

DISABILITIES ISSUES

Minutes of Meeting

March 26, 2014

[In these minutes: DS Update; DS Tool Kit for Instructors; Human Rights. YES! Document]

[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.]

Present: Mary Kennedy (chair), Penny Cragun, Donna Johnson, Betsy Kerr, Brian McAdams, Michael O'Day, Heather Peters, Kristine Talley

Guest: Dr. Katrice Albert

Regrets: Katie Benson, Maki Isaka, Patrick McNamara, Benjamin Minnis, Victoria Nelson, Susan Rose

Absent: Virgil Mathiowetz

WELCOME

Professor Kennedy called the meeting to order and asked for introductions.

DISABILITY SERVICES (DS) UPDATE

Ms. Johnson updated members on the following items:

- A service will be provided by the University's Department of Public Safety. In the event of an emergency, text messages and emails will be able to be sent by the deaf and hard of hearing. They will now receive the same responsiveness that other students receive.
- Regarding accessible course materials: Badger.com and Bookshare.org have resources on accessible documents.
- U of Montana, Missoula reached a resolution agreement with the Office of Civil Rights regarding accessible class assignments and materials. Changes will be made to inaccessible live chat and Learning Board documents, images scanned on websites, flash format videos, and class clickers. Ms. Johnson noted that as the data has been compiled there are more cases across the country. To address this topic a meeting has been arranged for June that will include: Provost Karen Hanson, Vice President Katrice Albert, OED, Vice President Kathy Brown, HR, Associate Vice President Kris Lockhart, OED, Vice President Scott Studham, OIT, Shelly Watson, Senior Associate General Counsel, and Ms. Johnson.
- Morris and Duluth are forming task forces on inaccessible tech. Ms. Peters said that making materials accessible is currently the responsibility of individual faculty and students. Ms. Johnson added that it would be helpful if each college had someone designated to know how to make accessible websites and documents. The effort will have to be expanded to make this possible on an institutional level. The three technology/Computer Accommodations employees within DS cannot possibly serve

everyone. Purchasing needs someone that is trained to ask the questions to ensure that materials are accessible.

- An example of accessibility being considered on an institutional level: Facilities Management consulted with DS on signage.
- CAP and accessibility.umn.edu, are resources for faculty to use now. Members agreed that college level consulting would be best. They would become experts in the needs of the college.

Professor Kennedy thanked Ms. Johnson and introduced the next speaker Dr. Katrice Albert, vice president, Office for Equity and Diversity.

DR. KATRICE ALBERT, VICE PRESIDENT, OFFICE FOR EQUITY AND DIVERSITY

Dr. Albert thanked the members for inviting her to the meeting. She said that she has been meeting with several governance committees. She continued by saying that she is honored to be a part of the long history of inclusion of the University and appreciates that it is a vision from the top, beginning with President Kaler. She has done seven months of strategic listening, visited all five campuses, conducted listening sessions for faculty and staff, and will hold one for the students in April.

She has isolated the following themes from her strategic listening:

- A call to make the University more accessible.
- Strengthen the relationship between the University and the broader community, especially those areas where research is being conducted.
- Greater visibility for equity and diversity affinity groups.
- More ways to diversify curriculum.

OED presented to the full Board of Regents their priorities including the following from the vision framework:

- Recruit and retain faculty, students, and staff of color.
- Improve the University climate, beginning at local (college) levels.
- Build strategic partnerships within the University and the external community.

Dr. Albert discussed the ongoing process of making these priorities a reality, operationalizing them, and then she responded to questions:

- Dr. Albert is working to increase visibility by working with deans and colleges to achieve mission-driven strategies around diversity, to make the U a “Top of Mind” place.
- Based on the research of William B. Harvey, strategically they will strive to change the climate of the University by starting at a local level. OED will partner with each school and college to define goals and will then assist in tracking procedures to measure progress. They intend to strategically increase the numbers of students of color by college and she added that quotas are not used.
- A working group has been established to address issues of campus climate, such as racial profiling and stereotyping as a result of recent crime alerts.

- Accessible technology is a focus and she explained that Disability Services is unique because it serves faculty, students, staff, and guests. She added that a working group would examine how to make the University and technology more accessible. They need to look at peer institutions and become a leader in this area. The fact that accommodations are offered to visitors positions the U as a leader. She will ensure the Provost is involved to make sure the information is funneled to the colleges through the deans.
- Dr. Albert emphasized that there is a balance between increasing exclusivity as an institution, while ensuring students within the state can still attend.
- University Students of Color Executive Committee is looking at recruiting students of color and underrepresented groups. They are taking a broad approach and not just looking at admissions, but also athletics, alumni, and connectivity after graduation.
- OED is working with each college to learn their goals, and asked them to look at college data, over a 10-year period, related to under represented groups faculty, students, and staff. The system campuses will also be included in this effort. Goals will be established for each individual college. Meetings will be completed with TC deans by the end of the summer and they will work with each chancellor to decide the timeline for system campuses. Dr. Albert emphasized her understanding of her position as system wide.
- A member asked if there are plans to recruit students with disabilities. Dr. Albert responded that they are working with Admissions to look at current practices.
- Ms. Johnson added that the Buuck Scholarship fund has been increased specifically to recruit students with physical or sensory disabilities. Services that DS can provide attract students, despite the weather making campus inaccessible at times. A wheelchair basketball team is being discussed to recruit student athletes.
- Assistant Vice President Abdullah, OED, will be working with the external community and outside relationship development.
- Professor Kennedy noted that the number of staff increasing in DS would offer the students the opportunity to build personal relationships with DS specialists. Student success is achieved not just through accessibility, but also in consistent access to professionals. Dr. Albert said that she understands the pressures on support areas to fill the 90 million dollar funding gap and that the work is intense and the staffing is thin.

Professor Kennedy concluded the discussion by thanking Dr. Albert for meeting with the committee. Hearing no further business, she adjourned the meeting.

Jeannine Rich
University Senate Office