

DISABILITIES ISSUES COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING
NOVEMBER 28, 2007

In these minutes:

Expand Committee Membership Update, DSCC Update, Disabilities Studies Program Update & Discussion, Electronic Textbooks, Accommodations for Disabled Students]

[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, Nicole Tollefson, Kimberly Simon, Kathryn Kohnert, Julia Robinson, Marlene Strum, Rachel Garaghty, Miriam Krause

REGRETS:

Amy Hewitt, Carol Rachac, Eric Schnell, Tammy Berberi, Lesley Craig-Unkefer, James Gambucci, Maria Gini

ABSENT: Marilyn Bruin

OTHERS ATTENDING: Victoria Nelson

I). Professor Lubet called the meeting to order.

II). Members unanimously approved the September 19, 2007 minutes.

III).

The discussion and vote to amend the language of the charge was tabled until the next meeting when more members could be present.

Professor Lubet noted that several people who had been actively involved in redrafting the charge were unable to attend today's meeting.

IV). As follow-up from the committee's September 19th meeting, Professor Lubet reported that Renee Dempsey, Senate staff, forwarded to Committee on Committees the committee's request to expand its student and ex-officio membership.

Committee on Committees approved the committee's request to expand its student membership, and is awaiting a few more specifics with regard to expanding its ex-officio membership.

Professor Lubet noted that expansion of the committee's student membership would be brought to the Senate for approval tomorrow, Thursday, November 29th, 2007. He added that Senate meetings are open to the public and anyone interested in attending is welcome.

V). Rachel Garaghty reported that there will be a Brown Bag lunch tomorrow, Thursday, November 29th from 11:00 – 1:00.

This lunch will be hosted by a student from Metropolitan State University who is starting a local chapter of ADAPT (<http://www.adapt.org/>). Ms. Garaghty stated that ADAPT is a nationally recognized grassroots activist organization of people with disabilities.

VI).

Professor Lubet informed the committee that the request to the administration to fund a Disabilities Studies Program position is on hold.

He went on to note, however, that the funds from last year's IAS grant to bring Dr. Arlene Kanter are still available and a date for bringing her to campus needs to be identified.

Ms. Garaghty stated that the DSCC is extremely interested in getting a Disabilities Studies Program at the University, and was planning, in conjunction with a woman's group on campus, to invite a notable scholar in the disability field to campus to draw attention to disability issues. Having said this, she asked if it would be possible for DSCC to co-sponsor bringing Dr. Kanter to the University this spring. Professor Lubet stated that this should definitely be doable and requested Ms. Garaghty discuss with her DSCC colleagues dates that would work for the DSCC and to let him know.

Professor Lubet added that there is a program in the School of Public Health called the Program in Human Rights and Health (<http://www.phrh.umn.edu/>) and Dr. Gregor Wolbring, a major disabilities scholar, serves on their advisory board. A member suggested inviting Dr. Wolbring to the Dr. Kanter event.

In terms of the University offering a Disabilities Studies Program a member suggested that there should be more regular conversations with the administration on this topic. Professor Lubet stated that the present climate at the University is not particularly sanguine to offering a Disabilities Studies Program. He noted, however, that it is clear that the committee needs to do something if a Disabilities Studies Program is to ever come to fruition.

The committee brainstormed ideas for moving forward its efforts to establish a Disabilities Studies Program at the University.

From this discussion the committee decided to create Disabilities Issues Subcommittee to strategize on the best approach for making a Disabilities Studies Program a reality at the University of Minnesota. It was suggested that members interested in serving on the subcommittee may want to check out the following resources as they start thinking about a Disabilities Studies Program at the University:

- Society for Disability Studies: <http://www.uic.edu/orgs/sds/>
- The Review of Disability Studies: <http://www.rds.hawaii.edu/>
- The Disability Studies Program at Syracuse University: <http://disabilitystudies.syr.edu/what/disabilitystudiesatSU.aspx>
- The University of Illinois at Chicago PhD in Disability Studies: <http://www.ahs.uic.edu/dhd/academics/phd.php>
- *Claiming Disability* by Simi Linton (1998, NYU)

Professor Lubet asked those interested in serving on the subcommittee if they would be willing to meet over break, and the consensus was that this would be fine. He then asked Ms. Dempsey to poll the committee to identify a date for the retreat.

VI). Other business:

a).

Professor Lubet informed the committee about an issue that was raised at a DSCC meeting he had attended, which was making all textbooks available electronically. To the best of Professor Lubet's knowledge, there is no systematic way of making electronic copies of textbooks immediately available to students.

A member stated that there is a movement underway across the United States where some state colleges have adopted policies that require the publishers who they purchase textbooks from to provide these books in both hard copy and electronic formats.

Professor Lubet and members agreed that this was an issue worthy of the committee's attention. As a first step, he suggested talking with Peggy Mann-Rinehart of Disability Services about this issue.

b).
A member brought to the committee's attention a situation in which a faculty member denied a disabled student's request to be a part-time student. The rationale for refusing to let the student be part-time was that it would lower the college's graduation rate.

Not knowing all the specifics, Kimberly Simon from the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action (EOAA) stated that the University has policies in place to make reasonable accommodations for disabled students. Ms. Simon agreed to bring this issue back to her office and raise it at an upcoming staff meeting. At this meeting the EOAA staff will discuss how best to handle the broader issue raised by this example, which is making faculty aware of the University's policies for accommodating disabled students.

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

Renee Dempsey
University Senate