

Social Concerns Committee
March 1, 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:** YOU@UMN Wellness Initiative; Board of Regents Policy: *American Indian Advisory Boards*; Demilitarization Resolution; Updates]

PRESENT: Aseem Kaul (chair), Ryan Allen, Leif Anderson, Katherine Arnold, Emily Eaton, Linda Frizzell, Becca Gercken, Hyunjoo Im, Mary Kurth, Katsumi Matsumoto, Rachel Miller, Miguel Ovies-Bocanegra, Molly Schwartz, Sarah Sexton, Nicole Smiley, Meaghan Thul, Boris Volkov

REGRETS: Jason Meyer, Sonya Zbinden

ABSENT: Jae-Lah Lymon, Leah Peterson, Kiran Sjoberg, Roselin Victor, Wil Zehouru

GUESTS: Julie Reuvers, assistant to the vice provost and dean, Office for Student Affairs; Lisa Lemler, associate director, University Recreation and Wellness; Tadd Johnson, senior director, American Indian Tribal Nations Relations

OTHERS: Kate Stuckert, senior assistant to the President, Office of the President

1. YOU@UMN Wellness Initiative

Professor Aseem Kaul, chair, called the meeting to order and welcomed Julie Reuvers, assistant to the vice provost and dean, Office for Student Affairs and Lisa Lemler, associate director, University Recreation and Wellness; who were present to consult on and raise awareness about a new platform, [YOU@UMN](#), designed to support and foster student wellness. Reuvers and Lemler provided an [overview of the tool, the consultation process, and the plans for rolling it out](#).

Members expressed support for the platform, and offered suggestions on how to get the word out about it. Becca Gercken thanked Reuvers for working so closely with the system campuses on the project.

2. Board of Regents Policy: *American Indian Advisory Boards*

Next, Kaul introduced Tadd Johnson, senior director, American Indian Tribal Nations Relations. Johnson explained that revisions to the Board of Regents Policy: *American Indian Advisory Boards* were proposed as a result of misunderstandings resulting in students on the Twin Cities Campus being denied permission to form such boards. He said that the revisions were minor in nature. He also noted that the advisory boards were not a priority for the tribes. When asked what the tribes' priorities were, Johnson listed several issues related to the University, such as experiments involving wild rice and [repatriation of remains and burial objects](#) excavated by University anthropology professors and students in the 1920s. Johnson noted that although he

had made some way with President Joan Gabel, Vice President for Equity and Diversity Michael Goh, and leadership of the Hubert H. Humphrey School of Public Affairs, he was having trouble finding allies to advocate on behalf of these issues. He offered to forward a list of these concerns to the committee. Linda Frizzell suggested writing a general resolution in support of these initiatives, and offered to take the lead on drafting it. Members agreed, expressing a desire to follow up with specific asks during the next academic year, if appropriate. Kaul said it would be important to find out what President Gabel is already doing in this space first, so as not to duplicate efforts. Johnson thanked the committee and promised to be in touch.

3. Demilitarization Resolution

Kaul told members that the electronic vote that had been initiated on the [Demilitarization Resolution](#) had been close, and several people had asked for further discussion. Many members expressed support for the main gist of the resolution, which called for removing military-grade equipment from the arsenal of the University of Minnesota Police Department (UMPD).

However, members expressed reservations about the resolution, including:

- The resolution lacked sufficient data.
- The resolution contained too many provisions and details that people do not understand and that detract from the larger issue.
- It seemed to be trying to hold UMPD accountable for the actions of the Minneapolis Police Department (MPD), which is not fair to the student body nor to UMPD, which puts officers through a great deal of training on sensitivity, bias, and other issues.
- It was not clear how seals on the holsters of police officers' handguns would impact police responsiveness to violent situations, and therefore the safety of police officers and those they are charged to protect. It was also not clear how data concerning seal breakage would be reviewed or used.
- The rationale for linking scholarships to the reductions in weapons spending was not clear.

Nicole Smiley reminded members that a resolution is advisory, and that the administration has jurisdiction over how (or, indeed, whether) suggestions in a resolution are implemented. After discussion, it seemed that most, but not all, members supported the general idea of the resolution, but were not comfortable endorsing the details. Kaul said that he would provide that feedback to the author.

4. Updates

Kaul announced that Professor Katsumi Matsumoto had agreed to chair the committee in the 2021-22 academic year.

Kaul then updated members on a meeting that he, Matsumoto, and Ryan Allen had with Stuart Mason, associate vice president and chief investment officer, Office of Investments and Banking (OIB) with regard to investing of the University's endowment. The University, it transpired, is already doing fairly well in terms of responsible investing, as the portfolio is probably already carbon neutral. However, the university's exact position is unclear because the OIB has a wide range of investments, across both public index funds and private equity, and they were still compiling aggregate numbers. Ethical and sustainable investing is also a priority for President Gabel; OIB is due to provide a report along those lines to Gabel later in the spring, said Kaul,

and Mason had agreed to share this with the committee when available, so the committee could decide how best to proceed after they'd reviewed a copy of this report.

Allen noted that his impression was that the priority was the rate of return, and social issues were secondary. He added that the University has recently increased its investment in private equity, which leads to less transparency. Kaul agreed that it takes more effort to be transparent, but it is possible. He suggested that the committee could advocate for greater transparency about the University's investments.

Matsumoto, Kaul, and Allen also proposed encouraging the University to increase its investments in environmental funds; currently such funds are part of the University's portfolio, but the percentage invested in them is low.

Amber Bathke
University Senate Office