

DISABILITIES ISSUES COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING
SEPTEMBER 24, 2004

[In these minutes: Introductions, Review of Committee Charge, Endowment Fund for Students with Disabilities, Disability Study Major Update, Center for Disability Studies, Subcommittee to Raise Faculty and Staff Awareness of Disability Issues]

[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: Harold Pickett, chair, Maureen McManus, Karen Nelson, Bobbi Cordano, Julie Sweitzer, Felicia Hodge, Virgil Mathiowetz, Patrick McNamara, Ken Myers, Christopher Johnstone

REGRETS: Kathleen Ball, Marilyn Bruin, Elizabeth Lightfoot, Victoria Nelson

ABSENT: Harvey Carlson, Carrie Bloss

OTHER(S): Roberta Juarez, Laurie Wilson

I). Dr. Pickett called the meeting to order and asked those present to introduce themselves.

II). REVIEW OF COMMITTEE CHARGE: Dr. Pickett noted that in conjunction with the reorganization of the Senate structure, Professor Judith Martin, chair of the SCC, requested that all Senate committees review their charge and make suggestions for changes. Copies of the charge were distributed to members for their review.

Due to the broad scope of the charter, a member expressed a concern regarding how the Committee is to accomplish all it has been charged to do. It was noted that the Committee is able make effective change both formally and informally by bringing resolutions forward to the University Senate and by building inter-disciplinary relationships.

Members affirmed the need for the Committee to continue to deal with system-wide disability issues.

Dr. Pickett asked members to review the charge before the next meeting and think about whether the charge is so broad that it does not adequately define what the Committee does or wants to do and be prepared to discuss this at the next meeting.

III). Dr. Pickett called on Bobbi Cordano to provide members with information on a new endowment fund for students with disabilities. Ms. Cordano began by noting that through the efforts of Harvey Johnson and Ruth Stewart, 1938 graduates of Marshall High School, the Marshall High School class of 1938 raised approximately \$8,600, which has been donated to the University of Minnesota, earmarked for scholarships for students with disabilities. As of last spring, upon finalization of a memorandum of agreement, Disability Services is the custodian of this money. Disability Services plans to raise

additional money so the fund will be fully endowed.

This fall, previous donors will receive a letter from Disability Services informing them about this new endowment fund. To show the University's appreciation, Disability Services in conjunction with the University Foundation are hoping to be able to arrange for the Marshall High School class of 1938/1939 to hold their reunion at the McNamara Alumni Center next summer.

The endowment fund has been named 'The Marshall Access and Education Fund' (MAEF). Ms. Cordano is unaware of any other Disability Services office in higher education with such an endowment fund. To attain quasi endowment status, \$10,000 must be in the fund and to achieve full endowment status requires \$25,000. Disability Services' goal is to have the fund fully endowed within one year. Once the fund is fully endowed, the University will receive 10% of the funds per year to help with scholarships, access, student development, and programming.

As part of the promotion of the endowment fund, there will be a focus on scholarships and one of the first initiatives will be to establish a writing center for students with disabilities. Ms. Cordano invited Disabilities Issues members to become involved in efforts related to the promotion of this endowment fund.

A member suggested that Ms. Cordano explore acquiring matching funds from either the Graduate School and/or the Foundation for the scholarship portion of the fund. Ms. Cordano was appreciative of this information and stated she plans to also make connections with private foundations as another means of attaining matching funds.

IV). Dr. Pickett called on Professor Virgil Mathiowetz, chair, of the Disability Studies Major Subcommittee to provide members with an update on a Disability Studies major at the University. To begin, Professor Mathiowetz, distributed a handout, 'Proposal For a Disability Studies Major'. He went on to note the Subcommittee recommends the major be offered through the College of Continuing Education: Inter-College Program (ICP), which is an established program at the University that has the flexibility to develop interdisciplinary majors.

Six core courses have been identified as part of this major:

1. Historical Perspectives on Disability
2. Cultural Perspectives on Disability
3. Sociology of Disability
4. Law, Public Policy and Politics of Disability
5. Seminar: Contemporary Issues
6. Research in Disability Studies

Issues to be resolved:

- Who will develop and teach the new core courses?
- What colleges/departments will house the courses? (Needs to be more than one to meet ICP guidelines).
- What administrative structure will be needed to maintain the quality of the major?
- Who are the key stakeholders that would support this proposal and help in the planning?
- How should this proposal be moved forward during these challenging fiscal times?

This major would target two primary audiences:

1. Individuals pursuing health science majors.
2. Individuals interested in disability studies that plan to work with people with disabilities.

Ms. Cordano noted that Professor Brenda Jo Brueggemann of Ohio State University (OSU), a catalyst in establishing OSU's Disability Studies minor, will be at the University of Minnesota on October 28th and 29th. On Tuesday, October 28th from 4:00 - 5:30 Professor Brueggemann will be the featured speaker at the CMU Campus Club and she will present on the topic, 'Why Disabilities Studies, Why Now'. Then, from 6:00 - 7:30 at DSCC (Disability Student Cultural Center) there will be a meeting with both undergraduate and graduate students to discuss shared experiences among people with disabilities. Finally, on Wednesday, October 29th there will be a small group breakfast meeting in Morrill Hall, which Disabilities Issues members will be invited to, in order to hear her recommendations on how the University should proceed with its Disability Studies major.

