

SENATE COMMITTEE ON STUDENT AFFAIRS
MINUTES OF MEETING
APRIL 1, 2009

[In these minutes: 2008 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) Survey, Multicultural Center for Academic Excellence Update, Suggestions for Agenda Items for 2009 - 2010]

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

PRESENT: Eric Brown, chair pro tem, Thomas Bilder, Thomas Reynolds, Kendre Turonie, Curt Baker, Silvia Canelon, Caroline Younts

REGRETS: Jeffrey Wencl, Nathan Pelzer, Amelious Whyte, Christiane Bartels, Jennifer Engler, Catherine Solheim, Olga Zakharenko, Gabriele Schmiegel

ABSENT: Kim Roufs, Megan Hayes, Hilary Ploeckelmann

GUESTS: Ron Huesman, assistant director, Office of Institutional Research; Patrick Troup, director, Multicultural Center for Academic Excellence

I). Eric Brown, chair pro tem, called the meeting to order and welcomed all those present.

II). Mr. Brown introduced the first agenda item, a report on the 2008 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) survey by Ron Huesman, assistant director, Office of Institutional Research. Mr. Huesman began by providing the committee with an overview of his presentation.

Mr. Huesman, using the Input Environmental Output (IEO) model, explained how this model was used to provide a framework for the design of the assessment procedures.

The NSSE survey, noted Mr. Huesman gathers information, on an annual basis, from hundreds of four-year colleges and universities across the country about student participation in programs and activities that institutions provide for their learning and personal development. The results provide insight into how undergraduates spend their time and what they gain from their college experience.

The University uses the survey results to identify aspects of the undergraduate experience (both inside and outside the classroom) that can be improved upon through changes in policies and practices.

The NSSE survey provides the University with 5 benchmark scores. The five NSSE

benchmarks of effective educational practice are:

- Level of academic challenge
- Active and collaborative learning
- Student-faculty interaction
- Enriching educational experiences
- Supportive campus environment

The NSSE has developed these benchmarks and demonstrated they are important. The benchmarks have high correlations with student outcomes.

The NSSE is conducted annually, and gives participating colleges and universities an idea about what types of programs and activities students are participating in, and indirect measures of student learning and personal development. A lot of work has gone into developing the NSSE, which has good psychometric characteristics.

The NSSE was first launched in 1999. Initially, just over 100 institutions participated in the NSSE, but now there are almost 800 participating institutions. The biggest group of institutions represented in the NSSE are small liberal arts colleges. The first time the University of Minnesota administered the survey was in 2008. The University was the last of the Association of American Universities (AAU) institutions to participate in the NSSE. Mr. Huesman stated that the NSSE website (http://nsse.iub.edu/html/USAT_initiative.cfm) contains a lot of valuable information.

The University is currently administering its second NSSE. The basic administration of NSSE surveys 2,500 freshman and 2,500 seniors who are randomly selected. Institutions are also allowed to do oversampling if they wish.

The response rate for the 2008 University of Minnesota NSSE was 42% of freshman completed the survey and 37% of seniors. This response rate is quite good for a national survey.

Next, Mr. Huesman shared the University's 2008 NSSE results with the committee. He noted that the NSSE survey reports are on the Office of Institutional Research's website at: <http://www.irr.umn.edu/surveyreports/nsse/>. The University has combined its NSSE results with other sources of data from the University's central record systems for analysis purposes.

Mr. Huesman went on to share information about a new survey, Student Experience in the Research University (SERU). He noted that the University is currently administering the SERU right now, but, unfortunately, so far the response rate has not been particularly good. Of the 21,000 students that were given the SERU, only 1,500 students or 6.7% have completed the survey thus far. The University of California system created the SERU survey, and has used it for quite a few years. This survey seeks to learn about student experiences at large research universities. The SERU may be a more appropriate survey for University of Minnesota students as opposed to the NSSE, but this will be assessed over time.

