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# The University Senate

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UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Minutes of:

## The Student Senate

Thursday, March 3, 2022

11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

### 1. Call to Order

*Sarani Millican, chair, Student Senate Consultative Committee (SSCC) and Student Senate*

Sarani Millican, chair, Student Senate, called the meeting to order at 11:30 a.m.

### 2. Discussion and Questions Regarding Ongoing COVID-19 Policies and Best Practices (Discussion)

*Jakob Tolar, campus public health officer and vice president, Office of Academic Clinical Affairs*

*Katharine Bonneson, assistant vice president, University Health and Safety*

*Michael Clements, director, UMarket*

Millican introduced the following individuals to address questions regarding ongoing COVID-19 policies, best practices, and supply chain issues:

- Jakob Tolar, campus public health officer and vice president, Office of Academic Clinical Affairs
- Katharine Bonneson, assistant vice president, University Health and Safety
- Michael Clements, director, UMarket

Tolar began the discussion with some updated information about the pandemic including the fact that the state and most of the country are now seeing a decline in the number of COVID-19 cases across all parameters. Cases are now less than half of what they were in mid-January. However, he noted that some areas of the world are not moving in the right direction, adding that Hong Kong is currently experiencing a spike in cases. The University is working closely with state officials including Governor Tim Walz to make sure that ongoing safety measures are adequate and appropriate. Americans are still suffering from the disease, especially those that are unvaccinated and those who are experiencing lingering issues from what is known as “long-COVID”.

Millican then opened the floor to questions and comments and highlights were as follows:

- Emily McGuire, student senator, School of Public Health (SPH), noted that the CDC and the city of Minneapolis recently loosened many of its COVID-related restrictions, including their mask mandate, and asked if the University was considering the same thing. Tolar replied that University leaders are having multiple conversations on these topics and will continue to make data-based decisions. He noted that masks do help stop the spread of disease which has been illustrated by the sharp decline of influenza infections over the past two years. Masking will likely become a more personal choice as there will still be a lot of people who need to protect those closest to them such as unvaccinated children under the age of 5.
- Taiwo Aremu, student senator, College of Pharmacy, commented that the University’s mask mandate should stay in place until vaccines are available to everyone including young children. Tolar acknowledged the fact that children under the age of 5 are the largest population of the unvaccinated. He noted that he was surprised by the recent delay in the recent trials but expects new progress later in the spring. He noted that with all populations receiving the vaccine there have been no major side effects.
- Leah Reiss, student senator, Law School, commented that the recent decisions released by the CDC seemed to be more business-based than public health-based. Tolar acknowledged that part of the situation is that the American health care model is a business. Tolar said there is a moral imperative for people-based health care decisions and personally not aware of CDC decisions that are anything other than that but can understand some of those perceptions. In his dealings with state health leaders, their decisions are not motivated by profit, rather they are motivated by keeping people safe.
- Millican asked about an update on the University’s mask supply and if masks will still be available even if the mask mandate is lifted. Bonneson stated that University will plan to continue making masks widely available, especially coming out of spring break. The University will also continue to promote the use of high-quality masks moving forward and encourage people to wear their masks if they choose to do so. Clements commented that the University’s supply chain for personal protective equipment is also data-based. He anticipates a large influx of PPE into the general marketplace in the next two months. The University has a healthy supply of masks and wants to be prepared for the next virus or variant.
- Millican further commented that as masking norms shift, she hopes that the University will continue to support those individuals who wish to continue to wear a mask. Bonneson replied that the University has no policy against masking and will support individuals in their personal choices. Millican further asked for better support as she has heard of some professors asking people to remove masks for pedagogical reasons.

### **3. Administrative Response to Senate Actions (*Information*)**

- [Resolution on Demilitarization of UMN Policing Forces](#)

Approved by the Student Senate:	February 25, 2021
Administrative Response:	Pending

- [Resolution Concerning Caste-Based Discrimination](#)

Approved by the Student Senate:	September 30, 2021
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Administrative Response:

Pending

#### **4. Student Senate Nominating Subcommittee - Approval of Appointed Senators (*Action*)**

*Sarani Millican, chair, Student Senate Consultative Committee (SSCC) and Student Senate Nicholas Wallenhorst, chair Student Senate Nominating Subcommittee*

**Motion:** That the Student Senate approves the appointment of the following Twin Cities student senators, as selected by the Student Senate Nominating Subcommittee:

Kayla Ignatowicz, College of Design  
Ricky Valentin Pena, CEHD Undergrad  
Siya Sakhardande, CLA Undergrad  
Reilly Werkhoven, CLA Undergrad  
Christopher Stallard, CSE Undergrad  
Parandis Kazemi, School of Dentistry

**Note:** Additionally, Ella Stewart has been named as a new senator from UMD-CAHSS.

Scott Petty, student senator, College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences (CFANS), noted that these individuals are not technically senators until the Student Senate approves of their appointments.

