SENATE COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL CONCERNS
December 7, 2015
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**: Welcome; Parental Leave Issues Report; Sustainability and Waste Reduction Issues]

PRESENT: Randy Croce (chair), David Fuhs, Katie Benson, Sarah Sexton, Maria del Carmen Garcia de LaSerrana Lozan, Megan Sweet, Maria Eustaquio, Lindsey Budde, Laura Duckett, Rachel Schurman, Daniel Kelliher

REGRETS: Becca Gercken, Kjerstie Wiltzen, Jayne Blodgett, Anna Blasco, Naomi Scheman, Brenda Kayzar, Sandeep Kataria, Deborah Hendricks, Zan Gao

ABSENT: Stuart Mason, Anne Sumangil, Felicia Christy, Katie Benson, Rachel Brockamp, Curtis Williamson

GUESTS: Deena Wassenberg, chair, Equity and Diversity (EAD) Committee; Shane Stennes, director, Sustainability Office

1. Welcome: Randy Croce, chair, commenced the meeting by reviewing the events of the previous meeting. He asked if any committee members were concerned by the guests from the union-represented employees who had attended carrying signs of protest. Megan Sweet, chief of staff, Office of Student Affairs, said she did not mind the observers, but she did feel the guests were a little hostile given the committee's limited role and purview related to employment policies. Croce said that he felt their anger was directed at the University and the circumstances, not the committee, but he was sorry if committee members felt that way.

Croce then informed the committee that the draft of the Board of Regents American Indian Advisory Board policy had been postponed, because some tribal leaders and University faculty felt they needed to add their input before it is finalized.

2. **Parental Leave Issues Report**: Committee member Sarah Sexton reported on behalf of Duane Orlovsky, chair of the Civil Service Consultative Committee (CSCC), on civil service employee concerns related to parental leave at the University. Sexton said that this is a hot topic across the country and that the United States is the only developed country that does not mandate paid maternity leave. She added that, according to her research, all the top 100 companies offer some sort of paid leave, but that often those employees who end up taking additional unpaid leave end up in another job. Sexton said that at the top fifty universities in the United States, six weeks is standard for faculty. She provided handouts on what faculty are granted at various institutions, and said that the CSCC will eventually have information on what other universities are doing for their civil service employees.

Sexton then described current benefits for University employees: faculty and professional and administrative employees are granted six weeks paid leave. Civil service and labor-represented employees get two weeks paid leave and up to an additional twenty days of accumulated sick leave. She said the Teamsters just negotiated for six weeks but that it is only for biological mothers, with two weeks paid for fathers and adoptive parents.

She stated that for the health and well being of both mother and child, two weeks is not enough. Croce added that he heard from Professor Megan Gunnar from the Institute for Child Development, who sent him a long paper summarizing research done across countries that revealed the benefits of parental leave. A number of studies, the paper said, showed definite improved cognitive development for the child, and lower incidences of disruptive behavior as they aged. There were also indicated advantages to businesses, Croce reported: when Google provided three months of maternal leave, retention of female employees rose 50%.

Professor Deena Wassenberg, chair, Equity and Diversity (EAD) Committee, reported on what her committee has discussed as it relates to parental leave. She said the issue was brought to their attention by the Senate Committee on Research. Individuals whose salaries are paid by contracts or grants are placed in a difficult position because the grants are written in such a way that they cannot cover someone's salary, if that person were to go on parental leave. The parental leave policy is in place but, she added, employees are not finding it enforced in such a way that allows them to take advantage of it. She said that individuals are left to wander campus trying to find someone willing to pay that leave. She added that this makes the employee feel as if they are drawing on favors, when really the leave was an earned, guaranteed benefit. Some women, Wassenberg said, have reported resentment building within their department when they are pregnant because money from allocated pools was being diverted to pay for leave. This is a problem, she said, because it creates an environment where women are not as likely to be hired, and are more likely to be laid off, or at least that is the perception of employees in the research field.

Wassenberg said that Kathy Brown, vice president, Office of Human Resources (OHR), spoke to EAD about the parental leave policies. She explained the policies and stated that it was the individual unit's responsibility to enforce policy. Brown added that if an individual has been denied coverage, they have recourse. But Wassenberg stated that no individual is going to let the situation get to the point where they are not getting paid.

So, Wassenberg stated, one of the things EAD decided to do was to draft a memo to Brown, stating that it was the University's responsibility to pay for that time, and it was not the employee's responsibility to figure out how to receive that money. She added that the Research Committee is putting forth a resolution that there should be a university-wide pool to pay for leave, rather than requiring individual units, some of which are small and would be strained financially, to provide the funds.

Professor Rachel Schurman asked if there were a way to estimate how much it would cost the University to provide parental leave - maternal and paternal - each year. Wassenberg replied that Research is going to have someone from finance visit their committee to help them assess what the costs would be. Professor Daniel Kelliher asked how many individuals find

themselves in this situation, to which Wassenberg replied that Research asked OHR to get those numbers, but OHR has so far not supplied them. Croce added that a number of graduate students have expressed similar concerns.

Professor Laura Duckett stated that when applying for grants, whatever level of employee is hired, the grant must budget for the benefits attached to that level of employee. It is not unusual for a large grant to have several job categories budgeted in, all covered with benefits included. She said she was not sure what benefits are granted to graduate research assistants hired at at least 50%. She was also not sure about post-doctoral student benefits.

Wassenberg stated that the University website states that eligible graduate assistants and post docs benefits are the same as faculty. But those who get fellowships are no longer university employees. One woman, said Wassenberg, had been in the same job for four years, but had to take an unpaid leave of absence after she gave birth, because she was coming off the fellowship, which had funded her work for that past year.