The SERU survey is unique in some ways. It is a modular system that measures 5 areas:

- Academic engagement
- Civic engagement
- Student development
- Global awareness
- Wildcard module (customizable)

The University of California system uses the SERU data for program review purposes. The SERU allows for longitudinal analysis of the data and inter-institutional comparisons.

A member asked whether other University of Minnesota peer institutions also administer the SERU. Mr. Huesman stated besides the University of Minnesota 5 other institutions began administering the SERU this spring, University of Michigan, University of Florida, University of Oregon, Rutgers, and the University of Pittsburgh.

Mr. Huesman noted that the Center for Studies in Higher Education at UC Berkeley coordinates this survey for the University of California system. More information about SERU can be found on their website at <http://cshe.berkeley.edu/>.

A member asked when the University would decide whether it administers the NSSE or the SERU. Mr. Huesman stated that it will take the University at least 3 years to decide.

Mr. Huesman was asked his opinion about the discrepancy between the numbers of people who completed the NSSE versus the SERU. He stated that the NSSE is much more widely known than the SERU. Also, the SERU website is not quite as polished looking as the NSSE website. He added that the SERU survey is also more research oriented.

A member asked whether there is a difference in the incentives offered to students for completing each of these surveys. Mr. Huesman stated that the NSSE incentive total was \$2,500 (five \$500 gift certificates), and the SERU incentive total was \$3,000 (six \$500 gift certificates).

Mr. Huesman stated that the Office of Institutional Research plans to put up posters where students congregate to encourage students to complete the SERU. Also, he noted that the low SERU completion rate could be attributable to the timing of the survey. He stated that the NSSE was administered in early February, and the SERU was just administered now after spring break. A member suggested sending survey reminders out after finals encouraging students to complete the SERU. Another member suggested emphasizing the importance of completing the survey by noting that survey responses will have an impact on decisions made by the University. Mr. Huesman stated that in the past the Office of Institutional Research has also put the incentive in the subject line to encourage students to complete surveys, and it may want to think about doing this again.

How long does it take to take the SERU and NSSE surveys asked a member? Both surveys take, on average, 20 – 25 minutes noted Mr. Huesman.

A member asked if the SERU data can be broken down by subject matter. This information is available noted Mr. Huesman. This same member then asked whether it would be possible to compare the University's writing program, for example, with that of other schools that administered the SERU. Mr. Huesman stated that it would be more difficult to get at this data. While the University's central records could likely separate out these results, getting this information from other institutions would probably not be so easy.

III). Next, Mr. Brown introduced Patrick Troup who was invited to talk about what the University is doing to make the University a more welcoming and accepting place for students given the University's diverse population. Mr. Troup thanked members for their invitation to come before the committee today. He stated that he is the director of the Multicultural Center for Academic Excellence.

Mr. Troup stated that the Multicultural Center for Academic Excellence (MCAE) is designed to help develop and foster inclusive and coherent learning communities for undergraduate multicultural students on campus by providing academic support, and cultural and community engagement activities. MCAE is one of five departments within the Office for Equity and Diversity. The other four departments include Disability Services, Gay, Lesbian, Bi-sexual, Transgender Programs Office, the Office for University Women and the office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action. MCAE, noted Mr. Troup, serves as a vehicle to disseminate information about programs, resources, activities and happenings, volunteer, work and internship opportunities taking place on and off campus. Mr. Troup went on to provide the committee with an extensive list of services and programs MCAE sponsors/co-sponsors along with a brief description of each. Examples included SEAM (Student Excellence in Academics and Multiculturalism), Multicultural Kickoff (MCAE Scholarship & Internship Information Fair), and the Multicultural Civic Engagement Program to name a few.

