

EQUITY, ACCESS & DIVERSITY

MINUTES OF MEETING

October 14, 2013

[In these minutes: Income-Based Diversity Discussion; Admissions Holistic Review; Financial Aid and Pell Eligibility; New Business.]

[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 represent the views of, nor are they binding on, the Senate, the Administration or the Board of Regents.]

PRESENT: Geoff Maruyama (chair), Neil Anderson, Katie Ballering, Rebecca Dean, Irene Duranczyk, Andra Fjone, Michael Goh, Richard Graff, Louis Mendoza, Christopher O'Brien, Jacquelyn Rupp, Deena Wassenberg, Ellyn Woo

GUESTS: Rachelle Hernandez, Associate Vice Provost for Enrollment Management; Professor Karen Miksch, Postsecondary Teaching and Learning; Tracy Smith, Deputy General Counsel, OGC; Patricia Jones Whyte, Director, Office for Diversity in Graduate Education; Kris Wright, Director, Office of Student Finance

OTHERS: Tina Marisam for Kimberly Hewitt

REGRETS: John Andrus, Priscilla Flynn, Kimberly Hewitt, Judith Katz, Tenzin Khando, Susan Seltz

ABSENT: Jeremy O'Hara, John Andrus

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Professor Maruyama called the meeting to order and asked for introductions.

INCOME-BASED DIVERSITY DISCUSSION

Professor Maruyama distributed a handout he created titled "EAD Discussion 10-14-13: Data on Poverty and Race." The following points were discussed regarding the information on the handout:

- Percentage Eligible for Free or Reduced Price Lunch, by Group.
 - The graph displayed percentage of eligible students from approximately a decade ago, by race (he noted that he had been unable to find current data on the MDE web site, which was the source of the earlier data).
 - About 20% of white students were eligible, while 60-80% of students of color were eligible, depending on the particular group.
 - Race and poverty do covary in Minnesota.

- Estimated Baccalaureate Degree Attainment by Age 24 by Family Income Quartile 1970-2011 (from Post-secondary Education OPPORTUNITY).
 - This graph displayed national data on the percentage of students, by their family income quartiles, who graduate from a 4-year college. Professor Maruyama noted that the graph shows that family income is a strong determinant of students' likelihood of graduating.
- College Participation Rate for Dependent Family Members: 18-24 Years Old from Low Income Families in Minnesota.
 - The rate of attendance for low-income students is increasing.

Professor Maruyama noted that current social science research finds race to still be an issue that affects day to day interactions and outcomes.

The speakers were introduced and the following discussion ensued:

- Ms. Wright stated that 26% of the University's student body is Pell Eligible.
- Professor Maruyama suggested that the committee think of the term "Affirmative Action" as the capacity to use race and other demographic information as factors when making decisions about issues including college admissions or assignment of students to high schools. Other words used include racial preference or race-sensitive policies.
- Professor Miksch explained that the *Fisher v. University of Texas, at Austin* (2013) (Fisher) U.S. Supreme Court case is specifically about race conscious admission policies where race is one of many diversity factors.
- Ms. Smith added that the 2003 *Grutter v. Bollinger* and *Gratz v. Bollinger* U. S. Supreme Court cases determined that race could be considered as one factor of diversity, and that student body diversity can be a compelling governmental interest, but that it must be narrowly tailored toward achieving this interest. *Grutter* affirmed that narrow tailoring must be part of the individualized holistic review and does not have a point system that overwhelms this process. The decision to use race included explication of local context, and whether or not there might be race-neutral alternatives available.
- Professor Miksch explained that the *Fisher* case would now be considered again at the lower courts, not because the U.S. Supreme Court reached a different decision or in any way overturned the *Grutter* case, but to emphasize that the appeals court did not sufficiently investigate whether race conscious admissions practices were needed in Texas. She also noted that the state of Texas has several factors that require special consideration and are not applicable to Minnesota:
 - The top 10% rule (students who graduate in the top 10% of their high school class are guaranteed admission to a UT campus) in Texas was established because the K-12 public schools are still largely segregated.
 - Texas higher education is still under federal supervision to desegregate.

- The Student Engagement at Research Universities (SERU) Survey will give the University a greater understanding of the student population.

Professor Maruyama restated that the committee was approached to consider diversity at the University in light of the Fisher case. If we state that we value diversity, how are we proactively developing a diverse and engaged student body? How do income, race, and eventual academic achievements fit together? Ms. Smith added that it is time for a review of the University's policies and practices regarding diversity.

