

Student Senate Consultative Committee (SSCC)

January 26, 2017

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 SSCC Members; Student Mental Health Task Force Discussion; Off Campus Housing Discussion; Aramark Resolution; Discussion of Board of Regents Candidates; SSCC Bylaws Change]

PRESENT: Trish Palermo (chair), Fanda Yang, Madison Schwartz, Zane Bloom, Taylor Cronen, Patrick English, John Freude, Katie Ledermann, Noelle Sjoquist

REGRETS: None

ABSENT: Mark Kanake

GUESTS: Lisa Erwin, vice chancellor for student life, University of Minnesota Duluth (UMD); Jean Baribeau-Thoennes, director, UMD Counseling; Sandra Olson-Loy, vice chancellor of student affairs, University of Minnesota Morris; Scott Creer, coordinator of housing properties, Housing and Residential Life; Mannix Clark, associate director, Housing and Residential Life

OTHERS: Zach Sheffler, Council of Graduate Students (COGS)

1. Updates from SSCC members - Noelle Sjoquist reported that the Crookston Student Association (CSA) is currently nearing completion of their work with mid-term alerts. The alerts were recently voted on and approved by the Crookston Faculty Assembly, and students enrolled in a 1000-3000 level course will now receive a midterm alert with a grade (A through F). Additionally, Chancellor Fred Wood announced that the University of Minnesota Crookston (UMC) will add the option for written comments on student ratings of teaching, and use these comments to make personnel decisions. Sjoquist added that the Crookston chancellor search was still in progress. Patrick English noted that the Minnesota Student Association (MSA) was currently preparing for All-Campus Election Commission (ACEC) elections, and discussing campaigns for the spring semester. In addition, MSA is looking into participation in upcoming Big 10 conferences. Maddie Schwartz said that in her role as at-large representative, she is currently working to drum up interest in ACEC elections for new senators. Fanda Yang, similarly, said that in his role as vice chair of the Student Senate, he is preparing for ACEC elections and trying to recruit graduate and professional students to apply. Taylor Cronen, Rochester Student Association (RSA) representative, noted that RSA was currently working on the creation of faculty workshops. The UMD Student Association, said Zane Bloom, is currently partnering with the UMD Marketing Committee to create and distribute a student mental health survey. Katie Ledermann added that the Morris Campus Student Association (MCSA) is addressing issues with Sodexo, their food management company, and working on a first year

seminar for students.

2. Student Mental Health Task Force discussion - Lauren Mitchell, co-chair, Student Mental Health Task Force, began with an overview of COGS' work on the student mental health issue. Last year, COGS members authored a resolution seeking additional resources for student mental health counseling in order to reduce wait times and meet increasing student demand; additional funding was provided to Boynton Health and Student Counseling Services (SCS) on the Twin Cities campus, and now student government groups are doing a more thorough analysis of student mental health needs on system campuses. In an effort not to lose momentum on this important issue, Mitchell said, she and Patrick English, co-chair, Student Mental Health Task Force, invited Lisa Erwin, vice chancellor for student life, University of Minnesota Duluth (UMD), Jean Baribeau-Thoennes, director, UMD Counseling, and Sandra Olson-Loy, vice chancellor of student affairs, University of Minnesota Morris (UMM), to discuss student mental health issues and resources on their campuses, with a focus on innovative programs, changes, or areas of need.

Olson-Loy began by saying that the UMM campus is now fully staffed in this area, having recently added a new full-time counselor. In addition, summer counseling is now offered, which was not previously available. All students are seen by counselors within one to two weeks, Olson-Loy noted, and same-day walk-in appointments are available for immediate need. So far this year, 209 students have requested counseling appointments, out of 1,800 students (12% of the UMM student population); in 2015, 381 students requested counseling (22% of UMM students).

Erwin said that one third of UMD students had reported diagnosed mental health issues, and one fifth reported more than one diagnosed mental health issue. Baribeau-Thoennes noted that one additional full time employee was recently hired to meet student demand, a mental health case manager. The Counseling Center now has a total of six staff members, though not all are full time; the center has a total of four full time positions. There is one counselor for over 2,000 students; the recommended ratio is one counselor for every 1,600 students, said Baribeau-Thoennes. In fall 2016, UMD Counseling set a limit of 12 appointments per student per year. When more appointments are required, the student may be referred to community health resources; unfortunately, Baribeau-Thoennes said, wait times for community resources for long-term care can sometimes be very long.