**Hearing no further discussion, a vote was taken, and the motion was approved.**

#### **5. Approval of the Minutes for Previous Student Senate Meetings (*Action*)**

*Sarani Millican, chair, Student Senate Consultative Committee (SSCC) and Student Senate*

**Motion:** To approve the minutes from the following Student Senate meetings:

- [December 2, 2021 Regular Meeting](#)

**Hearing no discussion, a vote was taken, and the motion was approved.**

#### **6. Assembly/Association Updates (*Information*)**

*All members of the Student Senate Consultative Committee (SSCC)*

- Nam Nguyen, SSCC member, University of Minnesota Duluth Student Association (UMDSA), stated that UMDSA recently passed a [resolution](#) in support of the recent vaccine mandate. The group is also busy working on revising the excused absence policy and advising on the search for a new campus chancellor. Additionally, multiple colleges and programs are implementing programs aimed at bettering student mental health resources.
- Grace Hiltner, SSCC member, Morris Campus Student Association (MCSA), said that the group has recently passed a resolution for student paid sick leave and are also working on

the “Fight for \$15” campaign aimed at raising student wages. Additionally, Morris is preparing for its annual Prairie Gala fundraising event and will be holding its annual elections over the next month.

- Karissa Grapes, SSCC member, Professional Student Government (PSG), said that PSG has been approving multiple grants and also working with faculty on the absence policy related to COVID-19 excused absences.
- Nick Wallenhorst, SSCC member, Minnesota Student Association (MSA), said that MSA recently passed multiple resolutions including an omnibus resolution on multiple COVID-19 related policies and a resolution to add a crisis hotline to the backs of UCards. MSA committees and working groups have been consulting on issues related to emergency management, lighting safety in Dinkytown, and student minimum wage.
- Richard Gonigam, speaker, Council of Graduate Students (COGS), announced that they have reached an agreement with the University to address graduate student parking contracts. Additionally, President Joan Gabel visited the general assembly in February and discussed several issues including work with the Board of Regents. Looking forward, COGS is looking to address wage equity in light of inflation.
- Petty, ex-officio representative, Senate Committee on Finance and Planning (SCFP), reported that the committee met with Executive Vice President and Provost Rachel Croson on the academic budget and had a first walk-through of the [proposed](#) operating budget for next year. The committee was also [presented](#) with information regarding the impacts that COVID-19 has had on the budget. Essentially, the pandemic has caused a \$214 million hole that has been made up by having units reshuffle their budgets. Petty further explained that it appears as though the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost (EVPP) are analyzing new metrics to assess academic units and their spending.
- Mattea Allert, ranking student senator, announced that she is currently working on a Student Senate newsletter and asked members to submit any news that they would like to be included.

### **7. Student Senate/Student Senate Consultative Committee Chair Report (*Information*)**

*Sarani Millican, chair, Student Senate Consultative Committee (SSCC) and Student Senate*

Millican then presented her report which included notifying senators about an opportunity to serve on the selection committee for the Sexual Misconduct Hearing Committee, and asked senators to think about joining or recruiting peers to join. She further announced that there will be a remembrance event on April 4, 2022 for University students who have passed away over the past year. Finally, the SSCC recently met with representatives who are working on the revision process of the Board of Regents policy: *Student Conduct Code*. Those representatives are conducting a wide range of stakeholders and will be at the next meeting of the Student Senate.