Professor Mathiowetz further noted the Subcommittee is:

- Exploring the possibility of getting an IRSCA grant (Interdisciplinary Research, Scholarly and Creative Activities) through the Graduate School.
- Meeting with the Graduate School's Interim Dean Victor Bloomfield and Associate Dean Shirley Garner on October 2nd to inform them of this initiative and get their input on how best to proceed.

A member recommended that meetings also be set up with CLA Dean Rosenstone, Associate Dean Arlene Carney and Vice Provost Craig Swan to get their buy-in as well.

Dr. Pickett asked if the Disabilities Issues Committee could do anything to facilitate this initiative. Ms. Cordano believes it would be extremely helpful if the Committee would support this effort through the networking process in order to gain broad based support. Additionally, Ms. Cordano asked the Committee to continue to offer ideas/suggestions because these are very beneficial as well.

It was suggested, based on previous conversations, that a Disability Issues major be housed in American Studies because it also is an inter-disciplinary major. Laurie Wilson of the Crookston campus recommended designing the major so that individuals outside the metro area are able to access these courses as well.

V). As follow-up to a discussion last spring concerning a Center for Disability Studies, Ms. Cordano noted that there are various pockets throughout the University that deal with disability issues in one form or another. As a result, there have been conversations about the need to better coordinate/organize these resources. Logistically, there are many unanswered questions surrounding the workability of such a Center for Disability Studies, and this idea is only at the conceptual stage.

VI). At the end of last year a subcommittee was formed to raise faculty and staff awareness of disability issues. Professor William Durfee volunteered to take the lead on this endeavor. Renee Dempsey, Senate staff, noted, however, that based on the most current membership list, Professor Durfee is no longer on the Committee. Ms. Dempsey will check into Professor Durfee's status and report back to the Committee. Members agreed that there is indeed a need to raise faculty and staff awareness related to disability issues. A member recommended that once this subcommittee is up and

running, it should seek out the advise of the DSCC in order to get students' perspectives on what kind of awareness faculty and staff should receive.

A member, playing the role of devil's advocate, said maybe there are no problems on the campuses related to disabilities. This member questioned whether a faculty, student, and staff survey should be conducted to determine peoples' perceptions around this issue. Julie Sweitzer from the Office of Equal Opportunity noted that her office has seen a steady increase in the number of disability based discrimination complaints over the past several years. In particular, she noted student curriculum issues are a source of great concern. Therefore, she recommended that the subcommittee focus on the faculty/student relationship, especially the instructional aspect. Ms. Sweitzer further noted that there would be a faculty and staff, University-wide climate survey conducted in November, which will address some of the issues raised today. While the survey will be able to tell overall if faculty and staff with disabilities are less happy than other employees, the survey will not be able to decipher whether their state of happiness is attributable to their disability or not. Ms. Sweitzer noted she is unfamiliar with the student survey data and its content related to this issue.

Another member requested that disabled faculty and staff not be overlooked. Fear of retaliation can deter faculty and/or staff from voicing their concerns. In Ms. Cordano's opinion, these comments are very disturbing and she believes that this is an issue the subcommittee needs to explore. Ms. Cordano volunteered to check with the Employee Services Unit within Disability Services to see if they have been hearing similar comments from their clients.

As a result of the Committee's discussion on this matter, a suggestion was made that the subcommittee focus on universal design in terms of how environments can be more inclusive and academics more accessible.

In closing, Dr. Pickett noted that the Committee's next meeting is November 12, 2003 from 9:00 - 10:30 in room 238A Morrill Hall. Members were encouraged to email Dr. Pickett picke008@umn.edu or Renee Dempsey demps005@umn.edu if they would like to put any items on the agenda for the next meeting.

Ms. Cordano suggested immediately reconstituting the subcommittee to raise faculty and staff awareness of disability issues. The following members volunteered to sit on the subcommittee: Dr. Pickett, Professor Hodge, Maureen McManus and Karen Nelson. Between now and November 12th these members agreed to explore ideas related to this issue. Additionally, Ms. Cordano agreed to check with her office to get a sense of the issues they have been dealing with.

Additional agenda items for the November 12th meeting include:

- An update on the integrated return to work efforts by Disability Services.
- Receive information from Barb Blacklock and Betty Benson from Disability Services on the "Needs Assessment Project: Exploring Barriers and Opportunities for College Students with Psychiatric Disabilities". This grant studied the barriers students with psychiatric disabilities face in post secondary education. Ms. Cordano distributed the executive summary from this project and asked members read it before the next meeting.

VII). Hearing no further business, Dr. Pickett adjourned the meeting.

Renee Dempsey
University Senate