

[In these minutes: Representatives to SSCC, Student Evaluations, Discussion with President Bruininks, Student Leadership Conference, Role of the Student Senate and SSCC, November 4 Student Senate meeting and agenda]

STUDENT SENATE CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE (SSCC) MINUTES

OCTOBER 21, 2004

[These minutes reflect discussion and debate at a committee of the University of Minnesota Senate or Twin Cities Campus 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: Nathan Wanderman (chair), Taqee Khaled, Jamie Larson, Seyon Nyanwleh, Tom Pielow, Colin Schwensohn, Stace Vonderhaar.

ABSENT: James Kanten.

GUESTS: President Bruininks, Kate Stuckert.

1. CHAIR'S REPORT

Nathan Wanderman said that the Vice President for University Relations search committee has identified two finalists and asked that SSCC members attend the public interviews.

Regarding the University budget, Vice President Richard Pfutzenreuter spoke with MSA Tuesday night, but talked more about the request than the process involved in making the request. It appears that there is no set-in-stone process, but that the President organized an ad hoc committee, with a more top-down process this year. He will try to get a personal meeting with Vice President Pfutzenreuter and talk about ensuring that students are involved in the process in the future if they are going to be asked to lobby for the request. If possible, the Student Senate might make a resolution on this topic.

Q: Are all groups involved on the ad hoc budget committee?

A: It appears that it involves more people with budget experience. If students are involved, the same few would need to stick with the process to ensure security. At the least, students should receive updates and provide feedback.

A member said that Vice President Pfutzenreuter spoke to GAPSA last night and said that if priorities need to be cut, students can influence the priorities.

2. REPRESENTATIVES TO SSCC

Since most students have not yet been appointed to the Student Affairs Committee, SSCC decided to find ex officio members from the Educational Policy and Finance and Planning

Committees at this time. It was agreed that an email would be sent to student committee members asking those who are interested to reply. SSCC will then select from those interested.

3. STUDENT EVALUATIONS

Nathan Wanderman said that he recently received a packet of information from Scott LeBlanc, a former Educational Policy Committee member, regarding student evaluations of teaching. The packet included a report from 2001 which clarified the data privacy law and which data are private.

From this report, it does not appear that the positive check-off can be eliminated. This leaves two options: have the legislature change the data privacy laws or have professors approve release of information one time, which would stand until the professor asked otherwise. He favors the second option. He proposes focusing on professors who teach elective courses and high enrollment classes.

Stace Vonderhaar then said that she and Nathan Hilfiker came up with a new set of questions for the student release section, which were distributed to the members. She said that most of the changes presented give the students other information and use more descriptive words.

Members then made the following suggestions:

- Question 6 should read 'Did the actual amount of work in the class reflect your expectations?'
- Question 10 from the old survey should remain
- Question 3 should have scalable responses
- In Question 5, 'biased' should be changed to 'unfair grading policy'
- Survey should ask about the type of tests given

4. DISCUSSION WITH PRESIDENT BRUININKS

President Bruininks then joined the meeting to discuss several items with the SSCC.

Budget

President Bruininks said that a legislative briefing will be held on January 27, 2005, and the Student Lobby Day at the capitol will take place on February 16. Student involvement at these events will make a difference, as well as students voting in the upcoming election. Because the state did not pass a bonding bill, all University projects will cost an additional ten percent by June 2005. The state must support access and opportunities to higher education. The University is trying to help this cause by putting resources into scholarships and creating a \$300 million endowment from private gifts.

For the University's state request this year, it is proposing a fifty-fifty partnership so that the legislature takes the request seriously since the University is offering to solve half of the budget problem as well. The University will put its investment into arts and humanities while the state

will support three other areas at the University. The University will try to invest in as many projects as possible, even if the state support is less than what is requested.

Q: What does the Governor think the role of the University should be in the state?

A: The Governor has two degrees from the state so he strongly supports the mission. However, he also made a pledge for no new taxes, which he intends to keep at all costs. This pledge would be hard in the best of times, but it is even worse now. Five to six years ago the revenue trend started to decrease. The best approach would have been a modest tax increase and budget cuts, but instead tax cuts were implemented and refunds were given. Now the state is faced with a \$4.6 billion deficit.

Q: What will be the University response if the state does not fully fund the University's request?

A: If the request is not fully funded the University will have an open and consultative discussion with all parties to get feedback on the approach to be taken. However, a final decision will be made by the President and senior officers. Three options for the University are:

1. Raising revenues through other sources, such as increasing tuition more than 5.5 percent. If tuition increases are kept at 5.5 percent, then some student services will need to be cut.
2. More program cuts
3. Defer some costs by slowing down implementation

Just like last year, the University will try to support student investments and academic programs.

Q: For the \$15 million that the University is reallocating internally, has the decision already been made where these cuts will come from?

A: The University decided on the total since this amount is what the University can likely reallocate each year with a minimum amount of pain. The University is considering cutting, consolidating, and moving programs, while protecting students enrolled in programs.

Q: Is the University considering other revenue streams?

A: The University has a \$2.5 billion annual budget and it needs to spend its money wisely. Revenue can also be found through partnerships with other institutions, dedicated tax revenues, being smart about assets, transfer through technology and inventions, and private donations.

Q: Are there ways to increase parking revenue or use the funds in other ways?

A: The University has an agreement with Met Council for reduced transportation rates and is looking for creative alternatives to more cars and costly parking ramps on campus.

Student Evaluations

President Bruininks said that he support the release of more student evaluations of teaching, as well as improving teaching and faculty training.

5. STUDENT LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

Nathan Wanderman said that he had collected some basic information to use in planning the conference, such as travel costs from Crookston (\$365) and Duluth/Morris (\$200). Other costs for the conference would include space rental and food. At this time, he has made a rough estimate of a total cost of \$1500-\$2000. The Student Senate budget can cover some of the expenses, but a fee will likely need to be charged per campus or invited group. As for a date, he would like to propose a few dates in late February and March to the assemblies/associations.

He then asked members what they would like to learn from the conference. Members made the following suggestions:

- Compare notes with other organizations
- Have a fun social event
- Find out how the Student Senate can be the most responsive to other groups
- Student share what is happening on their campuses
- Potentially bring in a few administrative speakers

It was then decided that a small planning committee would be formed with two members from SSCC, Stace Vonderhaar and Tom Pielow, and a few volunteers sought from among the Student Senate.

6. ROLE OF THE STUDENT SENATE AND THE SSCC

Nathan Wanderman distributed a page description of the role of the Student Senate and the SSCC. He asked members for feedback. The committee noted that roles for the bodies should be actionable items. Nathan Wanderman agreed to make the changes and bring it back to SSCC for approval.

7. NOVEMBER 4 STUDENT SENATE MEETING

Nathan Wanderman stated that the November 4 University Senate meeting had been cancelled, and at this time he has no items for a Student Senate meeting either. He said that he was reluctant to have the Student Senate meeting without any substantive agenda items. It was agreed that a meeting would be held with these topics on the agenda: student lobbying, teaching evaluations, alcohol policy, and instructor education.

8. OTHER BUSINESS

With no further business, Nathan Wanderman thanked all members for attending and adjourned the meeting.

Becky Hippert
University Senate