### **8. Update and Questions from the M Safe Implementation Committee (*Discussion*)**

*Kathy Quick, co-chair, M Safe Implementation Team, and associate professor, Humphrey School of Public Affairs*

*Mylene Culbreath, co-chair, M Safe Implementation Team, and director of diversity consulting, outreach, and recruitment, Graduate School Diversity Office*

Millican introduced the co-chairs of the M Safe Implementation Committee, Kathy Quick, associate professor, Humphrey School of Public Affairs, and Mylene Culbreath, director of diversity consulting, outreach, and recruitment, Graduate School Diversity Office. The co-chairs presented a [slide deck](#) about the work that the committee has done over the past year including its [final report](#) and highlights were as follows:

- The committee was created on the recommendation of an audit report performed by Dr. Cedric Alexander.
- The charge of the committee was to “Form or adapt an existing platform that reports directly to the President to be responsible for the implementation of the recommendations in this report and to serve as a way to reimagine and co-create how the UMN community wants to be policed, what it should be and what it is not, and to get the input from all sectors and affected communities, especially the perspectives of all groups that experience disparate policing outcomes.” The committee emphasized the Twin Cities Campus only.
- Actions that have already been taken prior to the work of the implementation committee include extensive training by the University of Minnesota Department of Public Safety (DPS), the introduction of body cams, and the hiring of additional police officers.
- The committee focused its summer 2021 work on three priority areas: training, mutual aid, and demilitarization. Some key takeaways from that consultation included:
  - Improving the quality of community-police interactions.
  - UMPD needs to define and affirm its positive culture, values, and practices.
  - There is value in increased visibility of and communication about existing efforts.
  - More training hours are not necessarily the answer to improving safety.
  - The impetus for demilitarization may be above all a desire to reduce/eliminate military-grade weapons at protests and rallies.
- Goals in the fall included focusing on UMPD roles & responsibilities, DPS technology & equipment, existing climate & quality of interactions, and enhancing climate & quality of interactions. Some key outcomes from this work included recommendations that UMPD/DPS over-communicate, distinguish themselves from the Minneapolis Police Department, and center themselves on community.
- There is a lot of fine detail on the 32 recommendations of the implementation plan which can be found on their [website](#). The main areas of focus include having a strategic direction, identifying roles and responsibilities, and having accountability and good communication.
- The ongoing work recommended in the report will require partnerships from DPS, senior administrators, and University Senate governance.

Petty asked how this process differed from other reform plans that local communities tried to implement in the past. Quick replied that she is seeing a lot more follow through with community audits, recommendations, and planning. McGuire noted that some invited community members declined to participate given the reformist nature of the work rather than an abolitionist nature and asked how those voices could be included in this conversation. Culbreath replied that it is important to acknowledge those different ideologies, and even though some

members declined to participate, the committee made an intentional effort to include those themes and opinions in its report.

### **9. Morris Campus Student Association (MCSA) Resolution on the Native American Promise Plan (Action)**

*Dylan Young, student body president, MCSA*

*Grace Hiltner, SSCC member and vice president, MCSA*

*Jade Allard, co-chair and organization representative, Circle of Nations Indigenous Association*

**Motion:** To endorse the MCSA Resolution on the Native American Promise Plan.

Millican introduced Dylan Young, student body president, MCSA, to present a resolution passed by the MCSA regarding the newly announced Native American Promise Tuition Plan. Young explained that President Joan Gabel recently announced that the University will expand its tuition waiver program to first-year undergraduate students and transfer students from Tribal colleges on all five system campuses who are enrolled citizens in one of Minnesota's 11 federally recognized Tribal Nations. Young explained that he thought the program was a great first step, but it could be improved. According to recent media reports on the matter, many students felt that it was not an expansion of the existing Morris program and that the new initiative would maintain too many barriers for it to succeed. He stated that the resolution had the following goals:

- To more closely match the Native American Promise Tuition Plan to the current parameters of the Morris tuition waiver program.
- To make the plan available to all current Native American undergraduate students enrolled at the University, as well as graduate students.
- That student eligibility will not require full-time student status or minimum GPA requirement.
- That the plan is made available to other tribes outside the state of Minnesota.

Millican thanked the presenters for the information and opened the floor for discussion:

- Allert asked if the authors know what this plan could cost each campus. Young replied that they had not discussed the budget but did not think that it would expand costs by that much. He noted that on the system campuses there were the following number of current Native identifying students: Crookston - 74; Duluth - 241; Rochester - 12; Twin Cities - 729
- Pavan Guttipatti, student senator, College of Biological Sciences (CBS), asked if the authors had any insight into why the administration put more stringent requirements on this plan. Young commented that the funding for the program seemed to be the result of the University allocating existing extra University money into the program.
- Reiss commented that she supported the resolution and felt that it follows the University's mission of being a land grant institution.

