

**Senate Committee on Student Affairs (SCSA)
September 21, 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 represents the views of, nor are they binding on, the senate, the administration, or the Board of Regents.

[**In these minutes:** University Senate Orientation/Overview; Bias Response Team]

PRESENT: Brianne Keeney (chair), Kari Volkmann-Carlsen, David Blank, Susan Mantell, Cody Mikl, Michael Stableton, Prashasti Bhatnagar, Emily Lekah, Alexander O'Connor, Kat Yushchenko

REGRETS: Jethro Land, Thomas Bilder, Matthew Loomis

ABSENT: Amy Thie, Megan Sweet, Kendre Turonie

GUESTS: Vickie Courtney, director, University Senate Office; Ann Freeman, senior consultant, University Relations; Laura Knudson, assistant vice provost for student advocacy and support, Office for Student Affairs; Tina Marisam, assistant director, Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action

Chair Keeney welcomed the committee and members introduced themselves.

1. University Senate orientation/overview – Brianne Keeney, chair, introduced Vickie Courtney, director, University Senate Office. Courtney reviewed the [University Senate organizational chart](#), noting that there are over 1000 people participating in University governance. There are four senates that report to the University Senate: the Faculty Senate, Student Senate, P&A Senate, and Civil Service Senate. The University Senate and the Faculty Senate are chaired by the president, Courtney said; the SCSA is a committee of the Student Senate. Courtney summarized the membership of the University Senate, noting that there are 278 elected members, including 168 faculty, 60 students, 25 P&A employees, and 25 civil service employees. Each committee has ex-officio members, Courtney noted, who generally have an expertise relative to the committee's business; these ex-officio members are important liaisons to the administration, and can help guide committee discussions.

Courtney then summarized the history of the University Senate. The University Senate was formed in 1912; it remained all-faculty until 1969, when students were added. Civil Service and P&A employees joined the governance structure in 2004.

Courtney went on to discuss the difference between resolutions and statements. Resolutions request an action, Courtney said; statements do not require an action, but often certify a position for review by University administration and/or the broader University community. Courtney noted that consultation is an important first step in forming statements and resolutions, as consultation and coordination with other committees interested in the same issues can make a stronger impact than if those groups worked separately.

Courtney outlined the path of a statement or resolution, noting that once a statement or resolution has been drafted and approved by SCSA, it would be sent to the Student Senate Consultative Committee (SSCC) for discussion and/or action. From the SSCC, it would move to the Student Senate for information or action. From the Student Senate, it may move to the University Senate, and then to the president and other relevant administrators with the expectation that they respond within 90 days.

In some cases, Courtney noted, a letter directly to a senior administrator requesting information may be helpful. Committee chairs, with the assistance of their senate associate, can draft letters to administrators requesting information, and invite those administrators to present at a future meeting.

Courtney added that in order to assist committees in their efforts toward effective consultation, the University Senate Office will soon add issues tracking as a feature on the University Senate website.

2. Overview and discussion of the Bias Response Team – Chair Keeney introduced Ann Freeman, senior consultant, University Relations, who reviewed the [background of the Bias Response Team](#) and [BRT protocol](#) with the committee. Freeman noted that the Bias Response Team (BRT) was created to fill gaps in services currently offered by different offices on the Twin Cities campus; the BRT will work collaboratively with those offices to respond to bias incidents and trends in ways that affirm the University's commitment to equity and diversity while maintaining its commitment to upholding free speech and academic freedom. Freeman added that the BRT is not investigative nor disciplinary; the BRT will work directly with those that report bias incidents to provide them with potential next steps, refer to other offices for action, and/or create opportunities for discussion and education.

Freeman said incidents may be reported to the BRT through a dedicated email address (endbias@umn.edu). The website is currently ready to launch, Freeman said, but BRT members are waiting until consultations with student governance groups are completed to begin marketing.

Tina Marisam, assistant director, Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, reviewed the consultations that are taking place with student and faculty governance and student groups. Marisam noted that these consultations have provided important feedback on how the BRT should operate.

Currently, Marisam added, there are no student representatives on the BRT. Marisam said that of our peer institutions that have created Bias Response Teams, most have not included students on the team due to privacy concerns for students and faculty, and the need to immediately come together as a team to respond to bias incidents (which students may not have the flexibility in their schedules to do). The BRT is looking to create a student advisory group, Marisam said, that will provide a strong student voice to the BRT.

Laura Knudson, assistant vice provost for student advocacy and support, Office for Student Affairs, reviewed the incidents the BRT has dealt with to date. Knudsen said that 27 incidents

have been reported thus far. Knudsen stressed the importance of protecting the privacy of those reporting incidents, and of those accused of bias. Knudsen said that the BRT consults with individuals reporting bias incidents to see how they would like the BRT to be involved before taking any action.

