

Disabilities Issues Committee

October 19, 2016

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 represent the views of, nor are they binding on, the senate, the administration or the Board of Regents.

[In these minutes: Committee on Committees Review; Discussion of Student Mental Health; Action on Disability Statement for Syllabi]

PRESENT: Katherine Murphy (chair), Michele Chilinski, Kim Doberstein, Maki Isaka, David Johnson, Donna Johnson, Betsy Kerr, Ryan Machtmes, Peggy Martin, Buck McKay, Lars Oddsson, Libby Parker, Regan Pelton, Heather Peters

REGRETS: Andy Hillis, Perry Moriearty, Anna Mosser

ABSENT: John De Haan

GUESTS: Doug Ernie, member, Committee on Committees; Shannon Zavada, disabilities support coordinator, University of Minnesota Rochester; Gail Myers, director, Disability Resource Center, University of Minnesota Crookston

OTHERS: Vickie Courtney, director, University Senate Office

1. Welcome and Introductions

Chair Katherine Murphy welcomed members and everyone introduced themselves.

2. Committee on Committees Review

Doug Ernie, member, Committee on Committees, explained the review process to members and encouraged them to send any comments they may have at a later time to him at ernie@umn.edu. He then read the committee's charge and asked members whether the charge is appropriate. David Johnson said that the charge is very broad, and that disabilities issues overlap with many other committees' work. Betsy Kerr said that the committee's discussions have fit the charge, and that accessible technology and accessibility awareness are big topics.

Ernie then asked whether this committee collaborates with others. Murphy said that they are working with the Classroom Advisory Subcommittee (CAS) and the Equity, Access, and Diversity Committee (EAD) on a variety of issues. She said that much of this work was done between the committee chairs, and she is looking at ways to collaborate more effectively. Peggy

Martin added that last year, the committee collaborated with the Social Concerns Committee and the Senate Committee on Faculty Affairs (SCFA) on a chair-to-chair basis.

Ernie then asked whether members felt that the membership was adequate in terms of employee types, diversity and system campus representation. Kerr said that she thought it was. Lars Oddsson suggested adding representation on the committee for persons with disabilities. Donna Johnson said that this may already exist on the committee, and Oddsson clarified that his suggestion was to formalize this representation through modifying the by-laws. Martin said that they have discussed adding disabilities coordinators from the system campuses as ex-officio members. Donna Johnson said that the disability professionals from all system campuses meet every other week, and that it makes sense to have them on this committee. Maki Isaka said that it would be good to increase cooperation with Boynton Health Service and Student Counseling Services, and wondered whether it would make sense to have ex-officio representation from these offices, as well. Murphy commented that more representation from system campuses, aside from ex-officio members, would be good as well. She suggested making a proposal on membership updates to Committee on Committees as a part of this review.

Ernie asked whether the committee is consulted on relevant policies and policy amendments, and if there is a consultative relationship with the administration. Donna Johnson said that there were resolutions on instructor training and Disability Resource Center serviceability, but she is not sure what happened to them. Senate staff will investigate.

The discussion then returned to the committee charge. With regard to points b and c of the duties and responsibilities (“to promote compliance with laws relating to students, staff, and guests of the University with disabilities and to review policies and practices in light of legal compliance aspects, deployment of resources, and effectiveness in meeting the needs of the University community, and to recommend changes”), Martin wondered what the committee’s role is in terms of compliance, since there is a compliance officer who is responsible for overseeing compliance. Isaka commented that compliance is the minimum, and that the committee should concern itself with the climate around disabilities issues. Murphy suggested revising the charge, as well, as a part of the review.

With no further discussion, Ernie thanked the committee and departed.

3. Discussion of Student Mental Health

Murphy proposed that the committee take on student mental health as “the” big issue to work on this year. There is a lot of momentum behind it, she said. If the committee decides to take on this issue, she asked, what would this committee’s piece of the movement be? Donna Johnson said that one in three students have mental health conditions. There is a lot being done, but plenty more to do. She then said that she is the chair of the subcommittee on Mental Health Advocates,

which is a subcommittee of the Provost's Committee on Student Mental Health. She talked about a pilot program that will be taking place beginning in November in which individuals in various departments across campus will be trained as mental health advocates. These people will not be counselors, but will be available as a resource for students, faculty and staff with mental health concerns. The mental health advocates will be supplied with information such as wait times to see a counselor, how to access drop-in counseling, and other processes, and can assist individuals in navigating these processes. Their official training will be on November 1, 2016. There are approximately 50 people who will be mental health advocates, and many other individuals have expressed interest in becoming a mental health advocate. Vickie Courtney, director, University Senate Office, informed members that the November 3rd University Senate meeting will focus on student mental health, and that Disabilities Issues Committee members are invited to attend. She said that Sue Wick, co-chair of the Joint Task Force on Student Mental Health, will moderate the discussion, and Matt Hanson, assistant director, Mental Health Clinic, Boynton Health Service, will be on hand to frame the discussion. Students will be involved as well. The committee agreed to focus on student mental health as the primary issue of the year. Oddson informed the committee about an app created by Adam Moen, a University of Minnesota alumnus, that tracks individual student mental health data and allows individuals to provide help in real time. Michele Chilinski commented that it would be good to explore how faculty and staff can best work with student workers with mental health concerns, and Murphy said that instructors need more training on this issue. Martin suggested that gathering data on graduation and retention rates of students with mental health concerns is another possible area of focus. Buck McKay suggested looking at student veterans' mental health. Isaka said that it would be good to look at faculty and staff mental health, not just student, and pointed out that grad students are also instructors. Martin said that there is no data on faculty mental health, and Murphy said that student mental health is where the momentum is, but perhaps the committee can give input that this isn't just a student issue, but affects faculty and staff, as well.

4. Action on Disability Statement for Syllabi

In the interest of time, Murphy said that the last agenda item, to vote on the revised disability statement for syllabi, would be moved to an electronic vote. She then adjourned the meeting.

Amber Bathke
University Senate Office