

Senate Disabilities Issues Committee
Minutes of the Meeting
December 3, 2014

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

In these minutes: [Report from Disabilities Resource Center; reports from system campus disabilities coordinators; old business and new business]

PRESENT: Patrick McNamara, chair; Maki Isaka, Michael O'Day, Paige Mackey, Betsy Kerr, Michele Chilinski, Paul Hinz, Peggy Martin, Anna Mosser, Donna Johnson, Heather Peters, Katherine Murphy, Perry Moriearty

REGRETS: Victoria Nelson, Susan Rose, Ben Minnis, Jane Jones, Andy Hillis, Ben Minnis

ABSENT: John DeHaan

GUESTS: Parry Telander, Chris Dallager

Professor McNamara welcomed the committee.

1. Report on the Disability Resource Center

McNamara introduced Donna Johnson, director, Disability Resource Center (DRC), who updated the committee on recent activities of the Center.

Highlights included:

- The transitional employment project has been launched, which provides opportunities for occupationally injured workers to do light duty work while they are preparing to return to their jobs of origin. Johnson noted that this is a good way to retain good workers and have them productively employed while waiting to return to their position.
- Occupational therapy students are conducting job analyses in departments in order that they can create more accurate job descriptions. Thus, if someone is working with UReturn, the integrated disability services program designed to assist faculty and staff who experience illnesses or injuries, the UReturn consultant is better able to establish accommodations with better information.
- UReturn is developing liaisons with the Office of Human Resources to expand services and spread the word about what they do and how they do it.
- The National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research is establishing proposals that will have a focus on employment, which may be another possible funding source
- Disabilities coordinators and service providers from all campuses now meet weekly to conduct case consultations, discuss service delivery, work toward consistency, and learn from each other about issues.
- Thirteen students registered with DRC have been trained as student trainers. They work with professional staff to provide disabilities training on campus.
- DRC is working with the law firm of Gray Plant Mooty to develop a short training webinar on access, which will be available to faculty system-wide.

- Students registered with the DRC responded to a survey indicating they wanted more in the way of stress reduction and wellness. DRC worked with the Recreation and Wellness Center and the Center for Spirituality and Healing to create opportunities to reduce stress around finals time, including free classes at the Rec and Wellness Center. They would like to expand the program next year.
- IT professionals will be meeting to discuss web accessibility, and Johnson emphasized the need for every website on campus to be accessible and communicating that throughout campus.

2. Reports from campus coordinators

McNamara commended the disabilities coordinators for their weekly meetings to address issues, and the campus coordinators further elucidated their work in these meetings.

3. Old business

McNamara updated the committee on the status of the request by the Minnesota Student Association (MSA) for an access ramp to Willey Hall. McNamara said it seemed that this was more about bicycle accessibility. He noted Roberta Kehne, coordinator, DRC, reported that they had not received any request to make the entrance accessible and there is adequate accessible entrance to all the buildings in this area. Persons with disabilities do have safe, efficient, and convenient access. The committee decided against supporting MSA's action on the project.

McNamara went on to discuss Drupal, and said that the committee had furthered the conversation about training for accessibility as far as it could go. He said the committee worked with the Office of Information Technology and did a good job raising the issue to the broader community. It was now in the hands of web professionals to do the right thing regarding training accessibility. The committee discussed Moodle accessibility and it was suggested that someone from the Moodle upgrade team visit the committee to discuss those issues.

4. New Business

McNamara raised the issue of support services for military veterans on campus and wondered if there was a place for the committee to help with making the campus more accessible, be it physically, psychologically or emotionally for returning vets. He noted he had reached out to the president of the Veteran Student Association and was waiting to hear back.

McNamara announced to the committee that he would be resigning his position as chair due to personal obligations. He asked if anyone would be interested in taking over the for the spring semester, and added that ideally that person would continue through 2015. McNamara asked that anyone who was interested contact him, and that he would be contacting people as well.

The committee thanked McNamara for his service.

Hearing no further business, McNamara adjourned the meeting.

Mary Jo Pehl
University Senate Office