Knudson cited several examples of responses to bias incidents:

- Students for Justice in Palestine had an online posting defaced. The BRT reached out to their group and also the Students for Israel group to form a joint statement. The posting was also taken down.
- Anti-Semitic printouts were found on printers around campus. The BRT worked with Bernie Gulachek, interim vice president, Office of Information Technology, to craft a statement to the University community.
- Anti-Muslim posters were found stuffed inside the Minnesota Daily throughout campus. The BRT worked with University leaders and the Minnesota Daily to craft a response.
- A student reported a bias issue related to his protected identity; he was connected to the Gender and Sexuality Center for further assistance.

Freeman added that the BRT has used the Campus Climate website to deal with bias issues relevant to the greater University community. An example, Freeman said, is the Pulse shooting in Orlando; the BRT worked with the Gender and Sexuality Center to draft a statement. Another example is the shooting of Jamar Clark, Freeman said; the BRT helped to post information on the website and on social media.

Susan Mantel asked how bias incidents were dealt with before the creation of the BRT. Freeman said that often individuals did not know where to go to report these incidents, or they were misdirected. The BRT can refer issues or incidents to the correct office, Freeman said, and track trend data across campus. Knudson added that some individuals report incidents but do not want any action taken; these incidents would still be reported in trend data.

Keeney asked BRT members to discuss their decision not to include students on the BRT. Knudson reiterated that when bias incidents are reported, BRT members need to be able to come together immediately, which is often not possible for students. Also, Knudson said, there are concerns regarding privacy for students and faculty. Knudson said that the BRT will be working very closely with students, and are looking to create a student advisory group to the BRT.

Freeman added that she had received similar questions from faculty, questioning the decision not to include faculty members on the BRT. Freeman said there were also concerns relating to privacy and the timely response to reports. The BRT is looking into forming a faculty consultative committee, Freeman said.

Kat Yushchenko asked how trend data was being tracked, and how it would be reported to the University community. Marisam said that this information will be available through U Reports. The BRT will also provide transparency to the community through annual communications, Marisam said, and will work with the Office of the General Counsel to make sure protected data is not disclosed.

Prashasti Bhatnagar asked about issues reported in the residence halls and how student information would be protected. Knudson said that only those BRT members in direct contact with the student who reported the incident would know their name; communications with others in residence halls would be in generalities.

David Blank asked if BRT members felt that incivility was on the rise. Knudson said that typically, people are not comfortable having difficult conversations with those they disagree with; the BRT will play an educational role, bringing groups together for conversation.

Alexander O'Connor asked how the BRT would determine what constitutes a bias incident. Marisam said that bias is defined as an act of intolerance, bigotry, or harassment that is motivated by a protected identity. Some incidents that are reported as bias incidents may actually be protected by free speech; others are considered discriminatory harassment, which is not protected, Marisam said. The BRT is not disciplinary, Marisam added, so they are interested in dealing with the impact of reported incidents, not in disciplinary action.

Mantel asked when the website would launch. Freeman said that the website would launch after the completion of consultations, in October or November of 2016. Blank suggested a "soft launch" of the website before the official October or November launch, making it searchable on the umn.edu website.

Mantel asked if there was currently a mechanism to offer educational outreach to faculty (classes, training, etc.) to help them know what resources are available at the University. Knudson said that currently this is not offered, but may be offered in the future. Freeman added that currently resources and time are an issue.

Alexander O'Connor asked Freeman to speak to the diversity of members on the BRT. Freeman said that people on the team are appointed by their units (Equity and Diversity, Human Resources, Student Affairs, Provost's Office, Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, Office of the General Counsel, Office of the President, Global Programs and Strategy Alliance, University Relations, Diversity Community of Practice, Campus Climate Engagement Team, Coalition for a Respectful U). When appropriate, Freeman added, the BRT can consult with outside groups (ex: issues relating to indigenous populations).

Yushchenko asked BRT members how they have been thus far perceived, and how much authority the group has. Freeman said that generally, units and individuals have been grateful for feedback from the BRT regarding reported incidents. Freeman added that executive oversight (from the vice president for equity and diversity and the senior vice president for academic affairs and provost) can help guide the BRT on the proper course of action when needed. Knudson said that BRT members have relationships and contacts across the University that are helpful for these types of conversations, and that feedback on their work this far has been positive.

3. Other business – Keeney asked committee members to bring forward any issues they thought SCSA should focus on this year.

Michael Stableton brought forward the issue of student mental health; Courtney advised that several other senate committees were discussing this issue, and so it will be important to coordinate and consult with those groups. Yushchenko brought forward the issue of student safety on campus and campus policing. Keeney said that Campus Climate was also brought forth last spring by the committee as an issue they'd like to focus on this year; Courtney suggested collaboration with the Equity, Access and Diversity committee on this issue. Keeney advised members to send her any additional agenda items via email.

Courtney went on to advise the committee to stay ahead of student affairs issues and take action when possible, rather than being a group that merely receives reports. Courtney advised members to look at the policy review matrix on the senate website and to review the University Policy Library to stay on top of policy issues affecting students.

Hearing no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Barbara Irish
University Senate Office