

SENATE COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL CONCERNS
MINUTES OF MEETING
NOVEMBER 9, 2009

[In these minutes: Local Foods Initiatives, SRI Update, Future Agenda Items]

[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.]

PRESENT: Timothy Sheldon, chair, Joseph Marchesani, Sandra Krebsbach, Benton Schnabel, Rebecca von Dissen, Kaari Nelson, Michael O'Day, Catherine Jordan, Kim Robien, Marynel Ryan, Ajay Skaria, Shannon Biegger, Christine Dolph, Ashley Gaschk, Elizabeth Shay, Carolyn Wardell

REGRETS: Lisa Pogoff, Amelious Whyte, Austin Loeb

ABSENT: David Golden, Katherine Fennelly, Michael Sommers, Jeffrey Thaler

GUESTS: Leslie Bowman, executive director, Contract Administration-Auxiliary Services - University Dining Services and Karen DeVet, ARAMARK

I). Mr. Sheldon convened the meeting, welcomed those present and called for introductions.

II). Members unanimously approved the October 12, 2009 minutes.

III). Mr. Sheldon introduced the main agenda item, local foods initiatives, and welcomed two of today's guests, Leslie Bowman and Karen DeVet. Ms. Bowman began by introducing herself and Ms. DeVet.

Next, Mr. DeVet stated that local foods and local purchasing is a portion of University Dining Services (hereafter UDS) overall sustainability platform on campus. UDS' sustainability brochure was distributed to members.

UDS has been active in securing local foods for the past three to four years, noted Ms. DeVet. With that said, it was noted that UDS is a charter member of the Heartland Food Network (<http://www.mnproject.org/food-heartland.html>). This is a network of companies, growers and producers who work to further making local foods available. In addition, UDS also partners with Food Alliance Midwest (<http://www.localfoods.umn.edu/foodalliance>). Another main supporter in the local food arena for UDS is Sysco Minnesota (<http://www.syscomn.com/>). For example, Sysco Minnesota has set up a network of small farmers and producers whereby they pick up their products and bring them back to their warehouse for redistribution. During the Minnesota growing season, Sysco has agreed to fill the University's produce orders first

with local produce and only use other sources when they are unable to fulfill the University's entire produce order.

UDS has been working to expand its local purchasing from on-campus entities such as the student-run farm Cornercopia, Andrew Boss Meat Lab and the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum.

A good portion of UDS' local purchasing comes from fluid milk. Approximately 25% of UDS' purchases (total dollars) in the six residential dining facilities on the Twin Cities campus are dairy purchases. In 2008, the University purchased over 100,000 gallons of local dairy products from Land O Lakes, which was distributed through Sysco Minnesota. Produce, on the other hand, comes from a variety of different sources.

Currently, UDS just completed its third annual "Eat Well, Live Well" event, stated Ms. DeVet. This is an event that serves to showcase UDS' local partnerships as well as its broader sustainability efforts. An informal survey was conducted at this event to find out, which of UDS' sustainability efforts were most engaging for students, and the two most frequently mentioned items were recycling and local purchasing.

Given that many students believe local purchasing is important, a big challenge for UDS this year will be to communicate what it is doing along these lines. UDS will work to inform students at the point of purchase or selection as to whether a given product is local. UDS will continue to work with its vendors to source additional local partnerships.

A member asked how UDS defines 'local?' Ms. DeVet stated that UDS is defining local as the states contiguous to Minnesota.

On the Morris campus, noted a member, there is push for the University to use local foods whenever possible. With this said, conversations have taken place in Morris concerning whether Land O Lakes products can actually be called 'local.' While Land O Lakes may buy some of their dairy products from local farmers, they actually use products from across the U.S. and not just the upper Midwest. Ms. DeVet stated that this is not a conversation UDS has participated in. UDS focuses not only on local growers, but local producers and companies in an attempt to support the local economy. UDS can ask Land O Lakes to report on where their products are sourced from. Ms. DeVet, however, was hesitant to speak on their behalf and guarantee what products they would be able to track.

