

Disabilities Issues Committee
January 31, 2018
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:** Update from Rural Mental Health Care Disparity Working Group, Discussion of Accommodated Testing Space]

PRESENT: Peggy Martin, Stephen Befort, Kim Doberstein, Margaret Doom, Samantha Grover, Catherine Jacobson, David Johnson, Donna Johnson, Muhammad Khalifa, Ryan Machtmes, Gail Myers, Aida Miles, Lars Oddsson, Heather Peters

REGRETS: Andy Hillis, Matthew Hoekstra, Betsy Kerr, Emily Norenberg, Jayanthi Sasisekaran

ABSENT: Shannon Zavada

GUESTS: Boyd Kumher, chief compliance officer, Office for Institutional Compliance

1. Update from Rural Mental Health Care Disparities Working Group

Chair Peggy Martin called the meeting to order and distributed a handout summarizing the discussion of the rural mental health care disparities working group, which includes Martin, Gail Myers, Ryan Machtmes, and Susann Jackson, director, Student Health Benefits, Boynton Health. The handout is summarized below:

Representatives from the system campuses have reported gaps in existing services at the different schools. For example, at Crookston, students with mental health disabilities receive 6-8 visits that are free, brief interventional visits on campus from at the counseling center. These are available to all students who take physical classes on campus. However, if continued therapy is necessary, students are referred to a community health center, Northwestern Mental Health, which is about 4.5 miles away from campus. Students must pay for these visits, while on the Twin Cities campus, students have access to therapeutic counseling, psychiatry, and medication management for free at Boynton Health. At Northwestern Mental Health, most students pay a \$40-\$55 copay per visit if they are on student insurance or on their parents' policy. However, those on policies with open deductibles will pay \$179 per visit. Whether it is \$40 per visit or \$179, it is outside of the reach of many students. Some students need weekly or bi-monthly visits, and these costs add up very quickly—one student with severe needs paid \$6,000 out of pocket for mental health care in one semester—which results in students not receiving much-needed support because of the cost. This poses a safety risk for the student and for the campus.

Additional concerns include:

- Until recently, there was no policy in place addressing the safety of service animals in labs, and no equipment for their protection. Crookston now has a comprehensive policy in place to address these concerns.

- Concern about autism is growing as the student numbers grow. These students meet admissions criteria, but do not have the everyday living skills to manage academic life on the campus. Could the Disabilities Issues committee request a task force addressing autism in higher ed?

The committee recommends collecting more information from each of the DRCs in the system to learn:

1. What services are available?
2. How these services are funded?
3. What are the disparities in services across the systems?
4. What does the University administration want to do regarding system wide services?

After reviewing the handout, Martin opened up the topic for discussion. Donna Johnson clarified that Boynton Health and Student Counseling Services do refer students to off-campus resources for some mental health concerns, but acknowledged that clear disparities exist. Heather Peters informed members that at Morris, students can get eight free sessions per semester; possibly more if it is deemed critical for the student. Another issue, she said, is that in the Twin Cities, there are ample resources for off-campus referral; in Morris, only the local hospital sees patients with certain mental health concerns, and there is a long wait list for an appointment. She added that this is a retention issue as well: in a survey of former Morris students who elected not to return, about ¼ cited mental health concerns as one of the reasons.

Members agreed that this inequity across campuses must be addressed. Suggestions for doing so included telecounseling, such as the pilot program Boynton Health is conducting with Morris. Myers said that the University of North Dakota allows its counseling students to fulfill practicum hours by offering telecounseling to people in the state and at other North Dakota schools; she suggested that perhaps such a model could be explored in Minnesota.

One idea that has been proposed at Crookston, Myers said, is to assist all students in getting on state medical assistance; Myers said that she did not feel this was a good solution. Members agreed.

Martin asked members what action the committee should take around this issue. Members agreed that more data was necessary to determine a course of action, and that the data and possible action should address disparities related to disability resources more broadly, rather than just mental health. One possible course of action proposed was to present a data-driven case to the administration and ask that a system-wide task force investigate this issue further. Donna Johnson, Myers, and Muhammad Khalifa volunteered to work on gathering this data. Johnson also said that she would meet with the counseling centers about the issue, as well.

2. Discussion of Accommodated Testing Space

Next, Martin welcomed Boyd Kumher, chief compliance officer, Office for Institutional Compliance, who was present to talk about a task force he pulled together to investigate the issue of space for accommodated testing. Kumher stated that in September 2017, former Vice President for Equity and Diversity Katrice Albert contacted him regarding the issue of accommodated testing space, as the new owners of The Graduate (former The Commons Hotel) had indicated that they did not want to continue the arrangement of leasing space for

accommodated testing to the University far in advance of finals. The arrangement is secured through December 2018. The task force initiated a small pilot with the Department of Organizational Leadership, Policy, and Development (OLPD) in the College of Education and Human Development (CEHD), wherein faculty were asked to administer accommodated tests requiring extra time only in the department. Exams where extra time is the only accommodation accounts for just under half of all accommodated exams. The pilot went well, and there are plans to extend it.

Donna Johnson added that conversations will continue, and that they are looking at other large spaces on campus to determine whether they could be used for accommodated testing during finals. Spaces under consideration include the Fieldhouse, Wilson Library tunnel, Williamson Hall, and the Great Hall in Coffman Memorial Union.

Another idea is to utilize a tool similar to studyspace.com, which identifies open study spaces at a given time, to serve a similar function for testing space. Often, said Johnson, faculty are willing to proctor their own exams, but space is an issue. She clarified that the DRC can also identify a proctor if space is available.

David Johnson said that deans have a responsibility to help address this issue in the colleges. He suggested working through the building administrators to find space, and added that proctoring could be built into job duties for teaching assistants. Peters pointed out that many faculty do not have teaching assistants, and said that it would be important to be mindful of faculty workloads.

At this point, Martin thanked Kumher for his time and he departed. The committee then discussed drafting a resolution on required training for instructors on accommodations. Members felt that it is a good time to propose such a resolution, as required training on preventing to and responding to sexual misconduct has recently been implemented. David Johnson asked whether other universities require training on accommodations; Donna Johnson said that none of the Big 10 institutions do, but she was not sure about others. Members agreed to move forward on a resolution; Martin said that she would share a draft she had written on Google Drive so as to facilitate comments, and asked Donna Johnson to add data regarding the number of accommodated tests and the availability of space.

In the interest of time, Martin adjourned the meeting.

Amber Bathke
University Senate Office