
The University Senate

FACULTY · STUDENT · P&A · CIVIL SERVICE

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

P&A Consultative Committee (PACC)

November 16, 2023

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; Civil Service Consultative Committee Report; Regents Scholarship Program Consultation; Universal Access; Subcommittee Reports]

PRESENT: Whitney Taha Frakes (chair), Kit Breshears (chair-elect), Molly Bendzick, Adolfo Carrillo Cabello, Marti Fasteland, Monica Kocon, Maureen Long, Angela Vetsch

REGRETS: Toni Abts, Stacy Doepner-Hove

GUESTS: Lisa German, dean, University of Minnesota Libraries; Stacy Maher, chair-elect, Civil Service Senate/Civil Service Consultative Committee; Mary Rohman Kuhl, senior director, Total Rewards, Office of Human Resources; Paige Rohman, chief of staff, University Services Twin Cities; Krisann McMahon, retirement programs manager, Office of Human Resources, Twin Cities; Ralph Daby, assistant director, One Stop Student Services, Academic Support Resources, Twin Cities; Kirsten Muller, University tax director, University Tax Management Office

OTHERS: Will Craig, Mike Herrick, Neil Olsness, Woody Stulberg, Megan Sweet

1. Welcome

Whitney Taha Frakes, chair, P&A Senate/P&A Consultative Committee (PACC) welcomed committee members and guests.

2. Civil Service Consultative Committee Report

Stacy Maher, chair-elect, Civil Service Senate and Civil Service Consultative Committee (CSCC), shared a written report that can be found on this [document](#). She highlighted the following items that CSCC leadership is currently focused on:

- Equitable child care across the University system
- Equitable representation in the University Senate
- Sending out a data collection form regarding the floating holiday selection process. Hoping to have a more informed process by soliciting input from everyone in the system that floating holidays are assigned to.

Marti Fasteland asked if the data collection form would be going to all campuses or just those whose holidays are aligned with the Twin Cities campus. Fasteland pointed out that University of Minnesota Duluth had already determined and adopted its holiday calendar for five years out. Angela Vetsch noted that a similar decision has been made at the University of Minnesota Morris campus. Maher clarified that the data collection form would go to all faculty and employees at all levels in the Twin Cities and Rochester campuses only.

3. Regents Scholarship Program Consultation

Information on proposed changes to the Regents Scholarship Program (RSP) was presented by Mary Rohman Kuhl, senior director, Total Rewards, Office of Human Resources (OHR), Krisann McMahon, retirement programs manager, OHR, Ralph Daby, assistant director, One Stop Student Services, Academic Support Resources, and Kirsten Muller University tax director, University Tax Management Office, using this [slide deck](#).

Prior to the meeting committee members received the following documents for review:

- [Form: Request for Regents Tuition Benefit Program](#)
- [Regents Policy Statement 11-13-2023 version 9](#)
- [Clean copy incorporating proposed changes 11-13-2023 version 9](#)

Rohman Kuhl said the proposed changes to the RSP generally fall into four areas:

- Make the program more accessible
- Simplify the policy and process
- Trust employees to use the process correctly
- Improve awareness of tax implications

Rohman Kuhl said feedback was gathered from multiple consultations with governance groups, individuals, and a report titled [Regents Scholarship - Summary of Access Barriers for P&A Employees](#) (authored by several P&A Senate members, including immediate past P&A Senate Chair Adolfo Carrillo Cabello). The following types of changes were made (please see documents listed above for specific proposed changes):

- Reducing the number of approvals an employee needs to apply for the RSP
- Removing language recommending that only one course per semester be taken by employees using the RSP
- If an employee is using the RSP and leaves the University, the benefit is no longer prorated for those who leave before the end of the semester
- Clarified taxable and non-taxable courses and how this information will show up on paychecks
- The Regents Scholarship Work Group will create a document that more clearly lists the key parties and their duties with respect to the Regents Scholarship
- Increase the promotion and awareness of the Postsecondary Child Care Assistance Grant which is available to the residents of the state of Minnesota if they fall below a certain income level
- Recommending a name change for the policy

