

SENATE COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL CONCERNS

MINUTES OF MEETING

December 8, 2014

[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: Food sourcing and distribution discussion]

PRESENT: David Golden (chair), Jayne Blodgett, BreAnn Graber, Stephen Gross, Deborah Hendricks, Stuart Mason, Naomi Scheman, Rachel Schurman, Abeer Syedah

GUESTS: Leslie Bowman, executive director of contract administration, Auxiliary Services; Jenna Brott, health and wellness coordinator, University Dining Services; Karen DeVet, Director of University Dining Services, Aramark Higher Education; Tasha LePage, student representative, Students for Sustainability; Alyssa Lundberg, sustainability coordinator, University Dining Services (UDS); Shane Stennes, sustainability coordinator, University Services; Courtney Tchida, student program coordinator, Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA)

REGRETS: Laura Duckett, David Fuhs, Sandeep Kataria, Brenda Kayzar, Michael O'Day, Natalie Pope, Catherine Solheim, Amelious Whyte, Kjerstie Wiltzen

ABSENT: Katie Benson, Felicia Christy, Zan Gao, Bernadine Jocelyn, Kathleen Matter, Anne Sumangil, Eric Svingen, Curtis Williamson

1. FOOD SOURCING AND DISTRIBUTION DISCUSSION

Mr. Golden convened the meeting and asked for introductions. Professor Schurman explained that a subcommittee of members, including herself and Professors Kataria and Kayzar, met regarding the following issue:

- The distribution and availability of healthy food for students, staff and faculty on the Twin Cities campus in spaces of work, pedagogy and residence
- Food sources both local and non-local
- Food costs

The guests were introduced and discussion followed:

- Mr. Stennes pointed out that food is not mentioned in the Regents Policy on Sustainability and Energy Efficiency, which can be found here:

http://regents.umn.edu/sites/regents.umn.edu/files/policies/Sustain_Energy_Efficiency.pdf. He added that he has seen growing interest and innovation in the space of sustainability and looks forward to seeing how the University will implement positive change as it has in the recent past.

- Ms. Bowman explained that as a result of an RFP process in 2007, the University's expectations for sustainability, health and wellness, and social issues are mentioned within contracts with food vendors.
- Ms. LePage informed members that Students for Sustainability is a group focused on creating awareness around where food originates and in spring 2015 they will plant a fair share garden on the west bank of the Twin Cities campus. Students that grow food in the garden can then keep it.
- Ms. Tchida distributed publications from the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA). They are focused on the production, education, outreach, and research around food. They are housed on the St. Paul campus in the Department of Agronomy and Plant Genetics. More information can be found here: <http://www.misa.umn.edu/index.htm>. She added that 20% of MISA's total dollar sales went to University Dining Services (UDS).
 - The mission is to feed the local community and they are not perceived as competition for local farmers because they do not serve those that are not on campus. It becomes a useful partnership as students intern or graduate and bring their valuable experience to the local farming community.
- Ms. DeVet explained that UDS serves a wide variety of customers. They operate most of the retail on campus. To support the University's health and wellness initiative, Ms. Brott works as the full-time registered dietician on staff. Aramark provides recipes on the My Fitness Pal app and online. They find that students often want choices, both healthy options and comfort foods. They host a series of "Uncomfortable Dinners," which are events planned for the discussion of difficult concepts and address questions such as: What is meant by the term sustainable food? Does this include the health and wellness component? These dinners have fostered relationships between those across different disciplines.
 - Almost 25% of food is purchased locally, within 150 miles of the Twin Cities.
 - The resources are there for students actively searching for healthy eating education and options such as: nutrition education events throughout the year, station signs, low-fat items are labeled, and retail locations have lower calorie options highlighted.
 - Ms. Brott is available at various education events held in retail locations and residence halls. She can also be contacted directly by students. She explained that it is difficult to influence students to change their behaviors when choosing food.
 - The Wellness Collaborative meets every six weeks and discusses events that UDS could participate in.

- A focus on health and wellness has been identified as a trend that is going to continue.
- Is it more expensive to provide healthy food options?
 - Ms. Devet responded that this appears to be more of an access issue for the University community, not necessarily a cost issue. The cost of food on campus is increased by the use of higher quality ingredients and culinary expertise.
 - They are making all options healthier by reducing sodium and the utilization of high fructose corn syrup, and using healthier fats.
 - There is a report released each year by Aramark that details the number of healthy options provided on campus and there has been an increase each year.
 - March style dining is being more widely considered, but it involves various infrastructure planning and changes that varies by location. Future dining projects will have some components of marche style dining, such as different stations that serve customizable dishes made to order.
 - The farmer's market strategy used in dining halls involves the selling of individual vegetables to accommodate buyers and reduce food waste.
- Education Opportunities offered by Boynton Health Service
 - In-home cooking demos provided by the Student Nutrition Awareness Collaborative (SNAC)
 - Grocery Store Tours - walking tour as you shop
- Typically 1 in 6 customers will change their food choice based on calorie information availability.
- Future dining halls will likely offer some freshly prepared options, but the facilities present limitations. Students have to-go options as a way to personalize their meals.
- Dining Trends
 - Last year gluten free was a popular request from students, this year there is a desire for more vegan and vegetarian options at residential locations.
 - There has been an increase in healthy item purchasing in retail. Trends are not as easy to assess in residence halls.
- How could the demand for local products be increased?
 - 50% of food sales come from national brands. They try to balance the demands for national brands with local options.
 - Members suggested a partnership with the Campus Reads program as an opportunity for education through a book choice based on food systems.

Mr. Golden posed the question: How can the committee help this effort? He added that research has shown that restricting immediate availability to substances like sugar-sweetened beverages creates a change in purchasing behavior. Responses included:

- Mr. Stennes suggested that a collective medium be made available for students to learn about opportunities like SNAC and promote awareness. How is sustainable food defined? Public engagement is a key component and this conversation should take place on a broader scale if possible.
- Public goals should be established, such as reducing the amount of simple carbohydrates available. 25% of students are obese or morbidly obese.
- Members learned that the contract with Coca-Cola will be renegotiated in 2018.
- Data has shown that when hydration stations are near a vending machine, the sale of bottled water increases. Bottled water purchases have increased, while the sale of carbonated drinks has decreased.
- St. Olaf students had to write a sustainability essay upon entry and graduation to measure their understanding as they complete their programs. They were able to determine the effectiveness of their education around sustainability.

Hearing no further business, Mr. Golden adjourned the meeting.

Jeannine Rich
University Senate Office