Croce stated that it seems that there are policies that are not being followed uniformly at the University, and that this could be related to the decentralization of the OHR. It might be that better training of decentralized staff, as well as revising the Principle Investigator training, he said, would be a good start. Schurman said that small grants do not provide for the level of funding that others do. Budgets are getting tighter and tighter and funding dollars are shrinking, so the issue is larger than just training.

David Fuhs said that the job of the committee is to recognize a problem and fix the problem, rather than demanding specific actions. The committee should say, he said, that policies are not being followed, and inconsistencies exist. Croce replied that he believes part of the problem is that administration does not really see that there is a problem. He said the committees need to find the extent and severity of this problem, and open up a dialogue with the appropriate administration.

Kelliher thought that the primary parental leave issue to be addressed by the committee is the one that affects the most employees. He asked, what standard should the committee be holding up the university to? He thought that the committee needed to push the administration toward analyzing the problem. It is their job, he said, and it is their job to be equitable. Schurman stated that the committee needs to go beyond "wouldn't it be nice," that there is a huge equity imbalance for those who get paid the least and the University needs to work toward parity. Fuhs added that the administration needs to provide the facts to help the committee provide recommendations.

Wassenberg stated that with three committees all looking at this at the same time, it is an important time to act. Duckett added that the committee should go on record as acknowledging that even six weeks is not adequate emotionally physically or socially for maternity leave. Three months is the bare minimum that a woman and family need, she said. Croce quipped, yes, we are working toward equal inadequacy.

3. **Sustainability and Waste Reduction Issues:** Maria del Carmen Garcia de LaSerrana Lozan and Lindsey Budde shared a sustainability priorities proposal written by members of the Minnesota Student Association (MSA) and the Student Senate. The goals of the proposal were as follows:

- Set a formal zero waste goal and time frame, similar to the Carbon Neutral Plan by Fall, 2016.
- Immediately begin expansion of the Organics Recycling program in conjunction with the Recycling Center and University Dining Services.
- Require events on campus with more than fifty people to be zero waste.
- Require registered student groups to include zero waste policies in their organizations, especially those applying for and receiving Student Services Fees.
- Incorporate Food Recovery Network (collects surplus food that would otherwise be wasted) where legally and logistically possible into food waste operations.
- Continue to change all food-related products to compostable and recyclable materials following the Environmentally Acceptable Packaging Ordinance.
- Commit to the Real Food Challenge by 2020.
- Report detailed percentages on food purchasing, including local food options and the amount of meat purchased to the public.
- Make internal reports on UDS operations and competitiveness openly and easily available.
- Incorporate student input on major contracts.
- Dedicate additional support and staff to the UDS Sustainability Director to ensure more rigorous sustainability goals.
- Create a system-wide policy regarding sustainability practices for procurement through the Senate, and campus student governments, beginning Spring 2016.

Croce then introduced Shane Stennes, director, Office for Sustainability, to the discussion. Stennes said that he appreciated the committee's interest in sustainability and gave a brief overview of the University sustainability landscape: he said that the Board of Regents (BOR) adopted the Sustainability and Energy Efficiency Policy in 2004. The policy, he said, does not speak directly to specific sustainability issues of food, but it does charge each campus with setting objectives and targets, and the president or delegate with indicators and measures of success around sustainability. Stennes said he has been talking with MSA about their priorities. He added that his unit is in the process of updating their strategic plan with University Services. Their plan is to set a concise number of attainable goals, and some of the issues they will likely address include emissions reduction, green house gases, and clean and safe water. They will also likely have goals addressing food and waste but do not know what exactly that will look like. Stennes said they will address how much the University diverts for composting and recycling. He added that after the goals are firmed up, they will develop the specific strategies to work toward those goals. He said that the priorities the students have laid out line up well with the priorities of his office.

Stennes then invited questions from the committee. Schurman said that the *New York Time*s ran a long article on companies like Aramark and Sysco, and the arrangements they make with universities. She wondered how constrained the University is by their Aramark contract. Stennes replied that the head of contract administration met with MSA, and apparently there

are some things that can change within the contract, but whether there is room to maneuver with subcontractors he didn't know. He said that Leslie Bowman, director, Contract Administration could talk about the specifics of the contract. He added that subcontractors do ebb and flow as the interests of the University community shift. For instance, he said, he has heard that Panda Express is very popular with the students, and there is always a balance to be struck between sustainability and where students will spend their dollars.

Stennes said that the Aramark contract contained a considerable amount of sustainability language, and the committee could find out what was asked of Aramark, and how they have performed in regards to that language. Bowman, he said, would be the individual who could talk to how much influence the University has in regards to subcontractors. Schurman stated that if she were a student she would organize so that student consciousness was raised, so these companies feel a little pressure to be more sustainable. University employees and students could vote with their feet, Duckett added.

When asked if there are vendors currently on campus who have compostable utensils and materials, Stennes replied that all Aramark branded locations have compostable materials. Fuhs asked whether the priority is organic and compostable or recyclable materials? Stennes stated that if the infrastructure exists, compostable is better because recycling products may require a washing process that is intense and involves water. Additionally, he said, fewer waste streams are better.

Croce concluded by asking Stennes how the committee could help his efforts.
Stennes asked that the committee continue to show interest, to keep the dialogue going and allow his unit to report on what has been accomplished. He added that the other helpful action is to voice their preferences. The more that voices are heard on the topic of sustainability, the more likely that change will happen.

Hearing no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Patricia Straub
University Senate Office