

Social Concerns Committee
September 26, 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: Welcome and Introductions; Overview of Governance; Review of Last Year; Presentation and Discussion of Research Regarding Loan from Gov. William Aiken Jr.; Bias Response Team; Discussion of Agenda Items for Upcoming Meetings]

PRESENT: Mark Pedelty (chair), Lindsey Budde, David Fuhs, Nicholas Goldsmith, Deborah Hendricks, Daniel Kelliher, Derek Kiewatt, Leah Peterson, Molly Schwartz, Sarah Sexton, Megan Sweet, Boris Volkov

REGRETS: Randy Croce, Zan Gao, Kendra Okposo, Rachel Schurman

ABSENT: Anna Blasco, Maria del Carmen Garcia de la Serrana Lozano, Laura Duckett, Becca Gercken, Meredith Horsch, Sandeep Kataria, Thomas Keller, Stuart Mason, Alex Oftelie

GUESTS: Vickie Courtney, director, University Senate Office; Ann Freeman, senior consultant, University Relations; Laura Knudson, assistant vice provost, Office for Student Affairs; Christopher P. Lehman, professor, St. Cloud State University

OTHERS: Chuck Turchick, student

1. Welcome and Introductions

Professor Mark Pedelty, chair, welcomed members and thanked them for serving. He then asked members to introduce themselves. Once they had done so, he introduced himself and expressed his preference for focusing on a few issues as opposed to many, in the interest of producing outcomes. However, he recognized that issues can arise throughout the year, and deferred to the committee to set the agenda. He also stressed the importance of treating all guests with respect, and maintaining transparency in the committee's workings.

2. Overview of Governance

Vickie Courtney, director, University Senate Office, gave an overview of senate governance at the University of Minnesota. She said that the University of Minnesota is considered to have one of the strongest and most active shared governance systems among large research universities, and that it is unique in that faculty, students, staff, and alumni are all involved in governance. The umbrella body is the University Senate, which was established in 1912 and consisted only of faculty members until 1969, when students were given representation. In 2004, the University Senate was expanded again, when professional and academic staff and civil service staff were granted representation. The University Senate now has representatives from faculty, students, professional and administrative (P&A) staff, and civil service staff, for a total of 278 members when all seats are filled. Courtney explained that the University Senate contains within it four senates: the Faculty Senate, the Student Senate, the P&A Senate (comprised of professional and

administrative staff) and the Civil Service Senate. Each senate has its own consultative committee, and under them there are 23 working committees and a variety of subcommittees. Much of the governance work is done through these committees. Some standing committees report to the Faculty Senate, some to the Student Senate, and some to the University Senate. Members of these committees may but need not be senators, and most committee members are selected by the Committee on Committees. The appropriate senior academic officers also serve as ex officio, non-voting members of relevant committees, which ensures regular communication between the administration and governance. Courtney also noted that because of restrictions imposed by federal and state labor law, unionized staff and the faculties that have voted for collective bargaining do not participate in the governance system.

Courtney then enumerated the three ways that a committee can take action: passing a resolution, issuing a statement, or writing a letter to the appropriate administrator(s). The difference between a statement and a resolution, she said, is that a resolution calls for some sort of action, whereas a statement simply gives the committee's opinion on a given matter. A statement follows the same route, but goes to the senate for information only, as no action is necessary. A letter is treated much the same as a statement.

Courtney emphasized the collaborative aspect of shared governance. She said that it is a best practice to consult with appropriate administrators before taking any action, and also to collaborate with other committees that may be working on the same issue.

