
The University Senate

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UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Campus Safety Committee (CSC) Monday, October 30, 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 reflect the views of, nor are they binding on, the senate, the administration, or the Board of Regents.

[**In these minutes:** Welcome; General Committee Updates; University Senate Governance Overview; Safety Alert Descriptions; Definition of Culture of Safety; Old Business/New Business]

PRESENT: Edgar Arriaga (chair), Joseph Alf, Jovany Betancourt, Tina Erazmus, Janelle Broesch, Clara Hanson, Jessica Larson, Jessica LeBlanc, Tim LeGarde, Adam Negri, Terry Niebeling, Ashok Singh, Barry Standorf, Ian Tonks, Andrew Whitman

REGRETS: Lamija Alisic, Austin Chanen, Rebecca Sedivy, Julie Thompson

ABSENT: Joshua Ichen, Soyun Lee, Christine Swartwout

GUESTS: Jeffrey Lessard, director, Public Safety Emergency Communication Center

OTHERS ATTENDING: Kari Nolan

1. Welcome

Professor Edgar Arriaga, chair, welcomed members and guests. Throughout the meeting, Arriaga referred to information in [this slide deck](#).

2. General Committee Updates

Arriaga announced that Joseph Alf has volunteered to be the Campus Safety Committee (CSC) liaison to the Strategic Safety Advisory Committee (SSAC) and will be attending that committee's meetings along with Arriaga. He briefly outlined what topics would be covered in today's meeting and shared preferred methods for discussion and Q&A.

3. University Senate Governance Overview

Erin Heath, director, University Senate Office, and staff to the Campus Safety Committee (CSC), presented an [overview](#) of University Senate governance. Specific items Heath reviewed included a timeline of the University Senate; current University Senate structure; roles and responsibilities of committee members; and information on legislative action options committees may consider.

Arriaga invited questions from committee members. Hearing none, he moved to the next agenda item.

4. Safety Alert Descriptions

Arriaga shared with the committee that the Senate Consultative Committee (SCC) sent a [letter](#), in April of 2023, charging the CSC to review and discuss whether or not the University's current practice around the information included in Safe-U notifications is the best practice; and if so, whether it should become a formal administrative policy, rather than just "what is currently in practice." There have been numerous conversations in and around campus, Arriaga said, where people have shared varying opinions about whether or not race descriptions should be included in Safe-U Notifications.

Arriaga invited Jeffrey Lessard, director, Public Safety Emergency Communication Center, to respond to the following three prompts:

- What are safety alerts?
- What is the purpose of safety alerts?
- What is the external consultation process regarding safety alerts?

Lessard shared the following details about what Safe-U notifications actually are:

- They are a requirement of the Clery Act (the law that requires colleges and universities across the United States receiving federal funding to disclose information about crime on and around their campuses).
- Crimes and incidents that involve homicide, non-negligent manslaughter, sexual assault offenses, robbery, aggravated assault, burglaries, motor vehicle thefts, arson, acts of intimidation with hate crime components, vandalism, and destruction or damage to property all warrant alert notifications if they occur on university property. (According to the definition of boundary in the Clery Act, University property includes events that happen in an adjacent street to the University and up to the next curb.)
- The University does have some discretion about extending a boundary into Dinkytown and Marcy Holmes neighborhoods (approximately 70% of residence in the two neighborhoods are made up of University students, staff, and faculty). [Clery Geography](#)

As to the **purpose** of Safe-U notifications, Lessard shared the following:

- Making sure that the campus community knows about safety situations and can take actions to make themselves as safe as possible.
- The Clery Act requires that Safe-U notifications are sent out. Information included in the Safe-U notifications include what type of event occurred, when it occurred, and what actions people need to do in relation to the alert.
- Follow up information is usually posted on the Department of Public Safety's (DPS) website.
- In cases where there may be an active threat, a shelter in place notification would go out, updates would be sent out, and once the situation is brought under control, a notification would go out that it is safe to return to the particular location.

