

DISABILITIES ISSUES COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING
APRIL 23, 2008

In these minutes: Pacific Rim Conference on Disabilities Update, Disabilities Studies Program Update, Disability Services Update, Electronic Textbooks, May 13, 2008 Retreat, Fall 2009 Agenda Item, University-Wide Policy Mandating Disability Accommodation Statement on Course Syllabi, Training Faculty on Making Accommodations for Students with Disabilities]

[These minutes reflect discussion and debate at a meeting of a committee of the University of Minnesota Senate or Twin Cities Assembly; none of the comments, conclusions or actions reported in these minutes represent the views of, nor are they binding on, the Senate or Assembly, the Administration or the Board of Regents.]

PRESENT: Alex Lubet, chair, Amy Hewitt, Carol Rachac, Nicole Tollefson, Joanie Toole, Linda Wolford for Eric Schnell, Kimberly Simon, Dale Branton, Julia Robinson, Miriam Krause, Anne Mayer, Emily Smith

REGRETS: Tammy Berberi, James Gambucci, Maria Gini, Kathryn Kohnert, Rachel Garaghty

ABSENT: Marilyn Bruin, Lesley Craig-Unkefer

OTHERS ATTENDING: Jon Gottesman

I). Professor Lubet called the meeting to order and asked those present to introduce themselves.

II). A member suggested that students with hidden/neurological disorders be recruited to serve on this committee. A genuine concern about students with hidden disabilities was voiced.

III). Professor Lubet reported that he recently attended the Pacific Rim Conference on Disabilities (<http://www.pacrim.hawaii.edu/>). He noted that this is consistently an excellent conference, and that he would explore finding funding to send a contingency of Disability Issues members to the conference next year.

IV). Disabled Students Cultural Center (DSCC) update:

- DSCC will host Sam Goodin, director of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSWD) at the University of Michigan, at its May Lunch and Learn. Mr. Goodin is a finalist for the University's permanent Disabilities Services director position.
- DSCC received the 2007 Tony Diggs Excellence Award for Outstanding Undergraduate Registered Student Organization of the Year.

V). Professor Lubet provided the committee with a Disabilities Studies Program update. He noted that the Graduate School is soliciting proposals for funding for new interdisciplinary Graduate School academic programs. A small faculty working group has been pulled together to co-author a proposal that the University offer a Disabilities Studies Program. The program that is being submitted for consideration is a doctorate level, double major program. To a degree, the proposed program bears a resemblance to the program offered at Syracuse University.

A member asked Professor Lubet to explain the structure of the program that is being proposed. Professor Lubet stated that this program is based on the premise that students would have a component of their program outside their major. Students would judiciously select coursework that overlaps disability concerns with their disciplinary major. American Studies was used as the model for this program.

A member stated that there is a real value in including the sciences, e.g. AHC programs, as it relates to a doctoral level Disabilities Studies Program. Professor Lubet agreed that this verbiage would be included in the proposal.

VI). Professor Lubet turned to Linda Wolford from Disability Services (DS) to provide a DS update. Ms. Wolford began by reporting that as part of the University's quest to find a permanent Disability Services director that Sam Goodin, director of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSWD) at the University of Michigan, had been invited to give a public presentation at the University. Last Friday, following his presentation, he met with DS staff, and students from the DSCC. A decision should be made in the not too distant future as to whether Mr. Goodin will be offered the director position.

Professor Lubet reported that he did not provide feedback on Mr. Goodin because he felt that his input was being solicited as the chair of Disabilities Issues rather than his own personal opinion. He made it clear that he was not comfortable speaking on behalf of the Committee when he had not garnered members' feedback. Also, several members did not have an opportunity to attend Mr. Goodin's presentation.

Members went on to discuss the search process for the DS director position. Because the Committee has a vested interest in who is hired for the position, it should be invited to meet with finalists for this position. After further discussion, the Committee voted unanimously that in its role as an advisor to Disability Services, it should be consulted whenever hiring decisions are made at a director level. Ms. Wolford stated that she would take this request back to the appropriate staff at DS.

Ms. Wolford also reported:

- Discussions continue with Recreational Sports and Courage Center to increase collaboration between the two organizations and to explore what can be done to attract student athletes with disabilities to the University. The possibility of establishing a competitive wheelchair basketball team at the University is being explored.

- DS is soliciting funding for its four scholarships for students with disabilities. For more information about these scholarships go to the following URL: <http://ds.umn.edu/scholarships/>
- Staff from DS Student Services conducted interviews with low vision and blind students to identify ways for creating a more welcoming environment for these students. Six areas for improvement were identified:
 - Orientation and mobility.
 - Classroom access.
 - Coordination with the DS access assistant.
 - Document conversion processes.
 - Computer accommodations.
 - Increase opportunities to connect with other students.

Once the final report from this study is completed, it will be circulated to Disabilities Issues members.

Professor Lubet reported at a meeting with the DSCC earlier this year that a student voiced concern that the University Bookstore does not routinely get textbooks in an electronic format so as to eliminate the need for textbook document conversion services.

Members passed a motion that before an electronic textbook resolution is crafted that Professor Lubet would consult with the Bookstore to learn about the pros and cons of putting such a recommendation forward to the Senate. In addition, Professor Lubet volunteered to ask for legal input from the Office of the General Counsel (OGC) or a faculty member at the Law School when drafting this resolution.

A member stated that the issue of electronic textbooks could very well be a legislative issue for the State of Minnesota. This issue could be brought to the attention of the University's legislative liaison. Professor Lubet stated that this is an issue that warrants further investigation.

A student member added that a lot of the textbook controversy is about price. Students are voicing their preference that old textbooks be used whenever possible, which would be problematic for getting older textbooks electronically.

VII). Professor Lubet asked members if they would be interested in holding another retreat on May 13th. At this retreat, Bill Dickerman would be available to speak about the autism spectrum as it relates to education. In addition, Professor Lubet volunteered to share information on Universal Instructional Design. He added that Marijo McBride from the Institute on Community Integration has also volunteered to share information about the Institute's effort (in partnership with four community organizations) to provide leadership training in disability policy and services to government officials, missionaries, educators, and advocates from Zambia, Africa.

Carol Rachac stated that in terms of Universal Instructional Design, it would be great to be able to offer a lecture series on campus. She suggested trying to secure grant money to pay for this lecture series and volunteered to look into it further.

VIII). Professor Lubet stated that Dr. Anne Kelly in Pediatrics and Adolescent Health is interested in coming before the committee to talk about what she calls the "autism epidemic." Dr. Kelly will be put on a fall agenda.

IX). Professor Branton brought to member's attention the fact that there is no University-wide policy that requires a disability accommodation statement on course syllabi. While some departments and colleges may make this a requirement, there is no University-wide policy mandating such a statement.

After some discussion, Professor Branton made a motion that a subcommittee of Disability Issues be formed to:

1. Craft a policy statement requiring all course syllabi contain a disability accommodation statement.
2. Investigate better ways to train faculty on accommodating students with disabilities.

Members voted to unanimously endorse this motion. Professor Branton volunteered to chair the subcommittee.

Before adjourning, a member requested a presentation from Disability Services next academic year on the types of accommodations that disabled students receive.

X). Hearing no further business, Professor Lubet adjourned the meeting.

Renee Dempsey
University Senate