

**Senate Committee on Student Affairs (SCSA)
November 9, 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:** Updates from the Office of Student Affairs, Student Mental Health Services on Crookston Campus; Student Mental Health Services on Rochester Campus]

PRESENT: Bri Keeney (chair), Kari Volkmann-Carlsen, Megan Sweet, Kendre Turonie, Thomas Builder, David Blank, Susan Mantell, Cody Mikl, Michael Stebleton, Prashasti Bhatnagar, Zaid Khan, Emily Lekah, Matthew Loomis, Runsheng Ma

REGRETS: Michelle Jesse, Jethro Land, Amy Thie, Katie Desautels, Kat Yuschenko, Chuddy Emukah, Alexander O'Connor

ABSENT: Emma Olson

GUESTS: Danita Brown Young, vice provost of student affairs and dean of students, Office of Student Affairs (OSA); Peter Phaiyah, associate vice chancellor for student affairs, University of Minnesota Crookston; Lori Carrell, vice chancellor for academic affairs and student development, University of Minnesota Rochester

OTHERS: Gabriele Schmiegel, Global Programs and Strategy Alliance; Lisa Erwin, Student Life

Chair Bri Keeney welcomed the committee and the members introduced themselves.

1. Updates from the Office of Student Affairs - Keeney introduced Danita Brown Young, vice provost of student affairs and dean of students, Office of Student Affairs (OSA), to give an update on the work of OSA during the fall semester. Brown Young began by saying that OSA is currently focusing its efforts in three areas: student mental health concerns, overall wellness initiatives, and campus climate issues.

Brown Young provided the committee with an overview of OSA's work relating to student mental health services, noting that over the summer funding was secured for four additional full time therapists for Boynton Health, and four full time counselors were added to Student Counseling Services. This allows for a fuller range of services, Brown Young added, and provided funding for the addition of a case manager, Emily O'Hara. She said that O'Hara managed 90 cases this fall, and that OSA would like to see an increase in the number of case managers on staff. One area that OSA is exploring, Brown Young said, is the creation of a "Holistic Student Center," which would function as a one-stop, central point for all students in crisis; this would preferably be in a central location on all campuses. In addition to work on student mental health issues, OSA is also focusing its efforts on overall student wellness initiatives, including financial wellness, health (with a broad focus), and food insecurity.

The third area of focus is on campus climate issues. Currently, students are expressing anxiousness, stress, and vitriol which may be contrary to University values; OSA would like to build relationships with faculty, students, and staff to facilitate regular conversations surrounding campus climate. She added that many groups are currently prioritizing campus climate, including the Bias Response and Reporting Network (BRRN), and the Provost's Joint Task Force on Student Mental Health. OSA is also currently helping students deal with the recent accident on the Washington Avenue bridge, by assisting them in processing the event and by providing healing spaces.

David Blank asked where OSA thought the "Holistic Student Center" would be located on the Twin Cities campus. Brown Young replied that Bruininks Hall would be an ideal location on the East Bank, since Appleby, where OSA is located, is difficult to find. Prashasti Bhatnagar asked if there would be a location on the West Bank campus, since many international students have different needs and perspectives. She added that the goal would be to have a location on each campus, open for any student questions (not solely mental health). Susan Mantell asked what the projected timeline for the first center would be; Brown Young responded that the first center could be active as soon as Fall 2017.

Keeney said that recently a student had contacted her asking that SCSA look into the Washington Avenue bridge incident to see if the bridge could be made safer. Brown Young said that the Provost's Joint Task Force on Student Mental Health is working with Twin Cities student government groups on this issue.

Brown Young said that another issue OSA has been working on is increasing funding and support for the Student Parent Help Center. Currently, there are grants available for graduate and professional students to help with family costs. Keeney opined that many international students who have families are not eligible for these grants; Brown Young said that yes, international students are excluded from some state resources and funding. Gabi Schmiegel added that International Scholar and Student Services (ISSS) regularly has conversations with students about these types of issues; sometimes, different types of visas may limit their financial options, and there may not be much assistance available. If a student gives birth while in the U.S., they are eligible for some additional funding, but regulations set by the federal government dictate that government funds cannot go to a non-immigrant visa-holder. ISSS has a small emergency fund that can sometimes be used, she added, though these funds cannot be used to support dependents.

2. Student mental health services, Crookston campus - Keeney introduced Peter Phaiiah, associate vice chancellor for student affairs, University of Minnesota Crookston. Phaiiah began by saying that he has a passion for international students, and that his office works closely with the International Programs Office in providing resources to international students.

Phaiiah provided an overview of [student mental health support offerings in Crookston](#). He said that international students receive the same array of counseling services that the domestic student population receives; those services include triage, brief strategic counseling, with specifically person-centered theory and cognitive behavior therapy approaches. In addition, if an international student is dealing with drug or alcohol issues or chronic mental illness, they will be

referred to Northwestern Mental Health Center, a community partner, for ongoing therapeutic intervention.

Phaiah noted that international students face many of the same issues as domestic students: anxiety, depression, academic stressors, and homesickness. International students also face distinct difficulties, such as culture shock, isolation, discrimination, and language-related problems. Other concerns for international students include acculturation, financial stressors, and social barriers.

