

Disabilities Issues Committee
September 21, 2016
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; Overview of Governance; Updates from the Disability Resource Center (DRC); Discussion of Revised Disability Statement for Syllabi; Vision for the Committee; Discussion of Possible Future Agenda Items]

PRESENT: Katherine Murphy (chair), Michele Chilinski, Kim Doberstein, Maki Isaka, Donna Johnson, Betsy Kerr, Ryan Machtmes, Peggy Martin, Perry Moriearty, Anna Mosser, Heather Peters

REGRETS: Andy Hillis, David Johnson, Lars Oddsson, Regan Pelton

ABSENT: De Haan

GUESTS: Vickie Courtney, director, University Senate Office

OTHERS: Matthew Hoekstra, coordinator, Disability Resource Center, University of Minnesota Morris

1. Welcome and introductions

Katherine Murphy, chair, welcomed members and thanked them for serving on the committee. She introduced herself and asked members to do the same.

2. Overview of Governance

Vickie Courtney, director, University Senate Office, gave an overview of senate governance at the University of Minnesota. She said that the University of Minnesota is considered to have one of the strongest and most active shared governance systems among large research universities, and that it is unique in that faculty, students, staff, and alumni are all involved in governance. The umbrella body is the University Senate, which was established in 1912 and consisted only of faculty members until 1969, when students were given representation. In 2004, the University Senate was expanded again, when professional and academic staff and civil service staff were granted representation. The University Senate now has representatives from faculty, students, professional and administrative (P&A) staff, and civil service staff, for a total of 278 members when all seats are filled. Courtney explained that the University Senate contains within it four senates: the Faculty Senate, the Student Senate, the P&A Senate (comprised of professional and

administrative staff) and the Civil Service Senate. Each senate has its own consultative committee, and under them there are 23 working committees and a variety of subcommittees. Much of the governance work is done through these committees. Some standing committees report to the Faculty Senate, some to the Student Senate, and some to the University Senate. Members of these committees may but need not be senators, and most committee members are selected by the Committee on Committees. The appropriate senior academic officers also serve as ex officio, non-voting members of relevant committees, which ensures regular communication between the administration and governance. Courtney also noted that because of restrictions imposed by federal and state labor law, unionized staff and the faculties that have voted for collective bargaining do not participate in the governance system.

Courtney then enumerated the three ways that a committee can take action: passing a resolution, issuing a statement, or writing a letter to the appropriate administrator(s). The difference between a statement and a resolution, she said, is that a resolution calls for some sort of action, whereas a statement simply gives the committee's opinion on a given matter. A statement follows the same route, but goes to the senate for information only, as no action is necessary. A letter is treated much the same as a statement.

Courtney emphasized the collaborative aspect of shared governance. She said that it is a best practice to consult with appropriate administrators before taking any action, and also to collaborate with other committees that may be working on the same issue.

3. Updates from the Disability Resource Center (DRC)

Donna Johnson, director, Disability Resource Center, distributed a handout summarizing the services provided by the DRC during the 2015-16 academic year. She highlighted the following facts about the 2015-16 year:

- The DRC conducted 4,030 consultations that were not directly tied to an individual registered with the DRC.
- 2,768 of these were students, with mental health concerns representing the largest portion of conditions.
 - 76% were undergrads
 - 17% were graduate or professional students
 - 4% were PSEO or College in the Schools students
 - 3% were other types of students, such as non-degree seeking students
- Students with non-apparent disabilities make up 85% of students registered with the DRC.
- UReturn, the unit of the DRC that works with faculty and staff with disabilities and medical conditions, conducted 1,652 consultations.
 - 26% of these were for people with back and neck injuries
 - 24% concerned mental health

- The DRC conducted 8,296 accommodated exams.
- The DRC converted 197,753 pages of text to accessible formats for students with print disabilities.

