshield. She stated that she wants to look at what can objectively be measured such as timeliness, responsiveness, and accuracy, and she does not believe that satisfaction is an objective measure.

Professor Julia Robinson stated that the motion does not discuss satisfaction, it deals with reviewing effectiveness, and asked Ms. Johnson if the motion interferes with the work DS is doing with Ms. Whiteshield. Ms. Johnson responded that she does not object to the resolution as long as the committee is not trying to start too soon or get ahead of the work she is doing with Ms. Whiteshield, and she would like to come back to the committee as a stakeholder in the evaluation process.

Professor Robinson stated she sees the statement as supportive of the evaluation work that is taking place in DS, and asked Ms. Johnson if she would like to change any of the language. Ms. Johnson responded that she would like a few minutes to review the language.

Ms. Simon stated she believes the fourth paragraph of the resolution is too specific, and it should not set out the components of the evaluation mechanism. Ms. Johnson agreed that the logic model is still being developed so the resolution should not set out the components of the evaluation. Professor Robinson replied that the committee could set out the components and DS could later say it does not agree with those components.

Professor Kennedy suggested that instead of specifically stating from whom formal feedback is sought the resolution should state that, “the evaluation should include feedback from all stakeholders involved.” Professor Robinson responded that it was not the point of the resolution. The point of the resolution is to gather information from individuals who contact DS but decide not to use the services.

Professor Branton reminded the committee that it is charged with learning how well the programs are working and should try and identify why individuals are not utilizing DS. Ms. Simon pointed out that not all of the reasons individuals choose not to use the services are negative.

Professor Kennedy noted that it would be difficult to access individuals who contact DS but choose not to use services. Ms. Gray commented that DS could conduct a stakeholder analysis.

Ms. Johnson stated DS is not that far in its evaluation process and it is important to be careful about identifying the evaluation methodology until DS knows what questions will be asked.

Several committee members responded that the intent was to broaden the language in the fourth paragraph. The committee then discussed who is included in the word stakeholders and whether examples of stakeholders should be listed.

The committee agreed that the language should be changed as follows. This evaluation should include formal feedback from all identified stakeholders ~~individuals who have been served by the Office of Disability Services and from individuals who contact Disability Services and then decide not to participate in available programs.~~

Ms. Zugay clarified that the committee wanted the motion to move forward to the University Senate. The committee agreed that it did, and the motion to pass the resolution with the suggested changes was approved.

Hearing no further business, Professor Branton adjourned the meeting.

Dawn Zugay
University Senate