
The University Senate

FACULTY • STUDENT • P&A • CIVIL SERVICE

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Disabilities Issues Committee September 20, 2021 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 reflect the views of, nor are they binding on, the senate, the administration or the Board of Regents.

[**In these minutes:** Welcome and Introductions; Consultation with Task Force on Disability Accommodations in the Learning Environment; Committee Orientation; Topics for the Year]

PRESENT: David Johnson (chair), Jeff Baier, Erin Durban, Kenneth Doyle, Mary DeGrote Goering, Gayle Golden, William Goodnow, Jessica Grittner, Sanoa Hagen, Kiel Harell, Matthew Hoekstra, Jeremy Jenkins, David Johnson, Donna Johnson, Jennifer McComas, Ben Munson, Kirby Newhouse, Dadee Saye, Eli Sailer-Haugland, Tim Walters

REGRETS: Samantha Grover, Deena Wassenberg

GUESTS: Tammy Berberi, member, Task Force on Disability Accommodations in the Learning Environment

1. Welcome and Introductions

Professor David Johnson, chair, called the meeting to order. He asked for a round of introductions, and members introduced themselves.

2. Consultation with Task Force on Disability Accommodations in the Learning Environment

Next, Johnson turned the floor over to Professors Ben Munson, co-chair, and Tammy Berberi, member, [Task Force on Disability Accommodations in the Learning Environment](#). Munson provided background information on the task force, noting that it was formed in response to a [resolution](#) from this committee, which was approved by the University Senate in April 2018. Munson shared the task force's draft [recommendations](#) on training related to disability in the learning environment. Next, he and Berberi asked for committee feedback on a number of questions. The questions and feedback are summarized below.

- What is your biggest concern working with students with disabilities?
 - Lack of clarity about what is allowed, especially with regard to extra time on exams
 - Continued existence of inaccessible spaces on campus

- Information on how, logistically, to implement accommodations (such as how to acquire special equipment, etc.)
- Students may not know or disclose that they have disabilities - universal design should be the goal
- How to support students with temporary disabilities (injuries, etc.)
- Worry about mishandling accommodation requests, especially ones that are unofficial (not through the Disability Resource Center [DRC])
- How to identify student distress/despair and what to do about it
- Flexibility is key
- The pandemic necessitated many things that were beneficial to students with disabilities, which should be preserved
- Where do you see gaps in resources?
 - Support for faculty and staff with disabilities
 - The DRCs need more resources in general
 - Addressing isolation/stigma around accommodations
 - Understanding and supporting the role of the instructor in implementing accommodations
 - Publicizing why certain things are helpful (sharing slides in advance, etc.)
- How much time should the required training take?
 - It should be ongoing, like the training on preventing and responding to sexual misconduct.
 - Something similar in length to the training on preventing sexual misconduct would be appropriate.
 - The University of Minnesota Duluth already has an optional [module](#), which takes 30-60 minutes.
 - The task force feels that 45 minutes would be appropriate for the required training.

Johnson noted that he and Professor Barbara Peterson, chair of the Equity, Access, and Diversity Committee (EAD), had been invited to present at the Faculty Consultative Committee (FCC) retreat, regarding what faculty can do to lead around diversity. The task force was mentioned at the retreat, and there was no push back about the idea of required training.

Members suggested that the committee should think about how to muster resources to make the training a sustainable and sustained initiative, including whether the committee should have a role in revisiting the content of the training from time to time.

3. Committee Orientation

Next, Amber Bathke, senate associate, University Senate Office, provided an overview of and orientation to University Senate governance and the work of the committee.

4. Topics for the Year

Johnson solicited member feedback on potential topics for the year, and the following emerged:

- Training for faculty and staff on student distress could be explored through the President's Initiative on Student Mental Health (PRISMH).
- How can the University assist students in healthy living, balance, etc. as prevention of some physical and mental health problems
- Support for faculty and staff with disabilities

- How to elevate disability as a part of diversity

In the interest of time, Johnson adjourned the meeting.

Amber Bathke
University Senate Office