3. Review of Last Year

Pedelty referenced the summary prepared by previous chair Randy Croce. The summary enumerated the following issues that the committee addressed last year:

- Gender inclusive restrooms
- Discrimination and Title IX issues concerning sexual assault and harassment
- Parental leave
- Supporting and retaining diverse faculty, staff, and students
- Composting and waste reduction
- Ban the box – criminal history questions on admission application
- Reformulation of the goals and composition of the American Indian Advisory Board
- Concerns about consultation and representation of bargaining committee members on senate committees

4. Presentation and Discussion of Research Regarding Loan from Gov. William Aiken Jr.

Pedelty introduced Dr. Christopher P. Lehman, St. Cloud State University, and invited him to speak about his article in *Hennepin History* magazine in July 2016, regarding a loan to the University from South Carolina Governor William Aiken Jr., before the Civil War. Dr. Lehman thanked Pedelty for inviting him to speak, and said that he has been researching local history as it pertains to African Americans for about 13 years. He said that he had found documentation of Southerners coming to visit St. Cloud, specifically, and bringing their slaves with them. He then began to go to county recorders' offices and research instances of Southerners purchasing property in Minnesota before slavery ended. He then cross-referenced the names of the individuals who had purchased property in the slave census schedules from 1850 and 1860 to see whether they were slaveholders. Lehman said he also referenced old newspapers, and came

across information about Governor Aiken's visit to the Twin Cities area in 1857. News articles indicated that during his visit, Aiken, who owned about 700 slaves, loaned at least \$15,000 to the University of Minnesota, which had been closed since 1854. Lehman said that in 1862, the Minnesota State Legislature passed a law that said no resident of a Confederate state could enter Minnesota's courts and sue. Since South Carolina was a Confederate state, Lehman said, this essentially turned Aiken's loan into a donation. This law was eventually deemed unconstitutional, said Lehman, but he has not found evidence that the University ever paid back the loan.

Aiken's loan, said Lehman, was referenced in University publications about itself until about 1870, when mentions of Aiken ceased. At that point, the focus shifted to Regent Pillsbury and his efforts, along with other regents, to reopen the school for good in 1867. Lehman said his aim in writing the article was to return Aiken's involvement to the University's history and consciousness.

Lehman then solicited questions and comments from the committee. Daniel Kelliher asked what \$15,000 converts to in today's dollars. Lehman said that according to his calculations, it is about \$500,000 in today's money. Kelliher then inquired as to Lehman's sense of the University's level of involvement in slavery. Is it a small level of involvement, he asked, and does level of involvement matter, or is it being involved at all that matters? Lehman responded that the University does have a historical connection to slavery, but that this incident seems to be the extent of the connection.

David Fuhs asked Lehman what he hopes will come of bringing this to the committee's attention-- is the purpose to get the word out about this history, or would he like the committee to take some form of action? Lehman responded that it would be great if the University both acknowledged this history and took some sort of action. Examples of action it could take, he suggested, would be to have the president visit the slave quarters at William Aiken's house in Charleston; perhaps future presidents could do this as well. He also suggested that the University take actions similar to what Georgetown is doing; some examples of which include naming buildings after slaves, creating a memorial, and giving admissions preferences to the descendants of slaves. Some of these actions may not be applicable to the University of Minnesota, Lehman clarified. The most important thing, though, he said, is simply to acknowledge the history.

Sarah Sexton asked whether Lehman thinks that Aiken's loan was purposefully left out of the University's history. Lehman said that this is not clear.

Kelliher asked whether a stone marker recognizing the history, such as exists at the Unitarian church in Charleston, would be appropriate. Lehman responded that yes, he felt that such a historical marker would be appropriate and adequate.

With no further questions, Pedelty thanked Lehman for his presentation. Lehman gave Pedelty a copy of *Hennepin History* for the committee, and Lehman departed.