Rohman Kuhl then noted the items shared in consultation and feedback that are out of scope for these proposed policy changes or will be addressed in other ways:

- Expanding the tuition amount covered by the RSP from 75% to 100%

- Ensure extra training for admissions staff; the new process should help alleviate the problems that have been noted in the past.
- Expand the RSP to courses in the College of Continuing and Professional Studies (CCAPS). The RSP applies to credit-bearing courses only
- Allow use of professional development funds to cover the remaining 25% of tuition not covered by the RSP. Because of variances in policy among departments, colleges, and units, there are potential equity issues. This could be better addressed in the future should the University move to 100% coverage of this tuition benefit.
- Expand the Native American Tuition Program to dependents - this is not part of the RSP

Rohman Kuhl said the proposed timeline for completing the updates to the policy is to continue consultation for the next two weeks; integrate feedback, and present the proposed changes to the Policy Advisory Committee/President's Policy Committee in December 2023 through February of 2024; and post new materials and promote policy changes beginning in March of 2024.

Rohman Kuhl then invited feedback from the committee. Members had a lengthy discussion and voiced concerns including the following:

- Significant support for a name change; committee members supported Employee Tuition Benefit Program.
- Request to revisit covering the remaining 25% of tuition as soon as possible after policy changes are approved/adopted. Twenty-five percent of tuition costs can be a significant barrier for many people at the University. Rohman Kuhl said the approach for this item will be in the administration's response to the Workforce Reinvestment Resolution.

After a long discussion, it was determined that clearer explanations of who is eligible to use the program and for what types of degrees are needed. Ralph Daby said the group that worked on developing the proposed changes agrees that the policy language is dense and will be creating additional user-friendly documents (roadmaps, infographics, etc.).

Kit Breshears noted that other higher education institutions seem to offer this type of benefit at no cost. He asked if the University has analyzed how other institutions (large and small, public and private) develop and implement similar programs. Krisann McMahoan said she believes the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost has done such an analysis.

Marti Fasteland asked if there is data regarding the following:

- Who is taking advantage of this program?
- Employees from which campuses, units, and job families?
- What are the trends the University is seeing?
- If there are trends, is the University trying to combat any accessibility issues that the data presents?

McMahon said there is a summary of usage information broken out by campus from the fall of 2022 to the summer of 2023. McMahon said she would ask a team member to see if information is available by units or job families for the working team to review further. Taha Frakes noted that the committee would be interested in hearing more information regarding the use of the RSP by units and job families.

Molly Bendzick thanked the committee for the proposed changes that will make the form easier to fill out, the reduced number of signatures that an applicant will be required to obtain, and the more accessible format of the application. She added that the presenters may become aware of a bias on the part of certain members of the University that if students are not paying for their tuition, they are not going to take the work as seriously or work as diligently as those paying for their tuition. She exhorted PACC members to continue its advocacy for 100% coverage of tuition for non-baccalaureate degrees and/or non-first degrees.

Maureen Long said, in trying to connect the work on the RSP to the Workforce Reinvestment Resolution, it might be worthwhile looking at the number of job classes at the University that *require* a graduate degree. She said the administration should look at investing in employees' degree completion as a path to promotion and invest in that at 100%. There is a big shift in the world, she said, in that people now need a masters or a PhD to advance in their careers. Daby agreed and noted that an educated workforce is a retained workforce.

Taha Frakes asked if McMahon would follow up on the requested information. McMahon said she would contact the unit that has benchmarking information and that she could provide further analysis on employees that are utilizing the RSP. Taha Frakes thanked the presenters and moved to the next topic.

4. Universal Access

Lisa German, dean, University of Minnesota Libraries, and Paige Rohman, chief of staff, University Services, presented information regarding a newly proposed program for adoption at the University called Universal Access. [This slide deck](#) was used throughout the presentation.