A member asked how MCAE balances making the University a more diverse place with all of its other responsibilities. Mr. Troup stated that it is challenging giving MCAE is a fairly small unit with only 16 full-time staff. MCAE works hard to provide pipeline programming for incoming students, and for making sure existing University students have a sense of community and for ensuring that they graduate. These challenges are made more difficult by the fact that MCAE is not situated within a particular college. MCAE needs to continuously reinvent itself to be able to provide programming and services that colleges will support, and that resonates with students.

A member asked whether MCAE has any statistical information about the number of K - 12 students it works with who actually end up going to college. Mr. Troup stated that MCAE is trying to get at this information, but it can be very difficult. He added someone has just been hired to track this information.

Does MCAE offer any resources for faculty asked a member? MCAE, noted Mr. Troup, does not have a lot of resources designed for faculty; however, the Office for Equity and Diversity does, e.g., small grants for faculty who are interested in research around under-represented populations, Equity and Diversity Research Institute (<http://www.academic.umn.edu/equity/edri.html>). MCAE focuses more or less on student support.

Does any University department work specifically with employment for under-represented students or students of color asked a member? No, stated Mr. Troup. There is no centrally run office that focuses on finding employment for students of color.

Does the Office for Equity and Diversity work with the Bridge to Academic Excellence program asked a member? MCAE works closely with this program reported Mr. Troup.

A member asked whether MCAE works with programs like Admission Possible or similar programs that do outreach. Yes, stated Mr. Troup, to a degree, but MCAE would like to work even more closely with them. Admission Possible is a great program that does really good work.

Hearing no further questions/comments, Mr. Brown thanked Mr. Troup for his presentation.

IV). The committee spent the remainder of the meeting discussing possible agenda items for the 2009 – 2010 academic year. Ideas generated included:

- Invite guests to provide information about the impact the light rail will have on University laboratories such as those located in Hasselmo Hall.
- Learn about what is being planned for the space formerly occupied by the Classroom Science Building. Find out what, if any, commerce possibilities this space might afford the campus.
- Invite a representative from the Department of Theatre Arts & Dance and/or the Department of Art to address issues of equity and diversity in those departments. Recently, there have been equity and diversity issues with outside directors and affiliate faculty.
- Learn how University artistic departments assess student performance in classes where students are practicing with their bodies versus written tests. How is student progress measured in these classes?
- Continue to monitor Welcome Week outcomes and hear about what is being planned for future in terms of Welcome Week programming.

Renee Dempsey, Senate staff, requested that members who have ideas for agenda items for the 2009 – 2010 academic year to email her at demps005@umn.edu. (PLEASE NOTE: Following the meeting, additional agenda item ideas for 2009 – 2010 were forwarded to Ms. Dempsey. These suggestions are at the bottom of these minutes).

V). Mr. Brown announced that he is acting as chair pro tem today because Jeffrey Wencil is now in the Navy.

Ms. Dempsey reported that Professor Thomas Reynolds and Olga Zakharenko will co-chair the Senate Committee on Student Affairs next year.

VI). Hearing no further business, Mr. Brown adjourned the meeting.

Renee Dempsey
University Senate

Additional ideas for 2009 – 2010 agenda items:

- Learn about what is being done to make the campus safer.
- Given that Northrop Auditorium is being remodeled, learn about what is being planned in terms of its artistic, cultural, and social connections with the community.
- Receive information about how the University is being affected by the economic downturn. In light of these challenging economic times, an increasing number of students could turn to graduate school given that fewer positions are available in the market. In light of this possibility, find out whether it would be possible to increase the current advisor to student ratio for graduate students. Also, apart from the “normal” tuition increases over time, will the University need implement further tuition increases to help with its financial dilemma? Learn about whether the money the University gives to registered student groups might change in light of the economy. Will priority be given to more “academic” uses of funding?
- Receive information about the Bridge to Academic Excellence program - <http://www.bridgetoexcellence.umn.edu/index.html>.
- Learn about the University’s writing intensive requirements.
- Hear from Career Services - <http://www.career.umn.edu/>.
- Monitor game day operations in light of the new TCF Bank Stadium.