

Senate Committee on Educational Policy (SCEP)
September 16, 2020
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; Committee Orientation; Policy Overview; Academic Alerts Project Update; Fall Modalities; gradSERU Covid Edition Results]

PRESENT: Thomas Chase (chair), Toni Abts, June Carbone, Matthew Croft, Dan Delaney, Stacy Doepner-Hove, Brett Heischmidt, Stephanie Huisman, Sara Hurley, Jennifer Goodnough, Scott Lanyon, John LaVelle, Danya Leebaw, Robert McMaster, Robert Poch, Jennifer Row, Katherine Scheil, Brian Sick, Rayan Tejada

GUESTS: Stacey Tidball, director, Continuity & Compliance, Academic Support Resources; Carin Anderson-Thoms, associate director, Continuity & Compliance, Academic Support Resources

OTHERS: John Hoffman, vice chancellor, Academic & Student Affairs, University of Minnesota Crookston; Hana Ikramuddin, reporter, *Minnesota Daily*; Jessica Kuecker Grotjohn, assistant to the vice provost, Office of Undergraduate Education; Jennifer Reckner, chief of staff, Office of Undergraduate Education; Leslie Schiff, associate dean, University curriculum; Office of Undergraduate Education; Karen Starry, assistant to the vice provost and dean, Graduate Education; Marlo Welshons, assistant to the provost, Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost

1. Welcome and Introductions

Professor Thomas Chase, chair, called the meeting to order and called for a round of introductions.

2. Committee Orientation

Next, Chase and Amber Bathke, senate associate, University Senate Office, provided the committee with an [orientation](#) to University Senate governance.

3. Policy Overview

Stacey Tidball, director, Continuity & Compliance, Academic Support Resources, gave an overview of the policy review process and SCEP's role therein.

4. Academic Alerts Project Update

Carin Anderson-Thoms, associate director, Continuity & Compliance, Academic Support Resources, [updated the committee](#) about a project related to academic alerts. Anderson-Thoms explained that current research suggests that addressing academic performance issues

early can have a positive impact on students' academic success. The University of Minnesota Twin Cities Campus' current practice is to use midterm grade rosters in PeopleSoft or ask instructors to contact advisors in the middle of the term if a student is at risk of failing a course. However, the practice has low adoption rates, and therefore many students are not getting midterm alerts. She then detailed issues to be solved; recommended changes to address these issues; steps that had already been taken; short-term and long-term benefits, and plans for phase II of the project.

Leslie Schiff, associate dean, University curriculum; Office of Undergraduate Education, noted that some people had expressed concern about alerts going to students' advisors. She explained that the goal there was to allow advisors to see overall patterns, such as when students are struggling in multiple courses, in hopes of early identification of issues that may contribute to this (such mental health, food insecurity, etc.).

Jennifer Goodnough informed members that they have already adopted a variation of this practice at the Morris campus and that it does support student success. She cautioned, however, that at Morris, all faculty are advisors, so all faculty frequently receive information about students that are not theirs. Anderson-Thoms stated that phase II of the project would look at security and privacy best practices.

5. Fall Modalities

Next, Bob McMaster, vice provost and dean, Undergraduate Education, [updated members](#) on instruction modalities for fall 2020, in light of the pandemic. He noted that classroom space was constricted by the need to maintain six feet of social distance between individuals. He added that faculty will again get to decide what modality they prefer to use for spring 2021.

6. gradSERU Covid Edition Results

Finally, Scott Lanyon, vice provost and dean, Graduate Education, presented [data](#) (password protected; accessible to users with a University of Minnesota x500 ID) from the special edition of the gradSERU survey on the graduate student experience during covid-19. Lanyon noted that the survey had a 31% response rate, and that 82% of respondents indicated that they were very satisfied with the University's response to the pandemic. 74% of respondents indicated that they were satisfied with the support they received from their faculty advisor, and 86% of teaching assistants (TAs) who responded were satisfied with the support they received from their instructor.

With regard to factors that might have influenced students' ability to transition successfully to online learning, three stood out, said Lanyon: lack of motivation, lack of interaction with other students, and lack of access to appropriate study space (a distracting environment).

Lanyon further noted that the survey revealed an increase in symptoms of anxiety and depression during the pandemic. Responses to questions based on a clinical tool used to assess anxiety and depression, were as follows:

Percent responding 'More than half the days' or 'Nearly everyday' in response to the prompt, "Over the last 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by the following problem?"

Symptom	2019 gradSERU	gradSERU Covid Edition (2020)
Little interest/pleasure in doing things	10%	28%
Feeling depressed/down	10%	22.8%
Feeling nervous/anxious	20%	37%
Not being able to stop worrying	16%	29%

Schiff asked whether Lanyon had heard reports of TAs being impelled to teach in person, even if they do not feel safe doing so. Lanyon said no, but that he remained concerned that if students turn down in-person TA positions, there may not be other options available for them.

Chase adjourned the meeting at 4:00 p.m.

Amber Bathke
University Senate Office