- The new program is currently being referred to as Universal Access; that name may change depending on what is shared during consultation.
- The new program is proposed for adoption in the fall of 2024.
- The proposal is being widely consulted across all five system campuses.
- At this time, the proposed program is for undergraduate students only.
- The presenters are not at consultations to speak for or against the proposed program; but instead to present it for discussion, collect feedback, and present their findings to administration.
- The program is a “pay one price” approach for course materials. Students can pay one fixed price (assessed as a student fee) to be subscribed to all the textbooks and course materials they would need for the term.
- The proposed program seeks to ensure that all students have their supplies on the first day of classes at a price that is predictable. Course materials are made available immediately prior to the start of the term.

Potential benefits for faculty and instructors include:

- Faculty and instructors retain full control over the content of their course.
- The University will continue to support open-access and low cost materials through the libraries because that would help to contain the overall cost of the proposed UA program.
- Faculty are assured that students will have access to their required course material on the first day of class.
- Access to open access material will still be available through the Libraries.

Potential benefits for students include:

- An opt-out option is provided to all students (up until the drop/add date for a given semester).
- Students can choose classes or majors without being concerned about the relative cost of the course materials.
- Materials costs will be predictable and are eligible to be covered by financial aid as any other student fee is.
- Time savings; students would not have to comparison shop, spend time gathering materials, and they could easily log into their computer and the materials will be there.

Potential concerns include:

- Unlike a physical book that one can retain, digital access varies by publisher so having access to the material after a given course of study is not guaranteed.
- “Recommended” materials would not be included and students would incur additional cost if they chose to use them.
- A student would have to take the initiative to opt out of the program.
- Currently the program is only available to undergraduate students.

Rohman then invited questions from committee members.

In response to a question of why graduate students are not included in the proposed program, Rohman said that the intention is to start with one population of students if it is decided to get the proposed program up and running. The requirements for different types of students, as far as course material is concerned, would dictate a mirror/similar program, but not the exact same one as for the undergraduates.

As committee members and guests continued to discuss the pros and cons of the proposed program, an emerging theme was the importance of a clear communications plan with students to make certain they understood the program, and that it was *their responsibility* to opt-out of the program if they did not wish to participate. Additional comments included the following:

- Would the fee be the same for every student involved in the program, across campuses, across disciplines, part-time and full-time? German said they have noted this question from other consultations and there is interest in exploring the possibility of different program costs depending on the college and whether or not a student is part-time or full-time.
- Academic advisors would need to be well-trained to assist students in deciding the best option for them.
- This type of program would require all faculty of undergraduate courses to have their materials listed by a certain date; that is often a difficult thing to accomplish. Rohman said the advantage of a “digital first” program is that online material can be very quickly made available.
- How can the University be assured that its students are ready for a digital first experience? A lesson learned from the pandemic is that not all students have equal access to the electronic resources that may be needed for a “digital first” approach.
- How is the University thinking in terms of preparing the faculty for this type of change, which may feel significant to many?
- Has a pilot program been considered before full implementation?
- How would this program interact with or interrupt open access and free materials that are already available? Rohman said one way to look at it is this program would cover all the

materials that are not already open access and not already available for no cost through the Libraries; any material that is outside those parameters.

When asked about the proposed timeline for the process, Rohman said consultation will continue with governance groups through the end of November, 2023. Feedback from the various consultations will then be reviewed and incorporated into a report intended for the provost and academic leadership from all campuses. If the decision is made to implement the program, it would begin in the fall of 2024.

Taha Frakes asked if the recommendations report that is drafted for the provost and other academic leaders would be shared with the groups that have been consulted. German and Rohman said they would discuss that with the provost, who would make that decision, and report back to the groups consulted.

5. P&A Subcommittee Reports

Monthly written subcommittee reports can be found on [this document](#).

In the interest of time, Taha Frakes thanked committee members and guests and adjourned the meeting.

Geanette Poole
University Senate Office