Arriaga then invited Lessard to share information regarding consultations that DPS has and is having with groups external to University Senate governance and the proposed timeline for addressing concerns regarding the current composition of Safe-U notifications. Lessard explained the following:

- Based on some concerns that have been presented to the University regarding its current practice, the University has hired an external consultant to do an overall assessment of the University's alerts process and systems; including the degree to which it uses racial descriptions in safety alerts.
- The consultant will also do a comparison with the processes at other Big Ten institutions to see how practices align or diverge.
- The consultant will interface with faculty, staff, student groups, and individuals to understand what the community prefers to have communicated in these alerts.
- The consultant will provide a report to administration which will then be shared and consulted through the shared governance structure. The intention is to improve and make recommended changes to improve the process.
- The intended timeline is six to nine months.

Committee members raised the following concerns and questions:

- Can Safe-U notifications be more specifically targeted to the people who may be affected by the event? Having unnecessary alerts being sent far and wide does not enhance the public image of the University. Lessard said that the University is bound by the technology that Everbridge, the chosen vendor for distribution of such notifications, uses. There is not an easy solution at the moment, but many emergency communication platforms are working toward more specific targeting of messaging. The consultant will be reviewing this issue as part of their review.
- In response to a question about how journalists and reporters respond to Safe-U notifications, Lessard said that unless those persons are affiliated with the University and have a "umn.edu" email address, they are not included in the emergency notifications.

Committee members asked the following questions:

- Is the information that Lessard provided relevant for all campuses? Lessard said his report focused on how and what the DPS does for the Twin Cities campuses only. Each campus does have a public safety designee who oversees the safety alerts for that campus.
- What criteria are used to determine *when* alerts are sent out? Lessard said it is determined by when an incident gets reported to the DPS.
- Who decides what text goes into the alerts and who writes them? The alerts are written by either the administrator on call at the time the event is reported or the sergeant in charge at the event location. DPS attempts to keep the format as uniform as possible to maintain the integrity of the messages. Receivers will know they are receiving legitimate alerts.

Hearing no other questions, Arriaga shared a summary of information that was provided in a report titled [Race In Suspect Descriptions Summary](#), compiled by the Office for Equity and Diversity (OED). He referred in particular to slides eight through ten in [this slide deck](#). Arriaga noted the following points that the committee might consider for its discussion:

- While there is no administrative policy at the University regarding the use of race descriptions in Safe-U notifications, the Kahler administration supported the practice of not including them. Recently, some University and surrounding community members have expressed a desire to revisit that practice.
- Both quantitative and qualitative questions are addressed in the OED report.
- In 2019-2020, when the report was compiled, roughly 70% of universities were moving away from using racial characteristics in safety alerts if they hadn't already done so.

- The report summarized information from the multiple resources it reviewed noting consequences of using race descriptions of suspects in safety alerts.

Arriaga also noted that he had received an email noting that custodial staff have expressed concern that they are potentially at high risk because many crimes happen at night when they are working. Arriaga responded to this concern acknowledging that all perspectives should be considered and that he would raise this University employee's concern at a CSC meeting.

Arriaga invited committee members to further review the materials and said the committee should be prepared to discuss the material in upcoming consultations.

Terry Niebling asked if it wouldn't be most beneficial to have as many details as possible in relation to a reported crime? Lessard responded that that may be true if DPS is asking the public to assist in looking for a suspect. In some cases, if the report is made very quickly at the scene of a crime where a suspect or group of suspects has already left the area, DPS would not be asking for the public's assistance in such situations, so concentrating on *where* the crime occurred and *time that has elapsed* since it occurred is the most relevant information.

Adam Negri noted that per the University's [Emergency Notifications](#) website, there is language that says safety alerts are not intended to enlist the help of the community in identifying suspects; they are provided to empower the community to make safe and informed decisions. He said he felt that having racial descriptions in such alerts would not make him feel more empowered to make safe and informed decisions. Jovany Betancourt agreed with Negri and said that if, however, the community is being asked to engage in the search, including pictures or descriptions could be considered.