Ms. Hernandez explained that her office meets regularly with the Office of the General Counsel and the colleges to review admissions policies and practices. They are now meeting to assess what a periodic review would mean, what it would mean as a result of the Fisher case, and how it will be planned. The University is planning a periodic review and the General Counsel will meet with every admitting unit on all campuses. Fisher reinforces the importance of a review, but Grutter set the stage for the process. She then outlined the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities' admission review process:

- She distributed a handout titled "Fall 2014 Freshman Admissions Overview." The handout outlined the admissions review and selection process and the primary and secondary factors of admission.
- Each application is read in its entirety, and students are assessed based on the publicly listed review factors, and within the context of the high school they are attending, and the opportunities that school offers.
- This year, a question was added regarding single-parent homes to gather further background about students' family circumstances.
- The Office of Admissions works with high schools, community organizations, and the University's colleges and other campus partners regarding application questions and factors of consideration to ensure that the application contains questions that allow students to share additional information about their personal characteristics and family circumstances that may speak to their potential for success at the University.
- She directed members to the diversity statement in the Overview and added that it also reflects student learning outcomes, however they will review the language to ensure that it asserts the University's value of diversity. She invited members to review the revised statement in the future.
- Professor Miksch stated that the national landscape of higher education is constantly being evaluated, in particular, areas where race is no longer considered in admissions. The University of Washington (UW) and UMNTC are very similar in cost, size, and number of Pell-eligible students. A proposition was passed in the State of Washington, and UW can no longer consider race for admissions. This presented the opportunity to examine a similar institution before and after this proposition passed. It was not UW's choice to stop considering race, but research has shown that once this

happened, communities of color now seem to perceive UW as unwelcoming, and the numbers of under-represented students of color have gone down.

- Professor Maruyama noted that diversity is not mentioned in the recently released strategic planning goals. Ms. Hernandez commented that diversity is a core value of the institution and is identified in the current student learning and development outcomes. Ms. Hernandez passed around a copy of these outcomes.
- Professor Maruyama asked Ms. Hernandez how issues of global diversity are addressed in comparison to American students of color. Are international students taking the focus away from populations that have received historical discrimination in the U.S.? She responded that the University is committed to the recruitment and enrollment of students of color and specifically, to encouraging Minnesota students to attend the University. International student targets are such that they do not take away spaces from domestic students. At the same time, the University is constantly assessing and enhancing its outreach and recruitment efforts to support the academic preparation of students and also to encourage more students of color to apply to the University. How the Office of Admissions identifies students, recruits students, and develops pipelines of students of color is constantly being reviewed and enhanced. They have a strong commitment to all populations of students. A committee member asked about students who are from Africa, but may be white. The comment was made that students who are white, but from Africa, are considered multicultural students per federal guidelines.

HOLISTIC REVIEW PROCESS

Ms. Hernandez detailed the holistic individualized review admissions process:

- Each application for admission is read in its entirety by at least two different individuals. Many applications receive more than two reviews, as the University considers students for the colleges of choice they have indicated, and if not admissible to those colleges, considers them for other colleges to which they may be admissible based on the student's academic interests and preparation. Last year, 43,000 freshman students applied to the Twin Cities campus alone, not including transfer students.
- The University admits students to seven different colleges and the colleges conduct their admissions process separately. There are, however, differences between transfers and freshmen. Transfer students could receive multiple offers of admission from different colleges, but they can only accept one. At the freshman level, students indicate their colleges of interest in order of preference. Their academic background will determine the college to which they are admitted.
- She directed members to the list of primary factors and course requirements for each college and noted their differences.

- The competitive level by college is different for each. The competitive level of admissions for a given college is impacted each year by the number of applications the University receives for that particular college. Students are presented with averages of the previous freshman class to give them an understanding of what a typical admit looks like.
- They aim to admit the most competitive students that have the greatest likelihood of success at the University. (This comment evoked later discussion about how welcoming our university is to students from different backgrounds, and if we should be examining it to see if there are ways that the U should be changing to change success rates of students from diverse backgrounds.)
- There are no automatic admissions decisions based on any one factor. Students are reviewed within the context of their high school. Due to this process, some students are accepted that do not meet average ACT/SAT scores, provided that they have demonstrated that they are taking advantage of available resources, progressing within their curriculum, and rank highly within their high school.
 - There are students that are struggling with both academics and test scores. Ms. Hernandez agreed with committee comments that in some student circumstances this may be due to achievement gap factors. In those cases, students are not admitted but the University is proactive in communicating transfer planning information to these students. With the Minnesota Cooperative Admissions Program, which is the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities' only guaranteed admissions program, a student can attend a metro-area community college, complete required courses, and if they achieve a certain GPA they will be admitted.
 - If a student has a life event during high school that causes their grades to drop, but then they show an upward trend during junior or senior year, this shows maturity. Though the student may have a lower cumulative GPA, their later work correlates most to their next step in education and they are likely ready to attend the University.
 - They are aware of the practice of tracking and realize that school administrators or teachers may have tracked some students out of higher-level classes.
 - Professor Miksch emphasized that outreach is important to attract students from schools that are not typical feeder schools for the University.
- Ms. Hernandez commented that the Office of Admissions maintains fairness by making the review process consistent for every student. The group of individuals that does the reviews is diverse on many characteristics.
- Within the list of secondary characteristics: diversity is broadly defined to include diversity of region and race, leadership, and other personal circumstances are considered.