She then said that she is the chair of the subcommittee on Mental Health Advocates, which is a subcommittee of the Provost's Committee on Student Mental Health. She talked about a pilot program that will be taking place beginning in November in which individuals in various departments across campus will be trained as mental health advocates. These people will not be counselors, but will be available as a resource for students, faculty and staff with mental health concerns. The mental health advocates will be supplied with information such as wait times to see a counselor, how to access drop-in counseling, and other processes, and can assist individuals in navigating these processes. Their official training will be on November 1, 2016, and the following individuals will conduct the training:

- Emily O'Hara, care manager, Office for Student Affairs
- Matt Hanson, senior psychologist, Student Counseling Services
- Barb Blacklock, program coordinator, Student Access, Disability Resource Center
- Matt Clark, chief of police, University of Minnesota Police Department
- Troy Buhta, lieutenant, Investigations and Outreach, University of Minnesota Police Department
- Alisa Eland, associate director, Counseling and Advising, International Student and Scholar Services

She said that there are approximately 50 people who will be mental health advocates, and they are mostly college coordinators, people who have been nominated by associate deans, or students services directors.

Johnson also said that the large number of accommodated exams illustrates the need for a larger testing center. This center, she said, could serve not only students with disabilities, but student athletes, distance learners, students who need to take makeup exams due to legitimate absences, etc., which would destigmatize the testing center and also use space efficiently. Murphy said that this should be a future agenda item, and Courtney added that this would be a great initiative on which to coordinate with other committees, such as Equity, Access, and Diversity and the Faculty Academic Oversight for Intercollegiate Athletics Committee.

Johnson then informed members that the disability coordinators from the system campuses had met that morning and discussed adding ex-officio representation from those offices to the Disabilities Issues committee. Duluth and Rochester are interested, she reported, and she thinks Crookston would be interested as well. Representatives from Morris are already attending these meetings but are not officially members of the committee.

4. Discussion of Revised Disability Statement for Syllabi

Johnson gave background on the syllabus statement, informing the committee that it has not been updated in five years. She said that the DRC's student advisory committee and the Senate Committee on Educational Policy (SCEP) have already given feedback. She then solicited feedback from committee members.

Murphy asked Johnson to highlight the proposed changes in the statement. Johnson said that the main changes were the addition of a bullet point on short-term disabilities and wording emphasizing that the University considers disability an important aspect of diversity. The latter underlines the idea that disability is a difference, not a deficit.

Peggy Martin commented that the bullet point on short-term disability is important but unclear. She said that the message seems to be that a short-term disability can be accommodated within the classroom and may not require DRC involvement, but that the wording is confusing. She also said that the fourth bullet point, directing people to contact their access coordinator, might confuse people not yet registered with the DRC. She suggested changing the wording to direct people to the DRC more generally.

Perry Moriearty asked why the current first sentence, "the University of Minnesota is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students" was removed from the revision. Murphy suggested keeping the current statement and adding the new statement, "the University of Minnesota views disability as an important aspect of diversity." Ryan Machtmes agreed, stating that the current first line made him feel welcome, as a new student with a disability, but that he also feels it is important to emphasize disability as an aspect of diversity.

Johnson said that SCEP had had the same suggestions, and that SCEP had also suggested making the contact information more general, so that it could apply to system campuses as well. Members agreed that this was a good idea. Johnson said that she will bring a revised statement to the committee for approval, and that it will go into effect in January.

5. Vision for the Committee

Murphy said that in the past few years, she has noticed that there is a lack of continuity from year to year, making it difficult to accomplish goals. She proposed the following ideas to create a sense of continuity:

- Establish a steering committee, consisting of the outgoing chair, the current chair, and the incoming chair. This would necessitate identifying an incoming chair prior to the start of each year.
- Creating a series of working groups that would be expected to do substantial work outside of the six committee meetings. Proposed groups are Metrics, Stakeholder Relationships, and Identifying and Prioritizing Issues.

Murphy then informed members that the committee is up for review this year by the Committee on Committees, and that this is a good opportunity to look at committee structure. She asked Courtney to describe the review process, which Courtney did.

Anna Mosser wondered whether the committee should consider merging with the Equity, Access, and Diversity Committee, and Murphy said that this was a question that was on the table, and the committee could discuss it as part of the review process.

6. Discussion of Possible Future Agenda Items

Murphy said that the Equity, Access, and Diversity Committee is working on a resolution around protection of counseling records in cases of litigation against the University, and that the chair of that committee had requested the Disability Issues Committee's assistance on this process. The testing center will be on the agenda as well, and other possible agenda items include the Bias Response Team, addressing the needs of an aging workforce, mental health, programs for first year students, and faculty engagement in disabilities issues.

In the interest of time, Murphy adjourned the meeting.

Amber Bathke
University Senate Office