

**Equity, Access, and Diversity Committee (EAD)**  
**November 21, 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:** Open Discussion on Campus Climate; Student Counseling Services Privacy Policies; Other business]

**PRESENT:** Jeremy Jenkins (chair), Solomon Gashaw, Joseph Gerteis, Kimberly Hewitt, Naty Lopez, Shailey Prasad, Sarah Sexton, Keisha Varma, Deena Wassenberg, Jonathan Watkins

**REGRETS:** Ann Burkhart, Priscilla Flynn, Cynthia Messer, Teddie Potter

**ABSENT:** Katrice Albert, Caitlin Boucha, Jude Fom, Tami Jauert, Jefrina Jayaraj, Mina Kian, Minsoo Kim, Marcella Windmuller-Campione

**GUESTS:** Glenn Hirsch, assistant vice provost and director, Student Counseling Services

**OTHER:** Vickie Courtney, director, University Senate Office

**1. Open Discussion on Campus Climate**

Chair Jeremy Jenkins opened the meeting by inviting members to participate in an open dialogue surrounding the increase in hate crimes and harassment of marginalized groups during the presidential election season. Jonathan Watkins observed that many of the events had taken place around public transportation, such as on the bus or the Green Line train. He suggested that the committee could encourage Parking and Transportation Services to look into this, as getting to school safely is critical to students' ability to learn. Naty Lopez said that some departments have offered space to students to process these events, and some student groups have accepted it, while others have declined. She said it was important not to go beyond what the students find helpful. She said that minority faculty have expressed concerns, as well. Solomon Gashaw added that the Morris campus also created a 'safe space' for students in the aftermath of these events. Deena Wassenberg commented that working at the University of Minnesota, which is located in a liberal urban area in a blue state, creates a kind of bubble, which it is important to see beyond in order to truly understand the political climate. Watkins agreed, adding that campus events geared toward such conversations suffer from a selection bias-- those who choose to participate are those who already care about the issues. Jonathan Gerteis shared that he works with a number of Somali students, many of whom are scared. He suggested reaching out and working with Somali organizations, especially those who share the West Bank neighborhood with the University.

Jenkins then asked the committee to think about the recent incidents on the Washington Avenue Bridge-- the College Republicans' "Build the Wall" panel and the painting of the word "ISIS" on the Muslim Students Association's panel-- and consider the administration's response. What is the University doing well, and what could it do better? Several members said that they were

satisfied with the administration's response to these events, and agreed that the distinction between legitimate political speech and hate speech is a fine line. Referencing the recent ["Reaffirming Our Values, Rebuilding the Social Compact" forum](#), Jenkins asked for members' thoughts on how to reaffirm the University's commitment to equity and diversity without taking a partisan stance. Sarah Sexton said that it is possible to recognize and validate emotions without taking a political stance-- it is undeniable that emotions were running high on both sides of the political spectrum during the election season. She also commented that it was important to continue responding to people's concerns without letting fear of seeming partisan get in the way. Gerteis added that faculty should be careful to avoid partisanship, but that it is possible to support legitimate political speech while also opposing hate speech.

## **2. Student Counseling Services Privacy Policies**

Glenn Hirsch, assistant vice provost and director, Student Counseling Services (SCS), visited the committee to talk about Student Counseling Services and their privacy policies. He began with an overview of SCS:

- They have existed since 1932 in various forms and offer career, mental health, academic skills, and personal counseling.
- They are a training program-- many of their counselors are graduate students in psychology.
- They strive to get students in for a same-day initial appointment and are about 80% successful at this.
- Since their practitioners are psychologists, not psychiatrists, they refer to Boynton for psychiatric services.

Hirsch said that students, in general, seem to be more open about their mental health than they were in the past, but that confidentiality remains a big concern for many. He said that professional students are often concerned that utilizing counseling services may somehow affect their job prospects. He added that members of certain cultural groups in which mental health concerns are especially stigmatized may hesitate to use counseling services or even to visit the counseling center. They are therefore making efforts to reach out to such students where they already are, in order to build relationships founded on trust.

With regard to confidentiality of counseling records, Hirsch said that technically, they are covered under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). However, he said, the standard in the profession considers the privacy stipulations in the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), which are more stringent than those under FERPA, the minimum standard for patient confidentiality. He also said that since SCS does not bill insurance for their services, there is no potential for parents to see a bill and find out about their student's use of the service that way. Boynton does bill insurance, he said, and many students do not know this. He said that in the case of a student pursuing litigation against the University, SCS would follow the recommendations in the [Department of Education's Dear Colleague letter](#) on the release of student medical records, which stipulate that student counseling records should not be released unless the litigation is against the counseling service itself. However, he added that if there was a court order, they would have to release the records, but they have never been pressured to do so. He concluded that as the director of SCS, he feels personally responsible for protecting records, and would not support their release if asked.

Kimberly Hewitt asked if SCS serves staff and faculty, and Hirsch replied that they only serve students. Jenkins asked whether there was any comparable service for faculty and staff, and Hirsch said that employees can receive assistance through their insurance or the Employee Assistance Program.

Hewitt then asked to hear more about the effort to reach out to underrepresented students. Hirsch said that the idea was to partner with the Multicultural Center for Academic Excellence (MCAE), TRIO programs, and the President's Emerging Scholars (PES) community, and have a dedicated staff person who would attend events and be present in the students' communities outside of their role as counselor, in order to build trust.

Lopez asked whether SCS offers any training for staff on how to facilitate safe spaces in the wake of hate-based incidents. Hirsch said no, but that the Office for Equity and Diversity offers such training. Heather Liu, Peg Lonquist, and Stef Wilenchek are the trainers.

Jenkins asked Hirsch what the committee can do to help. Hirsch said that faculty can acknowledge that being a student is stressful and try to be understanding. He emphasized that even in the absence of a mental health condition, stress is a concern for college students, and that one need not have a diagnosed mental health condition in order to seek help.

Shailey Prasad asked what the current wait times are for an appointment. Hirsch said that the wait time is about two to three weeks for ongoing appointments, but that they do prioritize students in crisis. Boynton is also currently about two to three weeks for ongoing appointments. He added that the busy times of day are from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., so it is easier for a student to be seen if they are willing to go outside those hours.

Gerteis asked whether SCS serves graduate students at the same rate as undergrads. Hirsch said that historically, graduate students have made up about 25% of the caseload. They also run dissertation and thesis support groups that are very popular, he added. Prasad then asked about professional students, to which Hirsch responded that generally those students have their own insurance, so are not using SCS's services. With no further discussion, Jenkins thanked Hirsch and Hirsch departed.

### **3. Other Business**

Jenkins informed members that in January, Hewitt would seek feedback on changes to the Sexual Misconduct policy. He then adjourned the meeting.

Amber Bathke  
University Senate Office