One aspect of this issue, noted Mr. Sheldon, is buying local foods, but another aspect is the size of the producers. For example, Land O Lakes is a huge corporation. Is there any sense that Sysco Minnesota would work with a group of local farmers who are producing products on a smaller scale? Ms. DeVet stated liability insurance likely factors into which producers/companies Sysco Minnesota is willing to enter into purchasing arrangements with. Ms. Bowman added that Food Alliance Midwest works with smaller farmers to form cooperatives. While individual small farmers may be unable to afford

liability insurance or meet some of Sysco Minnesota's other requirements on their own, if they work as a cooperative, they are in a much better position to meet their requirements.

Is it possible to have another definition of 'local' that would specify the number of miles where food is sourced from, asked a member? Ms. Bowman stated that this is a question that groups who talk about sustainability and local foods discuss frequently. Ultimately, it is UDS' responsibility to procure the products it has ordered. If the definition is narrowed too much, UDS may reduce its ability to procure certain regional products.

A member commented that sometimes the cost of procuring local products can be significantly higher. Given the financial challenges facing the University today, is UDS able to procure local products economically? Ms. DeVet stated that in some cases UDS can procure these products economically, and in other situations there is a cost differential. Ms. Bowman cited the example of cage-free eggs, which cost UDS more than non-cage-free eggs. Recognizing that cage-free eggs were important to the campus, UDS made the decision to purchase these eggs in the residential dining facilities. In other cases, noted Ms. DeVet, UDS has worked with vendors to negotiate special pricing.

As a client of Sysco Minnesota, is the University able to influence the products they offer, asked a member? Ms. DeVet explained that the purchasing arrangement is actually between ARAMARK and Sysco Minnesota. Within ARAMARK, there is a supply chain management group who works with distributors such as Sysco Minnesota to negotiate pricing, brand specification, etc. Ms. Bowman added that the University benefits from its size in this situation. Sysco Minnesota has restrictions on what it is willing to warehouse because it has to turn over products in a certain amount of time. Because of the volume consumed by ARAMARK on a nationwide basis, it enables the University, under certain circumstances, to get products that other smaller organizations might not.

In terms of size, asked Mr. Sheldon, how big of a client is the University for ARAMARK in Minnesota? Ms. DeVet explained that ARAMARK arranges its business channels around the types of clients it works with. For example, the University/ARAMARK contract is within ARAMARK Higher Education. Within the State of Minnesota, ARAMARK is one of the top ten employers. From a higher education perspective, ARAMARK is organized regionally. The University is the second largest regional university for ARAMARK: however, this includes Arizona. Just looking at the Midwest, the University would be the largest institution of higher education serviced by ARAMARK. The University is considered a relatively large account by ARAMARK's standards and among its competitors.

Are there different standards in terms of the type of products that are available in the different venues across campus, asked a member? No, stated Ms. DeVet. The only place where there are significant differences in products is between catering and other locations on campus.

Because the Crookston and Morris campuses contract with Sodexo, asked a member, would it be possible hear from Sodexo on what it is doing to bring local foods to those campuses? Mr. Sheldon said that this could likely be arranged.

Mr. Sheldon thanked Ms. Bowman and Ms. DeVet for their presentation and welcomed them to stay to listen to the committee's other guest, Courtney Tchida. Mr. Sheldon welcomed Ms. Tchida, student programs coordinator, Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture - <http://www.misa.umn.edu/> (hereafter MISA).

Ms. Tchida stated that MISA is a partnership between the College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences; the Sustainers' Coalition, (a group of individuals and community-based nonprofit organizations who work on issues related to sustainable agriculture); and University of Minnesota Extension. MISA works to bring together the diverse interests of the agricultural community with interests from across the University community in a cooperative effort to promote sustainable agriculture practices in Minnesota and beyond.

Next, Ms. Tchida went on to highlight the wide variety of programs and publications offered through MISA. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Student organic farm, Cornercopia.
- Marketing Local Food, a MISA publication.
- Endowed Chair Program.
- Green Lands, Blue Waters.

Ms. Tchida encouraged members to visit the MISA website - <http://www.misa.umn.edu/home.html> to get detailed information on all the programs and publications she mentioned. In addition, she suggested interested members visit <http://localfoods.umn.edu/>, which is an attempt to catalogue local food experts, partners and producers.