5. Bias Response Team

Ann Freeman, senior consultant, University Relations and Laura Knudson, assistant vice provost, Office for Student Affairs arrived to discuss the Bias Response Team (BRT) with the committee. Freeman and Knudson gave some background on the team, and then solicited the committee's feedback. Members gave the following feedback:

- Deborah Hendricks asked how the team has been promoted, and Freeman explained that they have been instituting a soft launch, since they were taking cases while still formulating their structure and protocols. There is a dedicated email address, endbias@umn.edu, and this has been announced in student updates in the U of M Brief, and on the Campus Climate website. Within the next month or so, Freeman added, they plan to launch a website.
- Fuhs suggested that the team liaise with campus law enforcement in order to help assuage anger and frustration that can surround investigations. Freeman informed the committee that the team has met with Chief of Police Matt Clark, and that they hope to have a productive relationship.
- Pedelty asked whether the team has consulted with scholars who study these issues. Knudson said that they are making a list of experts and expanding their network. She added that they are working with a professor in the Department of Organizational Leadership, Policy, and Development (OLPD) to provide training to the team around free speech and academic freedom.
- Pedelty then pointed out that people could be confused about whether to go to the BRT or to a specific office on campus when an incident occurs. Freeman said that they are still working on their protocol, but that the BRT would loop in the appropriate office on any incident that comes to them.

Pedelty then thanked Freeman and Knudson for their time. Freeman and Knudson thanked members for their suggestions and departed.

5. Discussion of Agenda Items for Upcoming Meetings

Pedelty asked the committee what issues they would like to address this year. Nicholas Goldsmith said that there may be more work to do on bathroom access, in addition to the gender-neutral initiative of last year. Some examples are disability access and the placement of child changing stations and sharps containers. Fuhs said that lactation rooms are another timely issue.

Pedelty wondered if some issues could be “bundled” together into a larger conversation, such as racial equity. He talked about the “Ban the Box” initiative, which seeks to remove questions about criminal history from application materials. He said that the committee has done work on this in the past, and that it is something that could use more work. Goldsmith asked how this interfaced with Minnesota state law, and Courtney suggested that Professor Christopher Uggem would be a good person to consult with on this issue.

Fuhs said that other past issues have included an initiative to ban triclosan in hand washes; University investments; drugs and alcohol involvement in assault cases; and energy efficiency. He said that the committee also tends to identify some issues through newsletters, current events, and what is happening at other institutions.

Sexton expressed interest in pursuing the sustainability issue, and Lindsey Budde seconded this, adding the use of local food and compostable materials as part of this topic.

Leah Peterson shared the Bell Museum's efforts to consider inclusivity and accessibility in designing their new building, and suggested it would be useful to discuss land use when designing new buildings, as well as how to build connections with community stakeholders in order to establish a meaningful advisory process that happens early on in the planning process.

Fuhs brought forth two additional potential topics: 1) the free college discussions that are taking place in the political arena, and hearing the pros and cons of that system from an informed party; and 2) student loans, loan forgiveness, and scholarships.

Pedely mentioned the minimum wage issue as another possible topic.

Pedely then asked whether members were interested in pursuing action in response to Dr. Lehman's research, and cautioned that if the committee does decide to take up the issue, that it would be important to consult other experts on the matter, and to proceed sensitively. Members asked about the document that University Relations and University News Service had provided with regard to Dr. Lehman's research. Courtney clarified that individuals at the University had looked into this topic over the summer, when the *Star Tribune* article on Dr. Lehman's research came out, and that this document was a summary of this research. Pedely said that if the committee does choose to pursue this topic, that the authors of that document would be invited to address the committee, and that other voices would be heard as well.

Courtney said that one action the committee could take would be to write a letter to ask the administration to form a task force to investigate this and similar issues.

Hendricks pointed out that in the University's long history, there may be many issues of this nature that could surface; specifically, she said, there is a long history with the Native American community. She suggested that looking more broadly at the University's relationship and engagement with marginalized communities could be productive. Pedely referenced various other issues around racial equity, and agreed that Dr. Lehman's research could tie into a larger discussion. Peterson also agreed that this is a larger issue and that building community connections is a great way to move forward in a healthier way in the future. Fuhs suggested expanding it to include the Native American community, as well.

In the interest of time, Pedely asked if there was a motion to adjourn. Goldsmith made the motion, and Fuhs seconded; the meeting was adjourned.

Amber Bathke
University Senate Office