**Hearing no further discussion, a vote was taken, and the motion was approved.**

## **10. Election of a System Campus Senator to the 2021-22 [Student Committee on Committees](#) (Action)**

*Sarani Millican, chair; Student Senate Consultative Committee (SSCC) and Student Senate*

**For Information:** The Senate Committee on Committees shall be composed of 5 elected students. Of the 5 student members:

- Three shall be elected by the Student Consultative Committee from among their members.
  - Of these three members, at least one must be from the Twin Cities and at least one must be from a system campus.
- The remaining two members shall be elected from among the student senators by the Student Senate. One seat is designated for a system campus student senator and the second seat is designated for a Twin Cities student senator.

Millican indicated that there is still a vacancy on the Student Committee of Committees and stated that it needs to be filled by a student from a system campus. Petty raised a point of information that this position should not be filled by the Student Senate, but by the SSCC. Millican acknowledged this confusion and said she would look into the question.

**Nguyen moved to table this agenda item and the motion was seconded by Adam Sychla, student senator, CBS. Hearing no further discussion, a vote was taken, and the motion was approved.**

## **11. Old Business**

There was no old business.

## **12. New Business**

**Sychla introduced a [Resolution Addressing the 2022 Invasion of Ukraine](#) and moved for its immediate consideration before the body. A vote was taken and the motion was approved by more than 2/3rds of those members present and voting.**

Sychla went on to explain that he wants to express his sincere support to all the University members directly and indirectly affected by the senseless invasion of Ukraine by Russia. The people of Ukraine have lost far too much, and yet continue to fight for the very concept of democracy, and they should not have to face these atrocities. He also acknowledged that the actions taken by the Russian government are not that of the Russian people. He stated that the University of Minnesota stands behind freedom, democracy, and peace, and cannot stand idly by as innocent people are losing their homes and being killed by powers intent on destroying a democratic state.

Millican opened the floor to discussion and highlights were as follows:

- Carter Yost, student senator, College of Liberal Arts (CLA), commended Sychla for bringing this forward in a timely manner. He further expressed concern for those students who are from the impacted countries who are here at the University.
- Michael Streit, student senator, College of Veterinary Medicine, expressed some concerns about the divestment provision and worried that it could hurt research partnerships with Russian faculty and students. Sychla acknowledged that concern and modified the language to be monetary investments.
- Petty commented that this seems like an empty symbolic gesture and that students who are concerned should perhaps work with agencies, communities, and churches that are directly working to help refugees. Sychla commented that in no way is this the only solution that the University should be looking for but it is merely a start to the conversation.

**Sychla moved to extend the debate on this item by five minutes and the motion was seconded by Hiltner. A vote was taken and the motion was approved.**

Further discussion included:

- Allert also commented that parts of the resolution were an empty gesture and it was silent on some of the atrocities being experienced by students of color and their being turned away as refugees by European neighbors. Sychla again reiterated that this was his first attempt to seek action items by the University community and that steps can be taken to help refugees they should be done.
- Stallard asked for a clarification on divestment and what happens if Russia ends the war while the University is still divesting. He thought that perhaps it was better to consider that question separately. Sychla stated his openness to dividing the resolution into three questions to address each ask of the resolution.

**Sychla moved to divide the resolution into three questions and the motion was seconded by Stallard. A vote was taken and the motion was adopted.**

**Sychla moved to approve the first portion of the resolution: “The Senate recommends the University of Minnesota publicly condemn the premeditated, unprovoked invasion of Ukraine, led by Vladimir Putin and his supporters. This statement shall express support for Ukraine, the people fighting for freedom and democracy, and all harmed by this war.” A vote was taken and the motion was adopted.**

**Sychla moved to approve the second portion of the resolution: “The Senate recommends the University of Minnesota commit to divesting from any Russian or Belarusian monetary investment it holds as soon as it is possible to do so.” A vote was taken and the motion was adopted.**

**Sychla moved to approve the third portion of the resolution: “The Senate recommends the University of Minnesota continue providing resources to its community members affected, directly or indirectly, by the war in Ukraine.” A vote was taken and the motion was adopted.**



### **13. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 1:39 p.m.

Chris Kwapick  
University Senate Office