

SOCIAL CONCERNS COMMITTEE

Thursday, November 12, 1998

B-12 Morrill Hall

1:30 PM

In these minutes:

Draft Letter re: Public-Private Partnerships, Culture Fair Formal Report, Brainstorming: Issues of Social Concern

MINUTES

Present: Robin Brown (Chair), Catherine Forseide-Hussain, Jean Niemiec, Julie Sweitzer, Amelious Whyte, Margaret Kuchenreuther, George French, Doris Rubenstein, Sabeen Altaf, Jenny Nate, Jennifer Watts, Clint Hewitt, Mike Davey, Wesley Matson

Regrets: Joel Nelson, Friedrich Srienc, Thomas Haakenson

Absent: Lori Clark, Nicholas Dehnert, Stephanie Eckroth

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

The Social Concerns Committee met at 1:30 PM on Thursday, November 12, 1998 in B-12 Morrill Hall on the East Bank of the University of Minnesota.

DRAFT LETTER RE: PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS.

A draft letter to President Yudof from Professor Robin Brown, Chair, was distributed to committee members by e-mail prior to the meeting for their review. The letter provides the President with background on the committee's charge, identifies public-private partnerships as a concern of the committee from last year, and requests assistance in learning about how the committee can help with possible large-scale partnerships in the future. A motion was made and unanimously approved to forward the letter to the President.

CULTURE FAIR.

Professor George French reported that the committee agreed at the October meeting that it is time to make more specific plans about the proposed culture fair. A draft schedule from November through June, 1999 and a letter to cultural organizations was distributed to all members at the meeting for their consideration. Main issues that need to be addressed are: 1) funding sources; 2) tents, booths, food, and infrastructure; and 3) rhetoric, presentation, and invitations. It was noted that Coke-a-Cola used to give away product, not money, although this policy may have changed. One committee member raised concern about the culture fair and the possible duplication of time and money for cultural organizations to put on the same event twice in one year (once for their own members at a specific date and time and again for the culture fair).

Before determining that there is a need for this type of event, the committee might want to evaluate the responses to Professor French's letter asking about interest. However, concern was raised about wasting time waiting for these responses since the committee can always stop or suspend logistics if it does not receive the response desired. One member noted that since last year's e-mail survey already determined an enthusiastic interest, the letter to cultural organizations should solicit more specific information about participation. Committee members identified several reasons for proposing a culture fair:

- Showing diversity across the University
- Visibility to the invisible
- Uniting the separate organizations and celebrating differences
- Important as a social concern
- Coalition-building (strength in numbers)
- Building a sense of community

Several ideas about the culture fair were discussed, including the following:

- Hold a portion of the culture fair on each of the individual campuses to involve everyone.
- Plan all this year for a big event to be held next year that would draw participants from all campuses, such as highlighting a well-known guest speaker.
- Spring quarter may be better than fall since there's not as many new freshman events to compete with (convocation, new student orientation, homecoming); it was noted, however, that spring quarter will also be shorter in the semester system.
- Remember to emphasize that faculty and staff are invited to participate in all culture fair activities, not just U of M students.
- Appoint a subcommittee from the Social Concerns Committee to organize the event.
- Meet with Rusty Barcelo from the Office of Multicultural Affairs to help organize a university-wide event; also meet with the Student Involvement Center's Special Events Coordinator Tina Rovick.
- The committee should sponsor the event, but enlist experts in the administration to plan it.
- Incorporate the college boards as well (funding sources).

Committee members George French (faculty), Amelious Whyte (staff), and Jenny Nate (student) will represent the committee and meet with Tina Rovick and Rusty Barcelo to present the idea of a culture fair and to ask for assistance with its direction and planning before the December meeting of the Social Concerns Committee.

BRAINSTORMING ISSUES.

Committee members brainstormed about issues of social concern to address during the 1998-99 academic year. One member recommended that the committee look into alcohol prevention at the University and perhaps draft a resolution from faculty and staff making an effort to be more involved with this issue through their work and through their teaching. For example, asking faculty to make a conscious effort to incorporate the effects of alcohol consumption on metabolism in a Food, Science and Nutrition class would help to make students more aware of the effects of alcohol.

Another issue raised was related to the conditions of student housing. Specifically, the conditions of rental units in Dinkytown, as well as some on-campus housing, have been described as deplorable. The committee could consider ways of informing students about their rights to decent housing and how to become better consumers.

WHAT'S NEXT?

- Professor Brown will send the letter re: public-private partnerships to President Yudof.
- George French, Amelious Whyte, and Jenny Nate will meet with Tina Rovick and Rusty Barcelo about the culture fair and report back to the committee at its December meeting.

- Committee members should consider ways to give more shape to the alcohol prevention issue for the December meeting.
- Mike Davey and Clint Hewitt will identify the specific problem(s) with the housing issue, which will also be discussed further at the December meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 3:05PM.