- Morris campus has a similar review process; each campus makes its own decisions about applications and admissions.
- Norming sessions are conducted constantly within admissions staff members to ensure that the holistic review is conducted fairly and consistently.

FINANCIAL AID AND PELL-ELIGIBLE STUDENTS

Professor Maruyama asked Ms. Wright for her input from the Financial Aid perspective and opportunities for the committee to contribute:

- As noted earlier, Ms. Wright stated that 26% of undergraduates are eligible for Federal Pell Grants.
- In reviewing research, when Pell eligible and non-Pell eligible students are ranked by their ACT scores, Pell-eligible students are less likely to graduate on time—which may be something of interest to the EAD committee. She continued, the term “low-income” becomes a proxy for several other factors, such as college preparedness or family support.
- The percentage of students from low-income families has remained steady.
- Although the income profile of our applicants has not changed, change has occurred in who is now receiving aid, with a greater proportion of aid money going to merit awards that are distributed independently of need, and a lesser proportion going to need-based awards.
- Low-income students are often borrowing the maximum amount that they are offered, as much as \$10,000 each year.
- The highest rate of student loan defaults are from students that drop out after one or two years of college. If a student graduates, the chance of default is only three or four percent. The University currently has low rates of default compared to other Minnesota institutions.
- It is important to recognize that low academic performance affects need-based as well as merit-based aid. Low GPAs can result in loss of both types of aid.
- Given the realities of the size of Pell and Minnesota state grants, it probably is realistic to expect that families and their students will need to contribute twice the federal *Expected Family Contribution*.
- Ms. Wright explained how aid is distributed to Pell-eligible students:
 - Pell-eligible students are given aid on the basis of an expected family contribution (EFC), which can be as low as zero, which means that a family is not expected to be able to pay for any of the costs of their child’s education.
 - Zero EFC students get full tuition and fees covered. That still leaves costs of housing and food.
 - Students can borrow money to move their aid package up to the cost of attendance, which is \$25,000 per year.
 - EFC is based on the Federal formula that has not changed.
 - Assets are no longer considered in the FAFSA.

- Financial Aid and Admissions discuss with parents and families the reality of the cost of attendance.
- A number of committee members raised questions about ways in which the University is changing to be more welcoming to students from diverse backgrounds and to deal with the current economic realities facing students. There was concern that given the large number of applicants, we could simply accept those who are more likely to graduate given the current state of the University and how things are being done. They wanted to understand better how admissions could be consistent across so many files and with only two reviewers. Given the lower graduation rates of low income students and students of color, basing decisions on who is likely to succeed might lessen their numbers and make the U a more elite institution.

NEW BUSINESS

Professor Maruyama began to close the discussion with a request for direction for the committee in the future:

- Ms. Wright suggested the committee examine why Pell-eligible students are not graduating at the same rate as non-Pell eligible. Also, the rates of student retention within a broadly defined context of diversity.
- Ms. Hernandez suggested that the committee could review the revised diversity statement once it has been written. Ms. Smith added that support would be needed for the revised educational objectives that can be achieved through diversity.
- Professor Miksch noted that it is important to have our own local social scientists and other experts involved in studying each college and the overall campus climate. She recommended that each review committee include at least one expert in the field.
- Dr. Whyte stated that provisions have been made to the graduate application to discern income and graduate level diversity would be a valuable conversation in the future. It would be important to know how debt loads are affecting student decisions to attend graduate and professional programs.

Professor Maruyama invited the speakers to a future discussion and adjourned the meeting. The committee will follow up this discussion with an additional internal discussion at its next meeting.

Jeannine Rich
University Senate Office