

**Senate Committee On Faculty Affairs (SCFA)
September 14, 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; University Senate Governance Orientation; Discussion of SFCA Priorities for 2021-22; Efforts to Diversify Our Faculty; PEAK Initiative Recommendations Discussion]

PRESENT: Clifford Steer (chair), Sophie Beal, Adolfo Carrillo Cabello, Aashi Chaturvedi, Moinak Choudhury, Shawn Curley, Katherine Dowd, Ann Fallon, Marti Hope Gonzales, Gopalan Nadathur, Michelle Page, Terry Roe, Rebecca Ropers, Brandon Sullivan

REGRETS: Jenifer McGuire

ABSENT: Bradley Deane, Brandon Macho

GUESTS: Ole Gram, assistant vice provost, Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty and Academic Affairs; Erin Heath, project coordinator, PEAK Initiative; Ken Horstman, vice president, Office of Human Resources; Josh Iniguez, project manager, PEAK Initiative; Phil Klein, project director, PEAK Initiative; Amy Kucera, senior director, HR Operations, Office of Human Resources

OTHERS ATTENDING: Maia Irvin

1. Welcome and Introductions

Professor Clifford Steer welcomed committee members and asked for a round of introductions from members and guests.

2. University Senate Governance Orientation

Geanette Poole, senate associate, University Senate Office, provided a brief [committee orientation](#). The review was provided in order to describe the responsibilities and charge of the committee, familiarize members with meeting logistics, and outline the function and structure of University Senate governance.

3. Discussion of SCFA Priorities for 2021-22

Steer noted that many discussions and questions were currently circulating regarding the following issues:

- Attestation for faculty and staff
- Mandates for vaccination and masking
- Other pandemic-related concerns
- Conditions related to returning to work on campus

Steer also listed priorities raised by SCFA members at the May 2021 meeting:

- Request an update from Fidelity Investments regarding the employee retirement plan at the University. This is a new provider and a check-in with their performance seems reasonable.
- How is the University strategizing for recruiting international students, and faculty and staff post pandemic and hiring freeze restrictions?
- Lack of clarity in the MPact 2025 plan about how to accomplish the stated goal of retaining diverse faculty and staff.
- As the University is focusing efforts on improving student mental health services, how does it propose to provide mental health support for faculty and staff who are charged with addressing the mental health needs of students?
- Reconceptualizing the idea of inclusive teaching - academic dishonesty, assessment, proctoring. How can the University facilitate more holistic conversations?

Steer next reminded committee members of priorities that Rebecca Ropers, vice provost, and Ole Gram, associate vice provost, Faculty and Academic Affairs, raised at the May 2021 SCFA meeting:

- Ensuring a robust faculty review process regarding promotion and tenure and awards
- Fair and comprehensive evaluation processes
- Faculty and leadership development opportunities
- Better awareness of the use of Student Rating of Teaching forms (SRTs) in evaluations, possible associated biases in their use, and the need to use additional metrics beyond SRTs in evaluation processes
- Expanding the metrics used to capture the often “unseen” labor of faculty when evaluating for promotion and tenure
- Greater guidance regarding faculty workload principles.
- Additional guidelines and practical advice needed in 7-12 statements regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Clearer guidelines around the inclusion of fixed-term faculty, clinical faculty, and instructors in faculty review processes
- Orientation programs for new faculty and new chairs and heads of departments
- Enhancing respectful and equitable academic cultures
- Connecting the power of the faculty and administration to build inclusive excellence

And lastly, Steer shared actionable items, suggested by Ropers, that SCFA might consider in the 2021-22 academic year:

- President’s committee on faculty misconduct
- Emeritus policy review
- Use of impact statements - determine how they will be considered in promotion and tenure processes
- Consequences for faculty who do not comply with pandemic related guidance

4. Efforts to Diversify Our Faculty

Next, Ropers led a discussion around initiatives to diversify faculty at the University of Minnesota. She highlighted a number of points in her presentation titled [Faculty Diversity Efforts](#), which describe:

- The University's goals for faculty diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)

- Key initiatives for academic year 2021-22
- Ways in which faculty governance can support the University's DEI efforts
- Goals to increase hiring and retention of faculty from underrepresented groups, leaning away from binary thinking, ensuring equity in faculty experiences, and promoting inclusion in research, teaching, service, and leadership
- The need to connect DEI efforts to the MPact 2025 Systemwide Strategic Plan

