

**Equity, Access and Diversity Committee (EAD)**  
**February 22, 2016**  
**Minutes of the Meeting**

*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*

[**In these minutes:** Transgender Commission update; MLK Day update]

**PRESENT:** Deena Wassenberg (chair), Ann Burkhart, Solomon Gashaw, Kimberly Hewitt, Abbe Holmgren, Tami Jauert, Jeremy Jenkins, Naty Lopez, Teddie Potter, Keisha Varma, Joshua Yuan

**ABSENT:** Katrice Albert, Priscilla Flynn, Jude Fom, Cynthia Messer, Jeremy O'Hara, Shailey Prasad, Kamaori Xiong

**GUESTS:** Stef Wilenchek, director, GLBTA Programs Office; Melinda Lee, co-chair, Transgender Commission; Amber Cameron, associate director, Public Engagement Initiatives; Nina Shepherd, Public and Media Relations Coordinator, OPE & UROC

Chair Wassenberg convened the meeting and members introduced themselves.

### **1. Transgender Commission update**

Stef Wilenchek, director, GLBTA Programs Office and Melinda Lee, co-chair, Transgender Commission presented the following information and discussed ways that the committee could get involved:

- The Transgender Commission was formed 10 years ago and is made up of faculty, staff, students, and alumni. They offer gatherings, events, and consult on policy and practices. Their leadership team consists of seven or eight people who meet monthly.
- Priorities for the year include:
  - Trans Employment Policy - currently a working draft document that would serve as a supplement to the Board of Regents Policy on Affirmative Action.
  - Bathroom Inclusion - they are working with Facilities Management to discuss renovations and new bathrooms that received funding.
  - Ongoing conversations regarding locker rooms at University fitness centers.
- Past achievements:
  - Preferred names can now be used on class rosters.
  - UCards allow for preferred names, there is still a barrier due to the cost of replacing a UCard.

- Beginning in 2013, trans inclusive health benefits became available. They continue to work with individuals that have been wrongfully denied healthcare.
- There are a number of student housing options that offer open gender housing. This will be offered to first year students in 2017.

Members then discussed the following:

- Are resources available for faculty?
  - The GLBTA Programs Office site has a link to trans etiquette and they are happy to consult at any time. The link can be found here: <https://diversity.umn.edu/glbta/trans>
- Committee support:
  - When the Employment Policy is finalized, they would like to seek an endorsement from the committee.
  - If there are any leadership opportunities, the Transgender Commission would be interested in serving.
- What are some of the points to be made regarding restrooms or locker rooms and gender identity?
  - Behavior, not gender, should be the main consideration. Education for the broader University community should be a priority.
- How can classes that do not naturally address gender identity be made more inclusive?
  - The syllabus is a good starting point and could include language about gender and pronouns. They have resources available for the faculty and this will be shared with the committee via email.
- How can the committee be an agent of positive cultural change around trans inclusivity?
  - The GLBTA Programs Office offers trainings for faculty, students, and staff.

Chair Wassenberg closed the discussion, thanked the presenters, and encouraged them to return to the committee with the completed Employment Policy.

## **2. MLK Day Update**

Amber Cameron, associate director, Public Engagement Initiatives and Nina Shepherd, Public and Media Relations Coordinator, OPE & UROC presented the results of the 2015 and 2016 UMN Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Service Volunteer Pledge Drive. Chair Wassenberg explained to members that the Pledge Drive has had modest results since it commenced. The committee will have to determine the future of the Pledge Drive, as it was originally an initiative of the committee. Chair Wassenberg asked the guests to explain how the program is run and their perspective on its effectiveness. They began by sharing participation results from 2013 to present.

## Participation Results

Volunteer Group	2013	2014	2015	2016
Faculty	5	3	14	16
Staff	82	62	75	44
Students	18	12	3	1
Twin Cities	98	83	91	62
Rochester	8	1	2	1
Duluth	-	-	-	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>64</b>

- It was pointed out that for a University this size, the results are quite lower than expected. Duluth did not choose to participate until 2016. There were various marketing efforts that were initiated over the years.
- Ms. Cameron asked the committee to consider if there are other events that would have a greater impact and honor MLK, Jr.

Members then discussed the following points:

- Morris did not participate because they did not see this as adding to their existing programs in honor of MLK, Jr.
- There is no way to determine if these hours are existing or new volunteer hours.
- Members discussed the importance of celebrating and reminding the University Community of MLK, Jr.'s legacy.

Ms. Cameron presented other opportunities for honoring MLK, Jr. She provided a handout with descriptions of the following:

- Opportunity 1: Community Service Leave Program
  - The University could implement a paid-leave program honoring the legacy of MLK, Jr. through a Community Service Leave program. Similar institutions, such as University of North Carolina, have similar programs. Full-time employees receive 24 hours a calendar year for general community service, 5 hours/month not to exceed 45 hours a calendar year for literacy community service, or 1 hour/week not to exceed 36 hours a calendar year for tutoring/mentoring community service.
- Opportunity 2: University of Minnesota MLK, Jr. Fellows Program
  - The University of Minnesota could support and organize an annual MLK, Jr. Fellows program that would support up to 10 University faculty, staff, and/or students to travel as a cohort during an academic break and participate in this experience.
- Ms. Cameron and Ms. Shepherd explained that other University offices would need to be involved to make this Pledge or another opportunity have a greater impact. They recommended University Relations as an option.

Professor Wassenberg recommended that the committee vote on one of the following options:

- Continue the Pledge Drive as is
- Discontinue the Pledge Drive
- Continue as is, with the intent to reimagine it

Members voted to continue the program as it is because the infrastructure exists, but they are committed to reimagining and improving it. The committee discussed meeting with University Relations and discuss how the website can be changed. The Office for Public Engagement currently owns the website for the Pledge Drive, but Ms. Shepherd said that they would gladly share access with those that want to be involved in the expansion.

Members then discussed the following options:

- Creating incentives or recognition for those that pledge
- Collaborating with other governance groups such as Student Affairs, Faculty Affairs, Social Concerns, Civil Service Consultative Committee, P&A Consultative Committee
- Defining the goals and purpose
- Authoring a statement that is a call to action that would be sent to the administration via the University Senate

As members discussed the purpose of the Pledge Drive, the question was raised of what the committee should take on in the future:

- Chair Wassenberg explained that the members of the committee could determine the future initiatives of the committee.
- Vickie Courtney, director, University Senate Office, explained the purpose and obligations of the committee. She highlighted that the committee is advisory and with respect to policies, University Senate committees do not own policies but they are included in policy review and may have input on policy development.
- A member suggested that Cody Nielsen of the Wesley Foundation meet with the committee to discuss the initiative to support student religious identity.

Chair Wassenberg updated members on parental leave, as there has been progress in creating equity between faculty and staff leave policies. Decisions cannot be made at this time due to the pending vote for faculty unionization. She hopes to have an update at the March meeting.

Hearing no further business, the committee adjourned.

Jeannine Rich  
University Senate Office