Crookston has assumed a cross-cultural model in their posture with international students, Phaiah said, though ongoing training is needed to address multiculturalism and diversity, specifically with international students. Serving as a central component to counseling international students, the counseling center has integrated a culture-free model approach, which is a model used in counseling that attempts to develop measures that are not dependent on a particular cultural context and are free from cultural bias, he said. International students with mental health conditions and/or a disability are reluctant to seek services even if they are diagnosed, but one successful strategy Crookston has employed is to ask a diverse faculty member who hails from a similar culture to talk to an individual student, the idea being that this can help break down stigma so the student is more comfortable seeking help. The Office of Community Engagement (OCE) also supports ESL and international students by offering engagement activities outside the classroom that give them a greater understanding of American and northwestern Minnesota culture, as well as a greater sense of belonging, he said.

The UMC campus has a Behavioral Alert Response Team (BART) that is activated anytime there is a report of concerning, alarming, threatening or violent behavior involving a student or employee. The BART is trained to effectively identify, intervene, seek support and follow-up on inappropriate behaviors or individuals in crisis. The BART has had additional training on working with International students and other diverse populations, Phaiah added.

The UMC campus has networked with several viable resources for mental health referrals and consultation with community partners, Phaiah said. The key resources in Crookston are the Northwestern Mental Health Center and Riverview Hospital.

Cody Mikl asked Phaiah to speak about the student to counselor ratio. Phaiah said that the ratio of students to counseling staff is 515:1 for full time counselors, and 350:1 when including part time counseling staff. Generally, Phaiah said, the ratio at peer institutions is 470:1.

Stebbleton asked if there were faculty members on BART. Phaiah said that while there are not faculty members on BART, faculty are routinely called in for assistance with specific cases.

3. Student mental health services, Rochester campus - Keeney introduced Lori Carrell, vice chancellor for academic affairs and student development, University of Minnesota Rochester. Carrell noted that the international student population on the Rochester campus is incredibly small, with four international students currently attending; therefore, Carrel noted she will be speaking more generally about student mental health services in Rochester (not specific to international students), though these students do have access to all available services.

Carrell said that the Rochester campus is focused on the health sciences; almost all attending are traditional college-age students between the ages of 18-22. Students on the Rochester campus are all participants in studies and research, with a focus on resilience. The student population on the Rochester campus is approximately 80% female, and many students come to study after having major health concerns, for themselves or their family members. Students studying health sciences can have high levels of anxiety, she said, so there is a focus on stress management. A life coach is assigned to students for the entire duration of their program, and they may participate in yoga, meditation, grief support, 12-step programs, stress programming, or programs to help manage anxiety and panic disorders.

Rochester focuses on the sophomore experience and resilience training for second year students, Carrell said, and partners with the Olmstead Medical Center, which provides free access to services for students. Rochester also has a Behavioral Assessment Team, similar in nature to that of Crookston's BART, and Rochester utilizes peer mentors and peer support groups for students. Students participate in living/learning communities, Carrell said; students take classes together and sign a covenant of support for each other.

Keeney asked if Rochester had any full time counseling staff on campus. Carrell responded that counseling staff are not employed by the University, but they are contracted for services, and available at locations around campus for easy access to students.

4. Other business - Keeney informed the committee that a student had contacted her and some other governance committees about the recent tragedy on the Washington Avenue bridge to see if some structural improvements could be made to prevent suicides or other accidents. As Brown Young noted, Keeney said, there are complications since Hennepin County owns the bridge, though perhaps the committee could make some recommendations to the University on this issue.

Cody Mikl said that he had witnessed an incident similar to this, where the jumper overcame netting, and it had a profound effect on him. He said he would be interested in looking into the effectiveness of netting in preventing these incidents. Schmiegel said that there are currently many signs on the bridge. Other bridges, such as the Golden Gate bridge, have phones every 50 feet and high barriers and netting; while some may still overcome these barriers, it may delay them enough to allow police to get to their location. Megan Sweet said that her office had previously looked into this issue after a similar incident, and that current efforts are focused on prevention, awareness, and decreasing the stigma surrounding mental health issues rather than structural changes to the bridges on campus. She added that OSA is open to anything that may prevent these tragedies, but noted that it is difficult to physically prevent suicides, and she is curious about the efficacy of structural options.

Mantell asked if the University owned any bridges on its campuses. Sweet said that she was unsure; while Hennepin County owns the Washington Avenue bridge, the University maintains the pedestrian level. Stebleton said that he would be interested in looking into other institutions and how they dealt with this issue, for example at Cornell; they have a bridge that is owned half by the University and half by the city, yet they were able to install mesh as a safety measure. Thomas Builder suggested SCSA provide Hennepin County with data showing the number of

incidents on the bridge, so they can address the issue if the University cannot make these changes.

Keeney asked the committee to vote on the formation of a task force to look into possible solutions to this issue. The committee voiced unanimous support. Schmiegel, Kari Volkmann-Carlsen, and Zaid Khan volunteered to be members of this task force, and report their findings to SCSA at its February meeting.

Hearing no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Barbara Irish
University Senate Office