In response to a question about the status of the Local Foods Task Force, and who is leading it, Ms. Tchida reported that this seat is vacant, but in the process of being filled.

A member asked Ms. Tchida to provide more information about the MISA program, Green Lands, Blue Waters. She explained that this program is a consortium of different universities along the Mississippi River. The mission of Green Lands, Blue Waters is to support development of a new generation of agricultural systems along the Mississippi River by integrating more perennial plants and other continuous living cover into the agricultural landscape.

Mr. Sheldon thanked Ms. Tchida for her presentation.

Mr. Sheldon asked for members' thoughts on today's presentations, and whether there should be any follow-up on the part of the committee. Members' suggestions included:

- Use the Blue Cross Blue Shield Healthy Eating Campaign as a case study for the Social Concerns Committee as it relates to this topic - <http://www.bcbs.com/news/plans/blue-cross-launches-statewide.html>.
- Invite a representative from Green Lands, Blue Waters to talk about their sustainability efforts.
- Invite a representative from the Local Foods Task Force to learn more about what they are focusing on.
- In an effort to do due diligence around this issue, the flip side of sustainability and local foods should be explored. Invite someone who can speak to the pros and cons of a sustainable/local foods approach versus a more traditional approach.

In light of the committee's charge, a few members questioned whether this issue had any social concern implications. Mr. Sheldon stated that if this is an issue the committee wants to pursue, who else should the committee hear from to gain a well-rounded sense of potential social concern issues.

A member suggested looking at the gaps in the University's local foods efforts to any identify pros and cons for pushing these efforts even further. Invite someone from CFANS to compare and contrast the traditional agri-business approach and the sustainability/eating local approach. It would be good to hear about the state of thinking in this field/discipline in general.

Another member stated that often when people think about local foods they assume these foods are grown on small family farms; however, local foods are often grown on huge farms. The committee needs to think through what it really means when discussing buying locally. There is a significant difference between buying locally geographically versus buying locally from small family farmers.

Is the University buying locally because it provides some economic benefit to the region it has declared as local, or is the University buying locally because it wants to cut down on greenhouse gas emissions, etc. Reasons for buying local foods can vary, e.g., health, environmental, economic.

Mr. Sheldon asked members whether they wanted to pursue this issue. Members agreed they would like to learn more about it. The suggestion was again made to invite a representative from the Local Foods Task Force to find out what they are doing. Other invitation suggestions included inviting someone who could provide an objective opinion on buying local foods such as an agricultural economist. It would be beneficial to invite a scholar of these issues who can provide the committee with an objective viewpoint as opposed to scholars who would advocate for a particular approach/model. Beyond dollars and sense, it would be good to understand other issues that are involved, e.g., health. Other factors that come into play when looking at the buying local issue are organic, the ability to feed people on a large scale, climate change, etc. The suggestion was made to invite Professor John Foley from the Institute on the Environment.

IV). Mr. Sheldon called on Cathy Jordan to provide members with a brief Socially Responsible Investment (hereafter SRI) update. Ms. Jordan reported that the Social Concerns SRI Subcommittee worked in collaboration with the SCFA Retirement Subcommittee and the Retirement Plan Fiduciary Advisory Committee to offer a new socially responsible investment fund option for University employees. Having said this, effective December 1, 2009, University employees will have the opportunity to invest in the PAX World Balanced Fund. Once the PAX World Balanced Fund is implemented, contributions in the Vanguard FTSE Social Index Fund, the University's current SRI fund, will be frozen. In addition to Employees Benefits communicating this investment change, Professor Riv Ellen Prell has drafted a letter, which will be sent out to all faculty and staff communicating the governance success story of getting the PAX World Balanced Fund added.

V). Mr. Sheldon asked members to spend the last few minutes of the meeting brainstorming agenda items for future meetings. The following ideas were generated:

- How does the Athletic Department promote health and wellness among its athletes? What role, if any, does the Athletic Department play in encouraging athletes to bulk up or starve themselves? Consider promoting the University to implement a health education course for its athletes.
- Ashley Gaschk volunteered to provide the committee with a Russell Athletic update.

VI). Hearing no further business, Mr. Sheldon adjourned the meeting.

Renee Dempsey
University Senate