Baribeau-Thoennes outlined the UMD "Let's Talk" program, a weekly offering where counselors are available for informal, brief, free, and confidential drop-in consultations. This program is highly utilized, and has been offered more frequently this year due to demand. Erwin added that the current philosophy of student mental health offerings at UMD is to focus on short-term care. If more resources were available, she said, there could be more focus on group care, wellness initiatives, and resiliency training. UMD has had serious budget issues, but will be requesting two additional FTE positions for UMD Counseling through the compact process to better address student need, said Erwin.

Mitchell said that on the Twin Cities campus, mental health resources in the community were

sometimes difficult to access, and that she imagined it was even more severe in greater Minnesota. She asked Erwin to explain what community resources are available to students in Duluth who are in need of long-term care. Erwin replied that one of the primary reasons for creating the case manager position was to address this issue, since many students may fall through the cracks if their cases are not being tracked. Baribeau-Thoennes said that there are two local hospitals, and students in crisis are able to access services through the emergency room. The Birchtree Center, a multi-county option, opened about three years ago, and they now offer a mobile service, she added. The Birchtree Center has 20 beds, but does fill up quickly since it serves several counties. If a student were able to get a bed in three weeks, Baribeau-Thoennes said, it would be considered fast. Erwin noted that there is good public transportation in Duluth, and that the case manager is very connected to local resources for students.

Mitchell asked for information on how each campus handles referrals to outside services. Olson-Loy replied that students with a previous diagnosis may elect to stay with their previous provider; for others, the Disability Resource Center is an excellent resource, in addition to referring students in need of long-term care to community resources. She added that Human Services in Stevens County is a good resource for students without family support. Baribeau-Thoennes responded that at UMD, they also have a strong partnership with the Disability Resource Center, in addition to the two area hospitals and multi-county option.

Mitchell asked how student need and the efficacy of services were evaluated. Olson-Loy replied that the Boynton Health College Student Health Survey was used, and is an excellent resource with highly detailed information. UMM also utilizes a survey given to entering students, and tracks usage statistics at its counseling center. She noted that the Student Life Health Response Team has seen a dramatic increase in the need for support. Baribeau-Thoennes said that for UMD, the Boynton Health survey data is also used, and each year a survey is sent to students who have utilized campus health resources; the survey changes yearly, rotating between counseling, substance abuse services, etc.

Mitchell asked if there were any other gaps in service the vice chancellors saw on their campuses relating to student mental health. Olson-Loy responded that UMM has modest budgets, and fewer resources than the Twin Cities campus; it would be helpful, she said, to have a more system-wide approach to student mental health. Erwin agreed, saying that in order for the University to work better as a system, there should be a system-wide plan for student mental health going forward.

3. Off-campus housing discussion - Palermo introduced Scott Creer, coordinator of housing properties, Housing and Residential Life, and Mannix Clark, associate director, Housing and Residential Life, to discuss three primary requests from the SSCC: collaboration with student governments on each campus on a yearly student renters survey, and publication of those results; creation of an off-campus search tool for students on each campus which hosts student reviews of landlords; and, publication of the “de-list,” a list of Twin Cities landlords and/or management companies that have violated off-campus housing policy. Palermo noted that these requests were made in response to many concerns brought forth by students living off campus in the Twin Cities, Duluth, and Rochester areas, including concerns with predatory leasing practices, safety

issues, and lack of response to concerns. Many students are currently utilizing the Facebook “Class of 2020” page to voice concerns, but would likely utilize a more official University system if available, she added.

Clark explained that the University Student Legal Service (USLS) and Housing and Residential Life sent these requests to the interim vice president of University Services, Mike Berthelsen, for review. Creer provided an update of the Request for Proposals (RFP) process for the off-campus housing search tool on the Twin Cities campus, and said that the group charged with evaluating vendors is nearing the completion of their selection; once selected, the vendor proposal will be sent to the Office of the General Counsel (OGC) for review in mid-March, and once approved by OGC, implemented as soon as possible. Clark added that most schools in the Big 10 outsource off-campus listing services, and that this approach is in line with common practice, since listing and review vendors are able to leverage their size and resources to provide better listings and pull reviews from Google or Yelp. This is a good time to outsource the Twin Cities listing service, he added, due to dwindling staff resources.