Joseph Alf took a moment to clarify, with Lessard's help, the difference between types of safety situations. Some situations (a prisoner breaks out of prison, an assailant actively engaged in threatening people, etc.) would most likely enlist the help of the public in finding this person, as much information as was available would be provided. He added that Safe-U notifications do not request the public's assistance in locating a suspect, therefore less information is needed in these situations, including race descriptions.

Arriaga noted that committee members, Austin Chanen, Ian Tonks, Rebecca Seddivy, and Alf had expressed interest in the topic of race descriptions in safety alerts as a priority, and that he would be reaching out to them for ideas regarding the role and potential activities of the CSC around this topic. If other committee members are interested in the topic and would like to be kept informed, Arriaga added, they should reach out to and let him know.

Alf asked Lessard to expand on how the CSC might engage with the consultant working on the issue and what the expected timeline is for consultation prior to the consultant's final report to administration. Lessard said that the intention is for the report to be completed by the end of March. He added that the consultant may be available to consult with the CSC on proposed questionnaires, surveys, and discussion topics prior to them being distributed to a broader University audience.

5. Definition of Culture of Safety

Arriaga said that after receiving committee members' feedback on the [October Draft: Culture of](#)

[Safety Statement](#), feedback was reviewed and incorporated. The committee voted electronically on its choice for an infographic to accompany the statement, and it was added to the statement document.

Arriaga noted that Section 5 of the statement (Advancement = Assessment) and its proposed changes would be discussed today, and if the committee was in a place of agreement, voting would take place either at the meeting (if a quorum is present) or electronically (if a quorum is not present).

The second item to consider, Arriaga said, was who to include on the list of “community reviewers.” He then invited questions and comments from committee members. Comments included the following:

- A recommendation was made to have the Office of General Counsel (OGC) look at the statement. Being too specific in a statement such as this may leave the University open to liability.
- Jessica Larson offered alternate language for the first paragraph in the statement: *The University of Minnesota “Culture of Safety” is built upon the foundation of an inclusive educational community for all students, staff, faculty, and visitors to feel welcomed, respected, valued, and acknowledged. This culture emphasizes open communication, mutual trust, transparency from University offices and officials, and fosters accountability to and from all members of the University Community in order to actively address threats, reduce risks, mitigate hazards, and discourage harmful behaviors. The Campus Safety Committee oversees the implementation of policies, procedures, and resources that promote awareness, preparedness, appropriate response to potential threats or emergencies, and works to expand resources for resilience and recovery.*

Arriaga then asked committee members, since the CSC’s definition of a culture of safety is aspirational and is the work of the CSC, would the committee like the statement to be shared with the OGC right now, or should consideration by the OGC happen at the same time as consultation with other groups? In other words, Arriaga said, should the two consultations happen sequentially or simultaneously? The committee did not give a definitive answer on this question.

After a lengthy discussion, the committee agreed that Larson’s proposed amendments to the statement were a friendly amendment and were accepted. Arriaga noted that the editing process would continue and voting would not take place at today’s meeting. Larson agreed to look at the other pages of the statement and make additional suggestions. She said that consultation with the groups that Arriaga had listed in the [slide deck](#) (slide #13) will also be very helpful to the committee as varying perspectives are presented.

6. Old Business/New Business

Arriaga then moved to prioritizing the committee’s preferred activities. The topics receiving the most votes from a poll sent to committee members after the October 3, 2023 meeting are as follows:

- Accountability structures
- Classroom safety
- Community engagement
- Safety Alerts (discussed at today’s meeting)

He invited committee members who had not yet responded to respond to the poll which would be sent out again after the meeting.

Arriaga next shared with the committee that Joe Alf will be recommended to the Senate Committee on Committees (ConC) for the position of chair of the CSC for the 2024-25 academic year. The appointment decision will be made by the Senate ConC in the spring of 2024.

Last, Arriaga said that members of the CSC have been invited to present at the Diversity Community of Practice (DCop) meeting on November 16, 2023. DCop is interested in learning more about the CSC's definition of a culture of safety. Arriaga invited committee members to let him know if they are interested in attending the meeting.

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

Geanette Poole
University Senate Office