Ropers then invited questions and comments from the committee. Steer asked if it were true that the University is prohibited from identifying a certain number or percentage in terms of expanding the diversity of its faculty. Ropers said that federal law does prohibit referring to quotas. She added that increasing representation from underrepresented groups is how the objective is stated in MPact 2025. One way to think of measuring diversity, Ropers explained, is by thinking about a specific group's representation on our campus compared to that group's representation in the state, and compared to that same group's representation in the nation. Faculty who identify as Black, Latinx, Native American, and Hawaiian/Pacific Islander are underrepresented at the institution, Ropers added.

Steer then asked if the University has considered proactively recruiting from underrepresented groups. Ropers said that the University had engaged in this type of recruiting effort. She added that the University needs to think differently in terms of recruiting and retaining a diverse group of faculty: the University needs to "re-recruit" people every day, make certain they are supported, and ensure that they have what they need to be successful.

Adolfo Carrillo Cabello asked Ropers to address two questions:

- Has the University considered expanding the channels and platforms it uses for recruiting and not always advertising using the same methods?
- Considering that a good deal of time was dedicated to providing guidelines about accepting the use of COVID impact statements in promotion and tenure processes, is the same degree of scrutiny being applied when evaluating whether or not department heads and chairs are considering impact statements equitably when evaluating faculty for promotion and tenure?

Ropers said she appreciated Carrillo Cabello's questions and plans to continue working with deans and heads of departments to make sure the use of COVID impact statements in the tenure and promotion processes have the intended outcome. She added that, regarding expanding the channels for recruitment efforts, much of that work happens at the unit level, and if there is support that can be provided by central administration, every effort is made toward providing that support. Brandon Sullivan, director, Leadership and Talent Development, OHR, said that the University is starting to look into recruitment and retention practices that are more common in the private sector and evaluating their potential effectiveness in the higher education sector.

Steer thanked everyone for the discussion and moved to the next agenda item.

5. PEAK Initiative Recommendations Discussion

Ken Horstman, vice president, OHR, shared updates on the PEAK Initiative with a PowerPoint titled [Report on PEAK Initiative](#). The presentation focused on how the initiative is moving from

the initial assessment stage into the “bridge period” which will involve leadership and employee discussions, community feedback, evaluation of options, and prioritization of recommendations.

The areas of the University that have been reviewed and evaluated are:

- Human Resources
- Auxiliary Activities
- Development, Finance
- Facilities Management
- General Administration
- Global Programs & Activities
- Information Technology
- Marketing & Communications
- Procurement
- Research Administration
- Student Services

Horstman noted that the potential benefits of the review and implementation of the PEAK recommendations include:

- Improved end user experience
- Streamlined business processes
- Less time focused on manual tasks
- Clarified roles and responsibilities
- Improved service quality

Horstman added that the implementation of PEAK recommendations would first roll out in the OHR. He added that in order to center diversity, equity, and inclusion in the implementation of the PEAK recommendations, the team will work with a staff person (yet to be identified) from the Office for Equity and Diversity (OED). Horstman said that full implementation of the plan across all 12 units in the initiative will take two to three years, and the newly established Peak Success Office (PSO) will oversee the implementation. He summarized by saying the overall goal is to learn how to provide administrative services in a way that improves timeliness and compliance so that faculty and staff will see immediate improvements in their lives at the University. He then opened the floor for questions.

Terry Roe asked Horstman for a specific example of a recommendation that will be implemented so that he and committee members could better understand the initiative’s practical implications at the University. Horstman used the example of hiring a new employee at the University. He explained that hiring authority should remain local, and that whether someone is being hired in engineering, liberal arts, or the medical school, the system that is followed must provide a similar experience to those being hired. How the University approaches hiring as an employer, Horstman explained, should be consistent from a compliance and liability standpoint and so that candidates don’t experience frustration.

Horstman noted that he had hoped to have more time for questions and comments from committee members, and would be happy to come to another meeting to hear more feedback and share the progress of the implementation.

In the interest of time, Steer adjourned the meeting.

Geanette Poole
University Senate Office