Palermo asked about the off-campus housing search tool, and if it was possible to host student reviews that were not pulled from Google or Yelp or similar review sites, since when landlords violate off-campus housing policy in the Twin Cities, they do not appear in searches on the University’s website. She asked if it was possible to tie the yearly student reviews from the housing survey to the listing service instead, to help students better identify problem landlord and management companies. Creer responded that he was in support of the yearly housing survey, and could publish the information, but that it may not be technically possible to tie the information into the landlord search tool on the website. Additionally, he said, a third-party vendor is more likely to pull reviews from Google or Yelp because then neither their company nor the University is required to monitor the content of the reviews. In cases where a landlord or management company wants to dispute a review, they would then need to address the situation with Google or Yelp directly. Trish said that after her meeting with Brian Slovut, deputy general counsel, OGC, and Creer and Clark, she was under the impression that OGC determined that the University was not at significant risk by publishing direct student reviews in the search tool. Creer said that he was not certain of this, and would need to discuss with OGC again. Palermo replied that the SSCC would like to be part of that continuing discussion.

Regarding the yearly renters survey, Palermo said that while the Student Senate could task a subcommittee with sending out the survey, she felt it was more appropriate for a University department to do this since there is less turnover from year to year. Creer said that he did not think it would be manageable for the Off-Campus Housing office to maintain essentially two different listing services, one the third-party search tool, and the other the student survey results. There are also other issues that should be considered, such as landlords giving a rent credit or other perks to student tenants for giving a positive review on the yearly survey, he added. Creer suggested that it may be a good idea for the Office of Off-Campus Living, a branch of the Office of Student Affairs, to be involved in the discussion of who should host a yearly student housing survey.

Zach Sheffler, representative, Council of Graduate Students (COGS), asked if Yelp and Google

reviews were generally biased in a negative direction. Creer replied that this is generally correct, though it is true of all reviews, including a yearly student survey.

Clark said that he was interested in speaking with vendors to see if student reviews from a yearly survey could be integrated with the off-campus search tool listings, and noted he would report back to the committee with the result of those conversations.

4. Aramark resolution - Palermo reviewed an Aramark resolution, drafted in response to two primary student concerns: food quality/lack of options, and ethical concerns with Aramark as a University vendor. She noted that at the beginning of the meeting today, a representative for Mike Berthelsen, interim vice president, University Services, hand delivered [a response](#) to the original draft of the resolution. In light of this response, she said, some language in the resolution should likely be changed, and the committee would need to vote on those changes via email after the meeting. Palermo noted that she would be presenting this resolution to the Senate Committee on Finance and Planning (SCFP), the Senate Committee on Student Affairs (SCSA), and the Social Concerns Committee (if approved by the SSCC) to possibly co-sign the resolution, and that MSA, COGS, and other groups were interested in passing similar resolutions.

Schwartz said that she thought the resources section of the resolution was very detailed, and very helpful for framing the concerns surrounding Aramark's business ethics. Sheffler commented that the penalty provisions noted in the University's contract with Aramark are based on food quality, and that the contract does not end until 2020. He wondered what SSCC members hoped would be accomplished by the resolution. Palermo replied that while the contract is not up for renewal until 2020, it is a long process for the University to find and evaluate new contract vendors. It will be important to have student input into that process, she said, and it is important that students go on official record with these concerns.

Palermo noted that the revised resolution would be sent out for email vote, and asked that members reply by Monday, January 30th.

5. Discussion of Board of Regents Candidates - Members voted unanimously to take this discussion off the record.

6. Revisions to SSCC charge - Fanda Yang presented a proposal to change the language in the SSCC charge to simplify appointments from student government groups to the SSCC. The revisions proposed were as follows:

Language to be added is underlined; language to be deleted is ~~struck out~~.

Membership

The Student Consultative Committee shall be composed of:

- one representative of COGS
- one representative of CSA
- one representative of MSA
- one representative of MCSA
- one representative of PSG
- one representative of RSA

- one representative of UMDSA
- the chair, vice chair, and at-large representative of the Student Senate.
A student governance representative members shall be ~~the sitting vice presidents (or the otherwise second highest ranking executive officers)~~ a member of the respective student governance organizations, ~~or who is~~ elected or appointed in accordance with procedures determined by the respective campuses' student governance organizations.

With no discussion, a vote was taken, and the changes were passed unanimously. The changes will be passed along to the Student Senate for approval before the charge is changed.

Schwartz asked if senators who switched colleges mid-year were still eligible to serve as senators for the college that elected them. Barbara Irish, senate associate, University Senate Office, said that after reviewing the bylaws, rules, and constitution, there is no language in any of these documents for this situation; this would likely mean that an elected senator is **not** required to give up their seat when changing colleges mid-year. Schwartz said that she would like to open discussion of this issue at a future SSCC meeting to see if revisions are needed.

Hearing no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Barbara Irish
University Senate Office