

DISABILITIES ISSUES COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING
JANUARY 23, 2002

[In these minutes:

Welcome and Introductions, Committee vacancies, Approval of November 14, 2001 Minutes, Update on Subcommittees, Presentation by Terry Margo, Facilities Management Owners Rep, on Access as it Relates to the Design and Construction Process]

[These minutes reflect discussion and debate at a meeting of a committee of the University of Minnesota Senate or Twin Cities Assembly; none of the comments, conclusions or actions reported in these minutes represent the views of, nor are they binding on, the Senate or Assembly, the Administration or the Board of Regents.]

PRESENT:

William Durfee, Chair, Bobbi Cordano, Julie Sweitzer, Harvey Carlson, Elizabeth Lightfoot, Virgil Mathiowetz, Ken Myers, Christopher Johnstone

REGRETS: Robert Copeland, Paula Knutzen, James Carey, David Wuolu, Amanda Tempel

ABSENT: Joe Reichle

OTHER(S): Laurie Wilson, Vicky Nelson, Roberta Juarez

GUEST: Terry Margo

I).
Professor Durfee called the meeting to order, welcomed those present and asked members to introduce themselves.

II). COMMITTEE VACANCIES:

Due to unforeseen member resignations, one student vacancy and one faculty position are open on the Committee.

Committee members were encouraged to forward the names of individuals who might be interested in serving.

Recommendations should be forwarded to the Student Committee on Committees and the Faculty Committee on Committees.

III). Committee members unanimously approved the November 14, 2001 meeting minutes.

IV).
Next, Professor Durfee briefly updated the Committee on the activities of two of the subcommittees that were established earlier this year.

- Academics Subcommittee – Committee members Harvey Turner and Professor Virgil Mathiowetz were asked to accomplish two action items by the next meeting on March 13, 2002:
 - a. Identify courses that have substantial disabilities culture content.
 - b. Determine feasibility of creating new programs or eventually even a minor in Disabilities Studies. Analogously, identify faculty champions to spearhead this initiative.
- Access to Information Technology Subcommittee – On-going strides are being taken to ensure that the

Access to Information Technology Policy will be implemented in March 2002. Disability Services Director, Bobbi Cordano, mentioned that public comment continues to be solicited and the team is aware that some language in the policy will need to be revised.

Ms. Cordano recently initiated conversation with Billie Wahlstrom, Director of Distributed Education, and the Provost's office about exploring the idea of establishing an 'access core'. The 'access core' would be comprised of graduate and undergraduate students that are interested in computer access.

The goal would be to have a cadre of students with expertise to work with the faculty to upgrade their websites.

Once implemented the Access to Information Technology Policy will eventually require University-wide compliance. Implementation of the policy will be staggered. For example, websites with the highest amount of traffic will require compliance sooner than less trafficked pages.

Funding sources are now being sought for this policy. An investment from central administration and the various colleges will be needed in order to implement the Access to Information Technology Policy.

If colleges cannot afford to make cash contributions they will be given the option of committing matching staff resources. In addition, Disability Services will commit resources for training.

Professor Durfee volunteered to contact the chair of the Senate Committee on Information Technology, Phil Goodrich, to discuss the possibility of bringing this matter forward at the Senate meeting on March 28, 2002.

Ms. Cordano was encouraged by the idea of gaining faculty support through a resolution at the next Senate meeting.

V).

Terry Margo, an Owner's Representative with Facilities Management, addressed the issue of access and how it fits into the design and construction process at the University. The University uses two primary approaches when undertaking construction projects, the design/bid/build process and the design/build process.

According to Mr. Margo there is not a big difference between the two strategies. First, the design/bid/build process involves hiring an architect and the architect designs the project after consulting with Disability Services, the University's code officials and other relevant groups. Once the design phase is completed it is sent out for bids, a contractor is selected and the project begins. In the design/build process the University disseminates RFPs (requests for proposals) to all University approved design builders. The design builders based on specifications received from the University will determine how much the project will cost and how long it will take to complete. After a design builder is chosen, the project begins.

A handout was distributed to Committee members outlining the 2000 Universal Design standards the University follows when designing projects.

These standards along with mechanical, electrical and other guidelines are in the process of being revised. It is expected that the standards will be updated by April 2002.

Mr. Margo went on to say there are several steps in both the design/bid/build and the design/build process each one of which solicits input from the many University departments involved in construction projects. The process operates as a check and balance approach to ensure that projects adhere to the documented standards.

Bobbi Cordano, Director of Disability Services, asked Mr. Margo who decides, for example, in a cost overrun situation whether a power door will be installed as opposed to some other installation that would be

less expensive.

Ms. Cordano believes that the opportunity for feedback from Disability Services and other key departments is being overlooked.

Mr. Margo assured the Committee that the University's best interests are always taken into consideration as part of the design/build team process and every effort is made to keep all interested parties involved. Mr. Margo stressed that the success of the design/build process resides in teamwork.

Mr. Margo also stated that there is a Standards Exception Committee for every project undertaken by the University. This Committee reviews and makes recommendations and decisions on proposed exceptions. The University requires its design builders to design according to the institution's standards; the contract language is very specific.

Mr. Margo stressed there is a tremendous amount of coordination between interested parties to complete projects.

Another important factor in the success of the design/bid/build or design/build process is the University's Owners Rep who is assigned a project and oversees that project until it is done. The Owners Rep is also the person that pays the contractor upon completion of the project and is authorized to hold payment until a project is done right. Owners Reps are empowered in the process to ensure accountability from the construction company to the University.

Committee members participated in an engaging discussion concerning design/bid/build, design/bid and universal design. Discussion highlights include:

Julie Sweitzer, Director of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, suggested seminars be offered to Owners Reps to educate and/or update their knowledge of universal design concepts. Conceding that the Owners Reps already know a lot about construction, Ms. Sweitzer commented that attending a seminar covering universal design principles would benefit the Owners Reps and give them a better understanding of why Disabilities Services needs to be consulted on construction projects. Mr. Margo replied that there approximately 14 owners reps that are well versed on the standards, however, he would be willing to consider this idea further.

After reviewing the handout that was distributed, Professor Durfee mentioned that the universal design concepts are much more vague than some of the other standards outlined in the document. He wanted to know how the University assures that the contractors are knowledgeable and skilled in universal design principles.

Mr. Margo replied that all architects and contractors that the University works with are pre-approved and are aware of the institutions standards.

Ms. Cordano concurred with Professor Durfee and believes that the University's architects and contractors need to be able to demonstrate to the University in some articulated form that they have complied with universal design concepts by citing specific examples. Mr. Margo stated that if the architects and contractors are not following the standards and universal design principles they would be removed from the University's list of pre-approved vendors.

It was further noted that universal design is a relatively new concept and has only been included in the standards within the last year.

Some Committee members voiced their skepticism that every architect and contractor the University deals with is truly knowledgeable of universal design concepts. Committee members brainstormed and put forth the following approaches to ensure vendors are knowledge of and practicing universal design principles:

- Institute a dialogue format whereby design builders would need to demonstrate specific examples of

universal design principles incorporated in a particular project.

- Conduct training seminars not only for the Owners Reps but the pre-approved design builders as well.
- Require design builders to have on record with the University their company's approach to universal design.

Mr. Margo volunteered to serve as a resource person for the Committee on this topic should members so desire.

VI). With no further business, Professor Durfee adjourned the meeting.

Renee Dempsey
University Senate